

CSUS 855, Section 001
Political Ecology of Food

Fall 2018

Mondays, 12:40-2:30 p.m.

19 Natural Resources Building

Date of Final Exam – Tuesday December 11, 3 to 5pm in 19 Natural Resources

Instructor: Phil Howard
Office Phone: 355-8431
Office Address: 316 Natural Resources
Office Hours: Mondays 2:30 to 3:30pm, and by appointment
E-mail: howardp@msu.edu

Brief Description

Interactions between food, society and the environment. Ecological impacts and sociopolitical power in international and domestic contexts.

Course Description

This interdisciplinary course will apply political ecology (critical political economy, with attention to environmental changes) to specific foods and food systems. We will explore food production, consumption, and the links in between in the United States, as well as in global/international contexts. We will also apply theories and methods from political ecology to our own specific research interests. Doing so will require understanding the diversity of approaches encompassed by the broad field of political ecology, as well as directly engaging in the difficult task of bridging the social and natural sciences. Issues that will receive particular attention include technologies, scale, development strategies, risk, knowledge, food sovereignty and crisis tendencies.

Learning Objectives

- Develop a scholarly capacity for analyzing the interactions between food, society and the environment, drawing on disciplines including anthropology, biology, development studies, ecology, economics, geography, history, political science and sociology.
- Develop a better understanding of how to synthesize political economic and ecological frameworks through case studies of food systems.
- Critically examine key themes in food research, with a focus on ecological sustainability, political participation and social inequalities.

Course Approach

This course is organized as a small seminar with a commitment to developing collaborative learning among all who participate.

Course Prerequisites

Graduate standing or permission from instructor. CSUS 811 (Community, Food and Agriculture: A Survey) is recommended, but not required.

Course Assignments and Evaluation

Assignments (100 points each) include:

- required readings and participation in class discussions
- weekly online reflections following up on the readings and class discussion from the previous week, and final self-evaluation

- critical review of a scholarly book related to the political ecology of food (Oct. 22)
- group project that critically applies political ecology to a food issue in Michigan (Dec. 11)

Weekly readings

You are expected to come to class prepared to answer the following questions about the weekly readings:

1. what did you agree/disagree with the most? OR what did you find most useful
2. what did the readings potentially leave out?

Online Component

Each week (beginning in week 2) you will write an essay of approximately 500 words to follow up on the readings and class discussion (please wait until after class discussion to begin the assignment):

1. what question(s) did the readings and discussion raise?
2. what were you able to uncover about this question?

Answering question 2 will require that you seek out and read at least one additional article or chapter in an effort to answer question 1. It's OK if you're not able to answer the question, just share what you learned in the process. Please cite the outside article/chapter that you read.

You will also be asked to read the reflections of other students, and brief responses are welcome (but not required).

Critical Review

800 to 1,000 word review of scholarly book, formatted for submission to an academic journal.

Group Project

Peer groups will also engage in research in Michigan communities to apply concepts of political ecology. Each group will investigate a specific food or food system, the results of which will be made publicly available as a multimedia presentation (e.g. powerpoint, keynote, PDF). There are a number of possibilities, but one example from a previous class involved comparing three different animal welfare standards, with a focus on ecological impacts, scale and political power (see https://prezi.com/req8x_tpzmpg/animal-welfare-standards/, but note that I am not a fan of Prezi and its excessive motion).

Topics might include food trucks, community supported agriculture farms, cottage food laws, heritage pork producers, seed libraries, retail cooperatives, Naturally Grown certification, etc..

Grading scale for the course (by percentage of the 400 points obtained):

94 to 100% - 4.0

87 to 93% - 3.5

80 to 86% - 3.0

75 to 79% - 2.5

70 to 74% - 2.0

Required Texts

- Vandermeer, John. 2011. *The Ecology of Agroecosystems*. Jones & Bartlett Publishers.
- Chappell, Jahi. 2018. *Beginning to End Hunger*. University of California Press.
- Galt, Ryan E. 2014. *Food Systems in an Unequal World: Pesticides, Vegetables, and Agrarian Capitalism in Costa Rica*. University of Arizona Press.

Recommended Text (recommended to read before first class)

- Robbins, Paul. 2012. *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction*. 2nd edition. Wiley-Blackwell

Additional readings as assigned (see below).

Schedule

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

Week 1 (8/29) – Class introductions, formation of peer groups

Week 2 (9/10) – The Political Ecology of Food

- Galt, R. E. 2013. Placing food systems in first world political ecology: a review and research agenda. *Geography Compass*, 7(9), 637-658.
- Baines, J. 2014. Food price inflation as redistribution: Towards a new analysis of corporate power in the world food system. *New Political Economy*, 19(1), 79-112.
- Moragues-Faus, A., & Marsden, T. 2017. The political ecology of food: Carving ‘spaces of possibility’ in a new research agenda. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 55, 275-288.

Week 3 (9/17) – Agroecology Part 1

- Vandermeer, *The Ecology of Agroecosystems*, Chapters 1-4

Week 4 (9/24) – Agroecology Part 2

- Vandermeer, *The Ecology of Agroecosystems*, Chapters 5-8

Part 2: US/EU CASE STUDIES

Week 5 (10/1) - Scale

- DuPuis, E. M., & Block, D. 2008. Sustainability and scale: US milk-market orders as relocalization policy. *Environment and Planning A*, 40(8), 1987-2005.
- Stuart, D. 2011. ‘Nature’ is not guilty: foodborne illness and the industrial bagged salad. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 51(2), 158-174.
- Kremen, C., Iles, A., & Bacon, C. 2012. Diversified farming systems: an agroecological, systems-based alternative to modern industrial agriculture. *Ecology & Society* 17(4):44.

Week 6 (10/8) – Technologies

- Friedberg, S. 2014. Moral economies and the cold chain. *Historical Research*, 88(239), 125-137.
- Warner, K. D., Daane, K. M., Getz, C. M., Maurano, S. P., Calderon, S., & Powers, K. A. 2011. The decline of public interest agricultural science and the dubious future of crop biological control in California. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 28(4), 483-496.
- Lawhon, M., & Murphy, J. T. 2012. Socio-technical regimes and sustainability transitions: Insights from political ecology. *Progress in Human Geography*, 36(3), 354-378.

Week 7 (10/15) – Knowledge

- Cuéllar-Padilla, M., & Calle-Collado, Á. 2011. Can we find solutions with people? Participatory action research with small organic producers in Andalusia. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 27(4), 372-383.
- Montenegro de Wit, M., & Iles, A. 2016. Toward thick legitimacy: Creating a web of legitimacy for agroecology. *Elementa: Science of the Anthropocene*, 4, 1-24.
- Robinson, P. A. 2017. Farmers and bovine tuberculosis: Contextualising statutory disease control within everyday farming lives. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 55, 168-180.

Week 8 (10/22) – Critical Book Reviews due

In-class presentations

Part 3 INTERNATIONAL/GLOBAL CASE STUDIES

Week 9 (10/29) - Food Sovereignty

- Chappell, Beginning to End Hunger

Week 10 (11/5) – Development

- Stone, G. D., & Glover, D. 2017. Disembedding grain: Golden Rice, the Green Revolution, and heirloom seeds in the Philippines. *Agriculture and Human values*, 34(1), 87-102.
- Hoelle, J. 2017. Jungle beef: consumption, production and destruction, and the development process in the Brazilian Amazon. *Journal of Political Ecology*, 24(1), 743-762.
- Gengenbach, H., Schurman, R. A., Bassett, T. J., Munro, W. A., & Moseley, W. G. 2018. Limits of the New Green Revolution for Africa: Reconceptualising gendered agricultural value chains. *The Geographical Journal*, 184(2), 208-214.

Week 11 (11/12) – Risk

- Galt, Food Systems in an Unequal World

Week 12 (11/26) – Crisis Tendencies?

- Weis, T. 2013. The meat of the global food crisis. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 40(1), 65-85.
- Moore, J. W. (2010). The end of the road? Agricultural revolutions in the capitalist world-ecology, 1450–2010. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 10(3), 389-413.
- Bichler, S., & Nitzan, J. (2017). Growing through Sabotage: Energizing Hierarchical Power (No. 2017/02). *Working Papers on Capital as Power*.

Week 13 (12/3) - group project oral presentations, draft PDF due

FINAL EXAM WEEK (12/10)

Final group project (PDF) and final self-evaluation due Tuesday, Dec. 11 by 5pm.

Article 2.III.B.2 of the Academic Freedom Report states: "The student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards." In addition, the Department of Sustainability adheres to the policies on academic honesty specified in General Student Regulation 1.0, [Protection of Scholarship and Grades](#); the all-University Policy on [Integrity of Scholarship and Grades](#); and Ordinance 17.00, Examinations.

Therefore, unless authorized by your instructor, you are expected to complete all course assignments, including homework, lab work, quizzes, tests and exams, without assistance from any source. You are expected to develop original work for this course; therefore, you may not submit course work you completed for another course to satisfy the requirements for this course. Also, you are not authorized to use the www.allmsu.com Web site to complete any course work in this course. Students who violate MSU regulations on Protection of Scholarship and Grades will receive a failing grade in the course or on the assignment.

Faculty are required to report all instances in which a penalty grade is given for academic dishonesty. Students reported for academic dishonesty are required to take an online course about the integrity of scholarship and grades. A hold will be placed on the student's account until such time as the student completes the course. This course is overseen by the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education.

Michigan State University is committed to ensuring that the bereavement process of a student who loses a family member during a semester does not put the student at an academic disadvantage in their classes. If you require a grief absence, you should complete the "Grief Absence Request" web form (found at <https://www.reg.msu.edu/sitemap.aspx?Group=7>) no later than one week after knowledge of the circumstance. I will work with you to make appropriate accommodations so that you are not penalized due to a verified grief absence.

"Michigan State University is committed to fostering a culture of caring and respect that is free of relationship violence and sexual misconduct, and to ensuring that all affected individuals have access to services. For information on reporting options, confidential advocacy and support resources, university policies and procedures, or how to make a difference on campus, visit the Title IX website at www.titleix.msu.edu."

Michigan State University is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all programs, services and activities. Requests for accommodations by persons with disabilities may be made by contacting the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities at 517-884-RCPD or on the web at rcpd.msu.edu. Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, you will be issued a Verified Individual Services Accommodation ("VISA") form. Please present this form to me at the start of the term and/or two weeks prior to the accommodation date (test, project, etc.). Requests received after this date may not be honored.