

SOCIOLOGY 341
Sociology of Agriculture
ST. FRANCIS XAVIER UNIVERSITY, FALL 2022
Dr. Riley Olstead

E-mail: rolstead@stfx.ca

Class Location: Mul 2022

Class Times:

Mondays 6:30-9:30 PM

Office Location: NT 618

Office Hours:

Tuesdays 2:15 PM -3:30 PM

Thursdays 12:45 PM -2:00 PM

Our focus in this course is on agriculture as a socio-political, economic, environmental and spiritual energy system. As a sociology course, we will attend to the historic gendered, racial, and colonial character of agricultural systems, to come to understand the development of the dominant extractive industrial processes, that are our agri-food and agri-fuel systems. In contrast, we will consider 'regenerative', 'peasant' and indigenous food and farming systems. We will consider how questions of an ethical agricultural system exposes the intersections of linear-extractive relations that are the basis of industrial farming, such as the patriarchy, (settler) colonialism, imperialism and capitalism.

The course is conducted as an interactive engagement such that close reading of all texts is required by students prior to class.

Required Reading:

1. Rather than purchase a course kit, students access all readings (which are open-access, or otherwise publicly available online), using the links embedded in the course syllabus.
2. Qualman, Darrin 2019. *Civilization Critical: Energy, food, nature and the future*. Fernwood: Halifax.
3. Kimmerer, Robin Wall. (2015) *Braiding Sweetgrass. Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*. Milkweed Editors: Minneapolis, Minnesota.

University and Classroom Policies

Plagiarism: Familiarize yourself with the university plagiarism policies. You are responsible for understanding them and abiding by them. The StFX library has links, tutorials, and definitions at this site: <http://sites.stfx.ca/library/plagiarism>. The StFX calendar outlines the procedures concerning and penalties for committing plagiarism.

StFX Equity Policy: Everyone learns more effectively in a respectful, safe and equitable learning environment, free from discrimination and harassment. I invite you to work with me to create a classroom space—whether face-to-face or online—that fosters and promotes values of human dignity, equity, non-discrimination and respect for diversity. These values and practices are in accord with the StFX Discrimination and Harassment Policy which can be found at <http://www.mystfx.ca/campus/stu-serv/equity/>. Please feel free to talk to me about your questions or concerns about equity in our virtual classroom or in the StFX community in general. If I cannot answer your questions or help you address your concerns, I encourage you to talk to the Chair/Coordinator of the Department/Program or the Human Rights and Equity Advisor.

Electronics: While we will be making use of computers for this class, I ask that students be respectful in how they employ technologies throughout this course.

Lecture policy: My lectures/classes are often organic cooperative and engaged considerations of topics and issues. As such, I do not pre-script how information exchange will unfold. I do not therefore, have PowerPoint slides or pre-scripted notes to share with students.

Grading:

- A. Treaty Presentation 10% **DUE SEPTEMBER 26th**
- B. Treaty Reflection 10% **DUE OCTOBER 17th**
- C. Sweetgrass Submission and Presentation 10% **DUE NOV 14th**
- D. Major Paper 40% **DUE NOVEMBER 28th**
- E. Final Exam 30% **DATE TBA**

Long descriptions:

- A. **Treaty Presentation (10%) DUE SEPT. 26th**

Arlyne MacGrath from Service Learning, will be joining us to guide a conversation in preparation for our Treaty Presentation and Treaty Reflection assignments. The class will divide into groups, each of which will be responsible for some aspect of a collective delivery of an engaging, coherent and meaningful presentation of the Peace and Friendship Treaties, and related legislation.

The presentation will be made just days prior to October 1st which, is Treaty Day in so-called Canada. For this reason, our class plays a central educational role in preparing the campus for Treaty Day, by offering this public presentation of the legal agreements between the settler state, and Indigenous peoples. We are all aware that Canada has been found responsible for

genocide of Indigenous peoples, and so this presentation must be offered with the utmost integrity and respect.

Students unable to participate in all of the portions of these assignments (the class preparation, assignment development and/or delivery of the presentation on Sept. 26th) will be given an alternative research paper assignment. Students are responsible for contacting me immediately, (and certainly prior to the presentation) in order to take advantage of this alternative arrangement. Otherwise, students will receive a 0 for both the Treaty Presentation and Treaty Reflection, which together amount to 20% of the course grade.

B. Treaty Reflection (10%) DUE OCT. 17th

This assignment asks you to respond to the following questions, aiming for a response between 3-5 typed pages in length:

1. What Treaty Presentation group do you belong to?
2. How did you contribute to the work your group undertook?
3. Did the group work collaboratively? Was the labour evenly distributed?
4. What did you know about treaties before this class?
5. From your political positionality (are you a settler?, are you Indigenous?), how did you experience this assignment?
6. Include any further questions, frustrations, thoughts or comments you have.

C. Sweetgrass Submission and Presentation 10% DUE NOV 14th

This assignment requires that you read the three chapters of Braiding Sweetgrass outlined in the course syllabus and provide a 2-page reflection that demonstrates you have carefully read the chapters. You must also home in on a section that you find particularly significant. Explain why you think the selection is significant to you. Also, explain if you learned anything new in these chapters and whether you think that the perspective taken in this book is important? How so?

Students will be required to submit their two- page assignment to me during class in hard copy which, I will use to guide me through a brief (3-5 minute) presentation by each student Describing what part of these chapters stood out most and why. Any additional time remaining in the class will be used for class discussion.

D. Major Paper (40%) Due: DUE NOV. 28th

Length: 8-10 pages, double-spaced, 12 point font

This assignment requires that you use critical thinking to write a paper that considers the question, 'Is biotechnology the 'way out' of the food and farming crisis?' (Think: 'Clean meat' at: <https://www.peta.org/living/food/memphis-meats-debuts-lab-grown-chicken-clean-meat/>).

You may wish to consider related questions such as, why is biotechnology given so much weight in considerations of how to address climate change? If we are so busy focussing on biotechnological solutions, what other possibilities are we being distracted from?

Please ensure you take a critical approach and **employ at least 4 directly relevant resources**, preferably from academic texts, reputable media sources or from Indigenous knowledge keepers. Use your resources well to build your paper. Grammar, spelling and especially, force of argument (integrity) will be evaluated.

E. Take Home Final Exam (30%) Due: TBA

ALL ASSIGNMENTS: Spelling, grammar, word choice and tone matter in the assessment of **all** assignments. Please be careful not to give assignments superficial treatment. I am seeking depth of analysis and contemplation of serious issues that are worth our time and consideration.

Schedule of Weekly Readings, Tests and Assignments

Week 1: Introduction: Why a Sociology of Agriculture? (September 12th)

- Review syllabus and explain format and goals of course
- Quiz: What do you know about farming?
- Guest visitor : Arlynn MacGrath

**** Establish Treaty Presentation groups and roles**

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TePIVr2bgCY> (Treaty Education: 13 minutes)

Week 2: God Made a Farmer (September 19th)

- Exploring the gendered, racialized and colonial nature of industrial agriculture and its alternatives : *'And God Made a Farmer'* commercial.
- Treaty Day Presentation Preparation

Week 3: Food Regimes & The Green Revolution (Monday September 26th)

- McMichael, P. 2009. "A food regime analysis of the 'world food crisis'", *Agriculture and Human Values*, 26 (4): 281-295. Available at:

<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/a00a/c3df508123145b5e16f9ef9d8fc6341b790e.pdf>

- Shiva, V. 2016. “Science and Politics in the Green Revolution”, In *The Violence of the Green Revolution: Third World Agriculture, Ecology and Politics*. Available at: http://www.trabal.org/texts/pdf/shiva_gr_excerpts.pdf
- Perkins, J.H., (1990). The Rockefeller Foundation and the Green Revolution, 1941- 1956. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 7(3-4):6-18. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/248776767_The_Rockefeller_Foundation_and_the_green_revolution_1941-1956
- Treaty Day Presentation 6:30-9:30 PM (10%) Location People’s Place Library

Week 4: How Agriculture can Teach us about Energy : Circles and Lines (October 3rd)

- Qualman, D. *Introduction and Chapters 1-6*.

Week 5: Indigenous Epistemologies and Relations with Land and Life: Origin Stories (October 17th)

- *Braiding Sweetgrass* Chapters, ‘Skywoman Falling’, ‘Council of Pecans’ and ‘Allegiance to Gratitude’
- Treaty Reflection Due October 17th (10%)

Week 6: Indigenous Harvesting Systems (Wednesday October 24th)

- Film: Seeking Netukulimk Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jrk3ZI_2Dd0 (22 mins)
- Prosper, K. , McMillan, L. J. , Davis, A. A. , Moffitt, M. (2011). Returning to Netukulimk: Mi’kmaq cultural and spiritual connections with resource stewardship and self-governance. *The International Indigenous Policy Journal*,2(4). <https://ojs.lib.uwo.ca/index.php/iipj/article/view/7358/6002>

Week 7: Climate Change and Agriculture (October 31st)

- Via Campesina Film: ‘Together we can cool the planet’: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eKLfTq7ljAs> (16 mins)
- Film, *Dirt* (1.20 mins)

**Week 8: Soil, and why it's Sociological, then Braiding Sweetgrass Presentations
(November 14th)**

- *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Chapters: 'The Gift of Strawberries', 'Asters and Goldenrod', and 'Learning the Grammar of Animals',
- **Sweetgrass Submission Due in hard copy followed by Student Presentations (10%)**

**Week 9: How Industry Shapes our Food Supply
(November 21th)**

- OPIRG, 'The Supermarket Tour' Available at:
http://www.fairtradebarrie.ca/pdf/wpirg_supermarket_tour.pdf

**Week 10: Western Ecological Science & Traditional Indigenous Knowledge
(November 28th)**

- Martin, D. (2012), "Nutrition transition and the public-health crisis: Aboriginal perspectives on food and eating", *Critical perspectives in Food Studies*, 228-241.
- [../Nutrition Transition article.pdf](#)
- Film, *Gather* (1.14 mins)
- **Major Paper Due November 28th (40%)**

**Week 11: Water if Life
(December 5th)**

No readings this week

Take Home Final Exam Preparation (30%)