

College of Charleston, Spring 2013

ENVT 395: ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES CAPSTONE—FOOD SECURITY

Instructor: Dr. Todd LeVasseur

Office: RSS 116 (bottom of the old library, inside room 115)

Office Hours: W 1pm-2:45pm, T/TR 12:45-2:45pm, or by appointment

Email: levasseurjtj@cofc.edu (I typically respond to emails within 24 hours, but expect longer on weekends)

Phone: 953-3095 (email works better, as I rarely am in the office)

Any student may email me for a copy of my teaching philosophy.

Location: RHSC 239, Wednesdays 3:00-3:50pm

Credits: 1 Semester Hour (fulfills core requirement of a 300-level class for the ENVT minor)

Course Description and Instructional Format: This is a capstone course designed for ENVT minors who are nearing the end of their minor course work. Students who enter the course should already have an interdisciplinary appreciation of the problems of the environment. The focus of the seminar this semester is “food security,” focusing on issues of food production, food distribution, access to food, how food structures society, food politics, food marketing, food justice, and both criticisms of and alternatives to the industrial agriculture model. The course is a seminar, so it will be discussion based, with students expected to offer insightful comments (reflections about, criticisms of, connections between) on assigned readings. The class will be augmented by lectures, youtube clips, documentaries, and site visits.

Course Goals and Objectives: Specific goals of the seminar are as follows:

1. To help ENVT students critically understand and examine the industrial food system
2. To help ENVT students make connections between other ENVT classes and their CofC major/s and food security issues
3. To develop an appreciation for the myriad and often contentious views about food and food production present in U.S. and global politics and society
4. To develop sophistication in looking at food security through an ethical lens

Specific Objectives of the Course are as Follows:

1. To gain an appreciation for key concepts, including but not limited to: food security, food justice, food miles, food deserts, industrial agriculture, sustainable agriculture
2. To critically examine possible scenarios about the collapse of our food system, including issues of: climate change, viruses/epidemics, resource scarcity
3. To understand how our bodies metabolize calories
4. To critically examine the marketing, distribution, and production of food
5. To reflect on the narratives and claims made by those in both the industrial and sustainable food movements, endeavoring to evaluate their accuracy
6. To gain an appreciation for food justice issues facing the Lowcountry and other parts of the world
7. To gain an introduction to a few leading food justice/security activists, campaigners, scientists, and politicians

Required Materials:

1. Menzel and D’Aluisio *Hungry Planet: What the World Eats*
2. Patel *Stuffed and Starved: The Hidden Battle for the World Food System*
3. Jackson *Consulting the Genius of the Place*
4. Course materials will be uploaded to OAKS and can be accessed under the “content” tab
5. Various websites to peruse at your leisure:

- a. <http://www.cornucopia.org/>
- b. <http://www.slowfood.com/>
- c. http://www.fao.org/index_en.htm
- d. <http://www.oxfam.org/>
- e. <http://www.heifer.org/>
- k. Also these professional (academic) groups/sites:
 - Association for the Study of Food and Society (ASFS) <http://www.food-culture.org/>
 - Agriculture, Food, and Human Values Society (AFHVS) <http://afhvs.org/>
 - European Society for Agricultural and Food Ethics (EurSafe) <http://www.eursafe.org/>
- f. <http://www.farmsanctuary.org/>
- g. <http://www.acresusa.com/magazines/magazine.htm>
- h. <http://viacampesina.org/en/>
- i. <http://www.foodfirst.org/>
- j. www.biodynamic.org.uk/

Requirements, Expectations, and Resources:

- 1) *Attendance:* Attendance is mandatory. Roll will be taken at the beginning of each lecture. If you are more than 5 minutes late to class, you will be counted as absent for that day. Tardiness harms your understanding of the material and disrupts the class. Students are responsible for any missed content covered in class, as it is your responsibility to be present and to be to class on time. Only excused absences render the above moot—it is the student’s responsibility to approach the Office of Student Affairs and present them with valid excuses for missing class, at which point the instructor receives an email that says either “documented” or “undocumented.” Undocumented excuses count as an absence. After 1 unexcused absence, your grade drops by 1/3 letter (i.e. A to A-, C- to D+, etc.) for each successive absence. After 2 unexcused absences (i.e. your 3rd absence), you will receive a WF and be dropped from the course. *Please observe the totality of this attendance policy;* because we meet only once a week, it is imperative you are present in class.
- 2) *Common Courtesy:* As stated by the Code of Conduct in the CofC Student Handbook, cell phones and other electronic devices must be turned off during the whole class period. Computers are in the classroom are only to be used for research purposes and accessing online readings. The instructor also reserves the right to ask any student engaging in disruptive behavior (i.e. whispering, reading a newspaper, texting messages, etc.) to leave the class. Repeated observations of students using computers for activities not related to the course, or of students texting, will result in a failing grade for the class participation component of the overall course grade. Please observe this policy with diligence.
- 3) *Honor Code:* On all work submitted for credit by students at CofC, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The legal code of the College specifically prohibits plagiarism, cheating, bribing, conspiracy, misrepresentation, and fabrication. If it is proven that any student has committed any of the above infractions of the honor code, then that student will automatically fail the course with an XF. In addition, violations of the Academic Honesty Guidelines shall result in judicial action. Students should be aware that unauthorized collaboration (working together without permission) is a form of cheating.
- 4) *Accommodation for Disabilities:* To request classroom accommodation, you must first register with the Center for Disability Services at the beginning of the semester. This office will provide you with documentation that you will then provide to us when you request accommodation. For more information, please see <http://www.cof.cedu/~cds/index.htm>
- 5) Counseling Resources, a writing lab, and a career resource center are all available to CofC students and are staffed with trained professionals.

6) *Assignments*: Your grade will be determined based on the performance you exhibit for the following:

- (1) *Class Participation*: As we only meet for 50 minutes a week, it is important that you take full advantage of our short time together. Students are expected to come to class ready to actively discuss, criticize, and reflect upon the readings assigned for that week. 20% of grade.
- (2) *Reading Responses/Summaries*: Students are to submit to Dropbox a quick summary of readings for 7 of the total weeks of the semester. These summaries should provide evidence that the student read, and is thus able to participate in class and is working towards mastering the course goals and objectives. Summaries should include the following:

- (a) What is the key argument? (i.e. Be able to summarize the key argument/s in two to three sentences using your own words, and write this in your first paragraph.)

- (b) What evidence is presented by the author/s to make this argument? (What key facts, figures, studies, viewpoints, policy mechanisms/laws, economic data, etc. are used to support and justify the argument? Share only key data.)

- (c) Why does this argument matter to the author/s?

- (d) How is the argument and evidence related to other readings? What body of knowledge is being developed, or what argument is being developed by the readings?

**This is a skill to develop over the semester: critical reading of texts (reports, essays, books, articles) where you are able to distill the key argument and why it matters. Your summaries should reflect that you have mastered the reading, and should include key quotes as needed from the readings. Summaries are to be 200 to 300 words long, double spaced, Times New Roman, 12 font, include word count, and are to be uploaded to the course Dropbox by 10am each Wednesday. For weeks with multiple readings, then each reading should be summarized in 150 words. 3% each for 21% of grade.

- (3) *Food Journal*: you are to keep either a digital or written food journal through the term. You are required to reflect at least once a week on the feelings and thoughts that are being triggered by class discussion and the readings. Each entry should be dated. There is no “right” or “wrong” way to do this, but I do ask you spend some time with this, using it as an opportunity to reflect on your own diet and relationship with society and with the earth via the vehicle of food. 24% of grade. Four journal entries are pre-determined, and are as follows:

- (a) Food exercise #1: prepare a meal and attempt to trace the history of each item you just consumed. Where was it grown? What variety of seed/animal was it, and what was its breeding history? How was it grown? Who grew it? Who processed it? Who shipped it, how? How much did it cost? How many miles did each item travel?
- (b) Food exercise #2: Attempt to prepare a meal using food found only within 100 miles of Charleston. Where did you find this food? How was it marketed? Who grew it, processed it, and shipped it? How much did it cost? If you have a special diet, was it easy to find items to meet your dietary needs? Why or why not?
- (c) Food exercise #3: Purchase a meal from a local restaurant that claims to sell local produce. How did they market it? How much did it cost? What philosophy justified using local produce, and when did they start offering it? Was the restaurant crowded? How much of the menu was locally sourced? If you can, ask the wait staff/front end manager (or even a chef if possible) about the food and who delivered it and grew it and how long they've had a relationship with the farmer, and any other pertinent questions.
- (d) Food exercise #4: Attend a Farmers Market at Marion Square and reflect on your experience. What was being sold? How were items marketed? What demographics were present at the Market? How much did items cost? If you spoke to people, or overheard conversations, what were the topics discussed? If this was your first trip to a farmers market, what was the experience like? How might a farmers market speak to some of the content you've learned in your ENVT journey?

- (4) *Research Paper*: Each student is to write a 1,300-1,400 word paper on an issue related to food security due on 4/28 at 5pm, uploaded to Dropbox. Details will be discussed later in the semester. 20% of grade.
- (5) *Class Fieldtrips*: The course was awarded a grant via CofC to help meet the course goals. Students are required to participate in these fieldtrips. Notice: the dates are subject to change depending on weather and if the places we visit have to reschedule; all attempts will be made to communicate any developments as soon as they happen. 15% of grade.
- (a) Saturday, 2/2--we will visit the organic garden at Dixie Plantation, helping to plant spring seedlings. We will then visit Ambrose farm and Joseph Fields farm, respectively, on Johns Island. From here we will visit the Lowcountry Food Bank where we will receive a tour and volunteer.
 - (b) Saturday, 4/6-- we will visit two supermarkets, using a critical eye to analyze how they market food and to see if they are in a food desert. We will then visit Grow Food Carolina where we will receive a tour and purchase produce, which we will then take to Crisis Ministries to cook and serve to homeless citizens of Charleston.
- (6) *Extra Credit*: students may watch food related documentaries, attend public/campus talks on food issues, volunteer on a local farm, or analyze the politics of a contemporary (reported in the media) food security issue. These activities should be summarized and analyzed using tools gained from the course in about 300 words and are due by the last class meeting. .5 points per event, for a possible total of 2.5 points added to your final grade.

Grading Scale: A: 94-100; A-: 90-93; B+: 88-89; B: 83-87; B-: 80-82; C+: 78-79; C: 73-77; C-: 70-72; D+: 68-69; D: 63-67; D-: 61-62; F: 60.49 or below (all grades ending in .5 or higher are rounded up to the next point)

Course Schedule: (note—you do not need to include chapters from HP in your summaries!!)

W 1/9: First day of class—get syllabus

W 1/16: OAKS: Sale, chapter on “Intensification and Agriculture;” Quinn, selections from *Story of B*; Outram, “Hunter-Gatherers and the First Farmers”****summary 1 due

W 1/23: Guest Lecture—Dr. Reid Wiseman; Doolittle, “Agriculture in North America on the Eve of Contact;” *Hungry Planet* (HP) Foreword, Introduction, Australia, Bhutan

W 1/30: HP: Chad, China; *Stuffed and Starved* (SS) Preface, Chpts 1 and 2****summary 2 due

Saturday 2/2: Field Trip #1 9am—5:30pm...bring snacks and a bagged lunch, warm clothes, a hat, rain gear, your food journal, a camera, and anything else you need (including medicine, aspirin, bug spray, and other medical items you might need)

W 2/6: HP: Cuba, Ecuador; SS: chapters 3 and 4***journal exercise 1 due, and journal so far

W 2/13: HP: Egypt, France; SS: chapters 5 and 6****summary 3 due

W 2/20: HP: Germany, Greenland; SS: chapters 7 and 8

W 2/27: HP: Guatemala, India; SS: finish book; discuss research paper***journal exercise 2 due, and journal so far

SPRING BREAK—go outside, eat good food, have fun!

W 3/13: HP: Japan, Kuwait; Mercuri, "Plants and Culture;" Minkoff-Zern and Getz, "Farmworkers: The Basics and Bottom of the Food Chain;" Mallory, "Locating Ecofeminism in Encounters with Food and Place"***summary 4 due

W 3/20: HP: Mali, Mexico; Jackson, GP, pgs. ix-99****journal exercise #3 due

W 3/27: HP: Mongolia, Philippines; GP pgs. 100-176***summary 5 due

W 4/3: HP: Poland, Turkey; GP pgs. 177-249

Saturday 4/6: Field Trip #2 12pm to 7pm

W 4/10: HP: United States; Cast, selections from *X-Events*; Chakraborty and Newton, "Climate Change, Plant Diseases and Food Security;" Venkat, "The Climate Change and Economic Impacts of Food Waste in the United States"****summary 6 due

W 4/17: Wortmann, et al, "Farmer Research;" La Seur and Abelkop, "Forty Years After NEPA's Enactment..."***final journal exercise and final journal due

W 4/24: Holthaus, "Agriculture and Community Culture;" Shiva, et al., "Manifesto on the Future of Knowledge Systems"***summary 7 due

Final Exam: Potluck using a recipe from HP (attendance counts!)