Informational Handout: Course Syllabus
Food Systems, CRD 20, UC Davis, Fall 2008

It could plausibly be argued that changes in diet are more important than changes of dynasty or even of religion.
— George Orwell (1937: 82)

Logistics
Instructor: Ryan E. Galt, Assistant Professor of Agricultural Sustainability & Society
office: 2429 Hart; office hours: T & R 2:30 to 4:00 p.m., or by appointment
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Teaching Assistants: Julia Van Soelen (M lab) and Aubrey White (W lab)

Graduate Student Researcher: Damian Parr

Lecture time and place: T & R 4:10 to 5:30 p.m., 226 Wellman; Final: Dec. 9 at 8 a.m.

Lab time and place: M 1:10 to 4:00 p.m., 1102 Hart (starts Sept. 29); CRN 84328
W 1:10 to 4:00 p.m., 1102 Hart (starts Oct. 1); CRN 84329

Website: http://hcd.ucdavis.edu/courses/crd20/

Course Overview

Ever think about your food, where it comes from, and how it got to your plate? Do you wonder about who produces it, and what they get out of the deal? Why do so many go hungry in our world while others can afford to buy “jet fresh” produce flown in from all corners of the globe? Does the fair trade coffee you drink (or consider drinking) actually make a difference for small coffee farmers? Why did food start traveling so far, with farmers and consumers often thousands of miles apart? Are Americans getting heavier? Should you eat organic, or become a vegetarian, a vegan, or a “locavore” (New Oxford American Dictionary’s 2007 word of the year)? Who benefits most, and who is most harmed, by the current social arrangements that put food on your plate? And, perhaps most importantly, who is doing what to address these various issues and problems?

Through the lens of the social sciences, this course addresses these and other questions. It focuses on the whole food system from farm to fork and back again to assess the possibilities for sustainability and equity. The course emphasizes the societal context of food systems by positioning them within a capitalist economy. We ask about the broader social purpose of food systems, including the current and often contradictory goals of nourishment, productivity, profit, and exercising power. We examine specific commodity chains in historical and geographical context and aim to understand their impacts on producers’ livelihoods, citizens, and communities. Students are introduced to a number of social science frameworks from anthropology, geography, and sociology.

Students use laboratory time to develop knowledge and skills used to analyze food systems. Labs are used for hands-on activities and field trips that explore the positions of different people in the food system on and off campus. We visit farms, a dairy, food distribution and processing centers, and places of consumption. Exercises include documenting various aspects of the food system and creating multi-media reports.

CRD 20 complements Plant Sciences (PLS) 15, Introduction to Sustainable Agriculture, by providing a social science perspective on food and agriculture within the context of an interdisciplinary understanding of sustainability. Both will become the introductory courses to a new major in sustainable agriculture at UC Davis.
Outline of Lecture Topics

A NOTE ON DUE DATES: due dates for assignments and exams are on the informational handout “Timeline for Take-home Assignments & Exams.” Due dates for the readings are in the course reader table of contents.

INTRODUCTION
Sept. 25 Introduction: who are we, what do we want to learn, what might we already know, and how do we go about learning?

PART I: SOCIAL ASPECTS OF AGRI-FOOD SYSTEMS
Sept. 30 Understanding food systems and why perspective matters
Oct. 2 The diversity of society-agriculture relations and food systems
Oct. 7 Capitalist transformations 1: from enclosure to industrialization; or, what ever happened to the family farm?
Oct. 9 Capitalist transformations 2: globalization & further concentration

PART II: CRITICAL ISSUES & CASES
Oct. 14 Why do so many go hungry in a world of plenty?
Oct. 16 How do we explain the obesity epidemic?
Oct. 21 Should we eat meat? Questions about modern animal agriculture
Oct. 23 Guest: Trina Filan - What about women farmers? Gender in agriculture
Oct. 28 Who benefits from biotechnology? Power, resources, & democracy
Oct. 30 How will fossil-fuel dependent societies be affected by peak oil?

PART III: GRASSROOTS EFFORTS TO RESHAPE FOOD SYSTEMS
Nov. 4 How do we socially organize sustainability?
Nov. 6 Guest: Gail Feenstra - Sustainable, regional food systems
Nov. 11 Veteran's day - no class
Nov. 13 Organic agriculture to the rescue?
Nov. 18 What role for the state and land grant universities in sustainable agriculture?
Nov. 20 Guest: Navina Khanna - Addressing food insecurity and food deserts
Nov. 25 Whither the farm worker? Exploitation, organizing, & justice + Can South-North trade be made truly fair?
Nov. 27 Thanksgiving - no class
Dec. 2 Old dogs, new tricks? Networks for sustainability learning
Dec. 4 How do we overcome forces that sustain the unsustainable?
Dec. 9 8 a.m. — Final exam period
Required Readings
Each day of lecture has corresponding reading that must be completed before that class session. The list and due dates of required readings are in the table of contents for the course reader. You are expected to bring the relevant readings to each lecture session for discussion.

Required reader and texts:
CRD 20 Course Reader is required and available at Davis Copy Shop, 231 3rd Street (at University Ave), (530) 758-2311.


Grade Breakdown
Lab work (30% of total course grade):
- Lab attendance & participation: 10%
- Team projects: 20%

Take-home assignments (30% of total course grade):
- Food diary assignment: 5%
- Davis food system map assignment: 5%
- Learner document assignment: 20%

Exams and quizzes (40% of total course grade):
- Reading quizzes: 5%
- Midterm exam: 15%
- Final exam: 20%

General Policies
Lab attendance is mandatory. You may miss only one lab session. After that, another missed lab session will result in a 0% for your lab attendance and participation grade. Acceptable absences are medical and family emergencies, which must be explained by a note from the appropriate person. One missed lab can be made up by attending another lab section of the same week, but only with prior permission of the lab instructor.

Assignments are due in hard copy (print) unless the assignment explicitly states otherwise. Due dates and place due are on the informational handout “Timeline for Take-home Assignments & Exams.”

Late assignments will have two percent of the total assignment grade deducted for every hour (plus any additional fraction of an hour) that they are late. Assignments must be turned in at the start of lecture or lab sessions, unless the assignment explicitly states otherwise.

Closed-book reading quizzes may be given during any lecture period. Reading quizzes will involve a few questions about the most important ideas and information from the readings required for that particular class session. You should come to class knowing the important concepts from each reading, and be able to connect these with the author’s name and/or the title of the reading.
Plagiarism and other academic misconduct will not be tolerated and will be punished to the full extent of university policy. You are responsible for knowing what constitutes plagiarism and other academic misconduct. Below is the basic definition of plagiarism according to our university:

Plagiarism means presenting the words, phrases, ideas or work of another, including certain facts and statistics, as if they were your own. To avoid plagiarizing, you must clearly acknowledge the source of any borrowed language or ideas that you present in your own work. Quotation marks, followed by documentation, should be used to indicate the exact words of others. A signal phrase identifying a source and/or parenthetical citation or a superscript number should denote the summarized or paraphrased ideas of others, depending on the particular style the paper follows (Academic Integrity Project 2008a, emphasis in original).

For more on academic misconduct and university policy, please see: http://cai.ucdavis.edu/plagiarism.html. The Academic Integrity Project also offers helpful information on citations: http://cai.ucdavis.edu/citation.html (Academic Integrity Project 2008b).

Exams
The midterm and final exam are take-home exams that each consist of two essay questions. I will provide these questions at least three weeks before each exam is due. You are expected to prepare detailed outlines answering these questions by synthesizing material from lecture, lab, readings, and your own ideas. Be sure to cite your sources for all of these. These outlines will be assessed according to the 10 criteria (see informational handout “Criteria for Grading Essay Exams”). Examples of approved outlines and exams from other classes will be available on the course website. Outlines must be approved as adequate by your TA at least two days before the due date of the exam. If both of your outlines are approved by the outline due date, you can then choose which exam question you answer by turning your outline into an essay. If you have your outlines approved early you can write and turn in your essay early for feedback. You are also encouraged to use the Learning Skills Center (2205 Dutton Hall) to improve your writing skills. If both of your outlines are not approved by the outline due date, you will be assigned an exam question by the professor (to be completed by the next class session) and will lose 50% of your exam grade.

You are expected to come to each lecture session ready to ask questions about the readings, lecture materials, lab exercises, and any other topic related to class. If there are no questions, it is assumed that students have mastered all ideas and information, and the exam becomes due the next lecture session. Your questions can pertain to clarifying expectations of the exam questions, confirmation of connections and meanings, testing ideas, etc. Also, feel free to leave me questions on the front table before lecture sessions begin.

References
Orwell, George. 1937. The road to Wigan Pier. London: V. Gollancz, Ltd.