

# **SOCIOLOGY 574**

## **Food: Social and Environmental Perspectives**

Thursdays, 9.50-12.30  
Seminar Room, Davison Hall, 26 Nichol Ave (Douglass)

Professor Norah MacKendrick  
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26 Nichol Avenue  
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**Office Hours:** Tuesdays, 10am – 11am

### **Course Description:**

This seven-week seminar draws upon a variety of perspectives to examine the social processes that shape how food is produced, prepared and consumed in the Global North. The first weeks of the course look at the production side of the food system and inequality, with a focus on formal institutions and global economic relations. In the last weeks, the focus turns toward culture and the individual by looking at food preparation and consumption.

The study of food offers us a unique lens for viewing environmental and social relations. In this course, we'll consider how the production of food is part of a long history of complex social and economic relations. Likewise, we'll consider how food consumption and food cultures are never fully removed from the environmental conditions and impacts associated with how food is grown and distributed. The topics and readings cover diverse areas, including environmental sociology, gender, cultural sociology, risk, and the sociology of science.

### **Learning Objectives**

In this course, students will learn to:

1. Apply a broad, sociological perspective to understand how food and eating practices are defined as social problems and culturally produced
2. Use food as a lens to study the reproduction of social inequality, the production of gender, race, and privilege
3. Examine how expert authority and scientific knowledge help to define how food is produced and consumed
4. Identify theoretical and methodological overlaps, contradictions and gaps in knowledge in the social science food literature

5. Synthesize multiple academic readings and promote the exchange of ideas
6. Identify new research questions related to the study of food and propose ways to study those questions

Several methods of evaluation will be used in this class to measure students' achievement of these objectives

- Lead and moderate a seminar
- Produce a weekly reading report
- Produce a final research paper or comprehensive book review

In class, I'll draw on students' sub-disciplinary and theoretical expertise to help move discussions forward and generate new questions and debates. It's imperative that you keep up with the assigned readings and come to class prepared to discuss them. Feel free to also bring in examples of other works—both popular and academic—as well as news worthy items that may add to our discussions.

## **Course Policies**

### Contacting me

My office hours are listed above. If you are not able to make these hours, please contact me and we can arrange to meet at another time. The best way to reach me is by email. I check email throughout the week (not on weekends), and I will do my best to respond within 48 hours.

### Student conduct and plagiarism

I expect students to be on time for class and to stay for the duration of the lecture. The classroom should be a place for the free exchange of ideas, and students should act with mutual respect and use common courtesy. I hope for, and indeed encourage, debate among students. I welcome thoughtful discussion and critical thinking; but discourteous remarks will not be tolerated.

Students are expected to follow the Code of Student Conduct, which can be found here:

<http://policies.rutgers.edu/PDF/Section10/10.2.11-current.pdf>.

### Academic integrity and Plagiarism

All students must review Rutgers' policy on plagiarism. I take plagiarism very seriously and will follow University policy if I suspect plagiarism. Please refer to:

[http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI\\_Policy\\_9\\_01\\_2011.pdf](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_9_01_2011.pdf)

### Disabilities

To discuss academic accommodations for a documented disability, please contact me during the first week of class. Note that you must also contact the Office of Disability Services:

Kreeger Learning Center  
151 College Avenue, Suite 123  
E-mail Address: dsoffice@rci.rutgers.edu  
Phone: (732) 932-2848

### Grades

The final grade is based on your total score (out of 100) calculated from all assignments.

A	90-100
B+	87-89
B	80-86
C+	76-79
C	70-75
D	60-69
F	59 or less

### **Assignments:**

#### **(1) Reading Responses--RRs (30%)**

Students submit a total of 6 reading responses, due every week starting the week of September 13<sup>th</sup>. Each RR is worth 5% of your final grade for this course. I will assign 5 points for each one submitted. *RRs are due by **noon** on the day **before** class via Sakai.*

RRs should be about one-page (500 words or so) that address the week's assigned readings. These should be analytic responses to the readings rather than summaries. You have a lot of freedom here: you can construct an argument, ask and answer a question, observe strengths and weaknesses in the authors' argument, and relate concepts across multiple readings to each other.

#### **(2) Leading a seminar (30%)**

Every student will have an opportunity to lead a weekly seminar. You can present your weekly reading response, but should also provide a brief summary of the readings and identify some of the key concepts and significance of the material. You should provide the class with a hand-out of discussion points and questions and use these points to guide class discussion and debate.

**(3) Extended book review or short research paper (40%)\***

This is a 4,000 to 5,000 word paper (10 pages or so). You have two choices for this assignment.

- A. Write a short research paper that addresses a topic related to course material
- B. Write an extended book review of one or two books on a topic related to course material, and published within the last two years (2010-2012). I can provide more detail in class.

*\*For students who are also registered in Soc 575 Human Dimensions of Environmental Change with Professor Rudel, there is an option to submit one major paper that will be evaluated by myself and Prof Rudel. The grade for this assignment would count toward your final grade in both courses. I can provide more detail in class.*

**Assigned Readings:**

You must attend all classes and come prepared to discuss the assigned readings. I expect that you will complete the reading *before* class so that you can participate in discussions.

All assigned journal articles are available on Sakai and books are available on reserve at Douglass Library. Supplementary readings are optional.

# Schedule of Topics:

## September 6: Introduction: Why Study Food?

## September 13: Global food regimes, environmental degradation and risk

- Food regimes
- Environmental degradation and food production
- Global food in a risk society

### Readings:

Friedmann, H. 1993. The Political Economy of Food: A Global Crisis. *New Left Review* Jan./Feb: 197.

Horrigan L, Lawrence RS, Walker P. 2002. How sustainable agriculture can address the environmental and human health harms of industrial agriculture. *Environmental Health Perspectives*. 110:445–456

Mol, A. P. J., & Bulkeley, H. (2002). Food risks and the environment: changing perspectives in a changing social order. *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning*, 4(3), 185-195.

### Supplementary:

Beck, U. (1999). *World risk society*. Malden, Mass: Polity Press.

McMichael, Philip. 2000. “The Power of Food.” *Agriculture and Human Values* 17:21–33.

Patel, R. 2008. *Stuffed and Starved: The hidden battle for the world food system*. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Melville House Pub.

Oosterveer, P and D.A. Sonnenfeld. 2012. *Food, Globalization and Sustainability*. New York: Earthscan.

## **September 20: Alternative choices, Alternative food systems**

- Changing food systems vs. changing food choices

### Readings:

DeLind, L. (2011). Are local food and the local food movement taking us where we want to go? Or are we hitching our wagons to the wrong stars? *Agriculture and Human Values*, 28(2), 273-283.

Guthman, J. (2004). The trouble with 'organic lite' in California: A rejoinder to the 'conventionalisation' debate. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 44(3), 301-316. [A condensed version of her book: *Agrarian Dreams. The Paradox of Organic Farming in California*]

Jaffee, D. (2012). Weak Coffee: Certification and Co-Optation in the Fair Trade Movement. *Social problems*, 59(1), 94-116.

### Supplementary:

Belasco, 1993. *Appetite for Change*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Guthman, J. (2004). *Agrarian Dreams: The Paradox of Organic Farming in California*. Berkeley: University of California.

Hinrichs, C. C. (2003). The practice and politics of food system localization. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 19(1), 33-45.

Pollan, M. 2006. *The Omnivore's Dilemma*. New York: Penguin.

For information of the ownership structure of organics refer to:

<http://nutritionwonderland.com/2009/02/organic-corporate-hierarchy/>

## **September 27: Food security and food justice**

- Food banks vs. food justice

### Readings:

Alkon, A. H., & Agyeman, J. (Eds.). (2011). *Cultivating Food Justice: Race, Class, and Sustainability*. Cambridge: MIT Press. Chapters 1, 2, 5, 7, 14

Tarasuk, Valerie, and Joan Eakin. 2005. Food assistance through “surplus” food: Insights from an ethnographic study of food bank work. *Agriculture and Human Values*. Vol 22. No.2. p. 177-186.

### Supplementary:

Fairbairn, M. (2011). Framing transformation: the counter-hegemonic potential of food sovereignty in the US context. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 1-14.

Paarlberg, R. 2010. *Food Politics: What Everyone Needs to Know*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Poppendieck, J. 1998. *Sweet charity? Emergency food and the end of entitlement*. New York: Viking.

Winne, M. 2009. *Closing the Food Gap: Resetting the Table in the Land of Plenty*. Beacon Press.

#### **October 4: Nutritionism**

Readings:

Dixon, J. (2009). From the imperial to the empty calorie: how nutrition relations underpin food regime transitions. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 26(4), 321-333.

Lang, Tim, 2005. "Food Control or Food Democracy? Re-engaging Nutrition with Society and the Environment." *Public Health Nutrition*. 8 6A:730-737

Scrinis, G. (2008). On the Ideology of Nutritionism. *Gastronomica*, 8(1), 39-48.

Supplementary:

Nestle, M. 2007. *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health*. University of California Press.

Pollan, M. 2009. *In Defense of Food*. New York: Penguin.

#### **October 11: Food and Gender**

- Food and meal preparation as gendered terrain
- Masculinity and femininity in food culture

Readings:

Cairns, K. Johnston, J. and S. Baumann. 2010. Caring About Food: Doing Gender in the Foodie Kitchen. *Gender & Society* 24: 591-615.

DeVault, Marjorie L. 1991. Feeding the family: The social organization of caring as gendered work. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [Especially Parts 1 and 3]

Hollows, Joanne. 2003. Oliver's Twist: Leisure, Labour and Domestic Masculinity in 'The Naked Chef.' *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 6: 229-248

Supplementary:

Allen, Patricia, and Carolyn Sachs. 2007. "Women and Food Chains: The Gendered Politics of Food." *International Journal of Agriculture and Food* 15 (1): 1-23.

Beagan, B., Chapman, G. E., D'Sylva, A., & Bassett, B. R. (2008). 'It's Just Easier for Me to Do It': Rationalizing the Family Division of Foodwork. *Sociology : the Journal of the British Sociological Association*, 42, 653.

### **October 18: Food Cultures**

- Gourmet culture, foodies and omnivorousness
- Cultural shifts in eating practices

Readings:

Johnston, Josée and Shyon Baumann. 2009. *Foodies: Democracy and distinction in the gourmet foodscape*. New York: Routledge. [Especially chapters 1, 2, 3, 5]

Warde, A., Cheng, S.-L., Olsen, W., & Southerton, D. 2007. Changes in the Practice of Eating: A Comparative Analysis of Time-Use. *Acta Sociologica*, 50(4), 363-385.

Supplementary:

Bourdieu, P. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge.

Kamp, David. 2006. *The United States of Arugula*. Broadway Books: New York.

Warde, A., Martens, L. and Olsen, W. (1999) Consumption and the problem of variety: cultural omnivorousness, social distinction and dining out. *Sociology*, 33, pp. 105 – 127.