

SOCIOLOGY 398
Sociology of Agriculture: The Global Food System
ST. FRANCIS XAVIER UNIVERSITY, Fall 2017
Dr. Riley Chisholm

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Office Hours:

Office Hours:

Mondays 9-11 and 12:30-2

Tuesdays 11-2

Wednesday: No office hours

Thursdays 9:30-12:30

Friday: No office hours

Class Times: Tuesday 9:45-11 am and Thursday at 8:15-9:30 am

Classroom: Schwartz 289

This course begins with an interdisciplinary survey of the scientific, philosophical, political, social and cultural aspects of global agriculture and food production. Topics examined include the green revolution, the relationship between agricultural and social sustainability, local food versus export economies, food security, food sovereignty and justice, as well as biotechnology, soil science and climate farming. At least one farm visit is also included.

Required Reading:

Course Kit (Available in the bookstore – look for the course number and my name).

University and Classroom Policies

Plagiarism: Familiarize yourself with the university plagiarism policies and punishments. 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—both face-to-face and 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 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: Although electronic technologies have the potential to enhance learning, recent studies suggest that the use of personal computers and other electronic devices can be detrimental to students' learning. See:

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/laptop-use-lowers-student-grades-experiment-shows-1.1401860>

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2014/04/28/why-students-using-laptops-learn-less-in-class-even-when-they-really-are-taking-notes/>.

For this reason, I ask that students ONLY use devices for recording class notes. I reserve the right to ask students to leave the class should they not respect to this request. Cellular phones should be turned off and away, while class is being held.

Course grades and lectures policy: I do not use PowerPoint in class and do not post/provide my lectures to students. Students who miss classes are responsible to get missed lecture notes from another student in the class. Also, I do not discuss or provide grades over email.

Grading

- A. Film Review 30% Due Thursday October 19th
- B. Major Paper 30% Due Thursday November 16th
- C. Final Exam 40% Date TBA

Long description of assignment requirements:

A. Critical Film Review Due: Thursday October 19th (30%)

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

This assignment requires that you critically examine the documentary film, *Green Rights*, to be shown in class Tuesday September 26th, in conjunction with at least 3 additional academic resources to produce an assessment of the necessity of law and policy that protects nature. Grammar, tone and force of argument will be taken into account.

Questions you may wish to address in your paper:

1. What are Green Rights?
2. What kinds of Green Rights have already been established?
3. What are the obstacles to Green Rights?
4. What can YOU do to motivate for Green Rights?
5. Are there problems with the notion of Green Rights? If so, what?

Try to be as specific as possible by referring to real situations and people.

A. Major Paper Due: Thursday November 16th (30%)

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

This assignment requires that you write a paper that expands upon one of the following topics:

1. The relationship between global agricultural and gender (in)equality
2. How industrial agriculture is a threat to the commons (Think :Nestle)
3. The relationship between epidemics (obesity, or cancer for example) and industrial agriculture
4. Water Wars: How water resources are at risk. (Think: Indigenous resistance to the Dakota Access Pipeline, or more locally, the AltGas storage caverns).
5. The political significance of country foods
6. GMO crops vs. heritage crops
7. Biotechnology as the 'way out' of the food crisis (Think: 'Clean meat' at: <https://www.peta.org/living/food/memphis-meats-debuts-lab-grown-chicken-clean-meat/>).
8. Gender and farming
9. Race, exploitation and global agriculture
10. Suicide and agriculture
11. What's the matter with the Canadian government's approach to agriculture? (Think: <http://www.agr.gc.ca/eng/news/agriculture-150/?id=1478796320950>)
12. Sustainable approaches to food: Vegan, vegetarian diets...are they 'healthy'?

Please ensure you take a critical approach and employ at least 4 high quality resources, preferably from academic texts. Grammar, spelling and especially, force of argument will be evaluated.

Schedule of Weekly Readings, Tests and Assignments

Competing values, practices and outcomes

Week 1: Introduction: Why a sociology of agriculture?

(Sep. 5th and 7th)

- No readings this week

Week 2: Approaches to Agriculture and How we can Cool the Planet

(Sep. 12th and 14th)

- Bellamy Foster, J. 1995. "The Treadmill of Production". Keynote address: *Watersheds '94 Conference, U.S. EPA*. Monthly Review.

Week 3: The Green Revolution

(Sep. 19th and 21st)

- 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.

Week 4: The Rights of Nature: Policy and Law (Sept. 26th and 28th)

Mandatory film viewing on Sept. 26th: *Green Rights: Your right to a healthy world.*

- Lachlan and Megan MacDonald's dairy farm visit: Highway 337

Week 5: Food Regimes and Farming Crises (Oct 3rd and 5th)

- Van der Ploeg, J. 2010. "The food crisis, industrialized farming and the imperial regime". *Journal of Agrarian Change* 10 (1): 98-10
- McMichael, P. 2009. "A food regime analysis of the 'world food crisis'", *Agriculture and Human Values*, 26 (4): 281-295.

Week 6: What is food security? (Oct 10th and 12th)

- Holt-Giménez. 2011. "Food security, food justice or food sovereignty?: Crises, food movements and regime change". In Aikon and J. Agyeman (Eds.). *Cultivating Sustainability*. Cambridge, MA. MIT Press. Pp.309-311.
- Guest speaker: Christina ???

Week 7: The Costs of Industrial Agriculture (Oct 17th and 19th)

- Eplett, L. 2015. "Political Climates: Drought and Conflict in Syria". Available at: <http://blogs.scientificamerican.com/food-matters/political-climates-drought-and-conflict-in-syria/>
- Hoorigan et al. (2002) Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1240832/pdf/ehp0110-000445.pdf>
- **Critical film paper due on Thursday Oct. 19th (30%)**

Week 8: Save Our Seed! (Oct 24th and 26th)

- NFU Fact Sheet available at: <http://www.nfu.ca/issues/save-our-seed>

- Shiva, V. 2016. "Miracle seeds" and the destruction of genetic diversity", 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
- Film: *The World According to Monsanto*

Week 9: The Political Economy of Food Aid (Oct 31st and Nov. 2nd)

- Oxfam. 2001. *Food aid or hidden dumping? Separating wheat from chaff*. Available online at: http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/bp71_food_aid.pdf pp. 2-29
- Clapp, Jennifer. 2004. "The political economy of food aid in an era of agricultural biotechnology". *Global Governance*.

Week 10: Soil, and why it's sociological. (Nov 7th and 9th)

- "Shiva, V. 2016. "Chemical Fertilizers and Soil Fertility"", 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
- Ikerd, John. 2011. "Healthy soils, healthy people: the legacy of William Albrecht".
- Film: *Dirt*

Week 11: Biotechnology and Brave New Food (Nov 14th and 16th)

- Farm Visit: Sweetmountain Farm, 576 Ohio East Road: Organic Grass-finished Beef, Maple Syrup and Select-Harvest Wood Farm. Students will car pool.
- Rosset, et al. 2000. "Lessons from the green revolution: Do we need new technology to end hunger?" *Tikkum*.
- **Major Paper Due on Thursday Nov. 16th (30%)**

Week 12: The high costs of cheap 'food' (Nov 21st and 23rd)

- Pollan, Michael. 2003. "The way we live now: the (agri)cultural contradictions of obesity". *The New York Times Magazine*. Available online at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/12/magazine/the-way-we-live-now-10-12-03-the-agri-cultural-contradictions-of-obesity.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>

- Martin, D. 2012. Nutrition transition and the public-health crisis: Aboriginal perspectives on food and eating. In M. Koc, J. Sumner and A. Winson (Eds.). In *Critical Perspectives in Food Studies*. Toronto: Oxford. Pp. 208-222.

Week 13: Resistance and hope for a (sustainable) future

(Nov. 28th and Nov. 30th)

- Leopold, Aldo. "Thinking like a mountain" available online at: <http://www.eco-action.org/dt/thinking.html>.
- Desmarais, Annette Aurélie. 2002. "Peasants Speak: The Via Campesina: Consolidating an International Peasant and Farm Movement". *Journal of Peasant Studies*. 29(2):91-124.
- Hopi Prayer: "We are the ones we have been waiting for".