Assignment overview
You will create a learner document that has two parts. Part one is a 7-10 page “reflective essay” in which you will reflect on the connections between your fieldwork experience and theoretical knowledge. Part two is your learner document “master file” in which you will place all of your take-home and in-class assignments completed over the course. The learner document is worth 20% of your course grade.

Connecting fieldwork to theory
An important goal of the fieldwork is to improve your ability to link the concrete and practical situations experienced during the fieldwork with theoretical knowledge developed in lectures, lab discussions, and readings. This learner document is your opportunity to demonstrate such ability. As the team-based fieldwork is a central part of this course, it will be useful to include in the learner document condensed versions of the reports from team projects one and two. The figure below shows the connections to be made through personal reflection.

A number of the terms used below may be unfamiliar to you. Please use the definition of terms at the end of the document and/or approach your TA and/or professor to clarify any questions.

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Specific considerations for writing your reflective essay

First, you should use food systems and learning terminologies to describe the food system’s structure and functioning (“what” the food system is), the process of food system analysis (“how” you studied it), and the goals and values involved (“why” you studied it).

Second, you should select one or more key issues that emerged during your food system fieldwork/analysis and explore them further in the light of relevant lectures, lab discussions, and readings. It is important to describe such issues (e.g., food security/access, climate change, nutrition/health, markets, consumer safety, etc.) through the lenses of multiple perspectives, including environmental perspectives (e.g., biological, ecological, agronomic, etc.), and social perspectives (e.g., political, economic, philosophical, cultural, historical, etc.).

Third, you should reflect on your personal (but not private) experience from the food systems inquiry. You should put about 75% of your time in this assignment towards reflecting on and describing your learning and research process. Pay special consideration to reflecting on, and describing if and/or how your learning was influenced by communication with food system actors (farmer, distributor, retailer, worker, etc.) and your peers (classmates, team members).

Kolb’s learning cycle and description of learning styles may be a useful theoretical and practical basis for reflection on your personal learning. Relevant questions include: What have I learned in terms of ability to understand and act on complex, real-life situations? Have I improved my abilities to link concrete situations and theory, to communicate, co-operate, and to learn? What are the implications of my learning experiences in this class for my future activities?

This suggested approach to the learner document should be used as a starting point. It may be considered a guide to dealing with the challenge of the whole process of analyzing the food system within which we live, learn, and work daily. This whole process encompasses both what (food systems structure and functioning) and how (the process of food system inquiry and of learning) as well as why (goals and values within the food system and our studying it). A reasonable balance between these elements is expected, but you should feel free to emphasize the areas you consider most important and to move in a direction that you find most meaningful and personally fulfilling.

Course grade
This assignment is worth 20% of your total course grade.

Length
Suggested length (not including condensed team-based fieldwork reports) of the learner document is 1,800 words (7 – 10 pages depending on text density). It should be double-spaced and use 12 point font. The document should not exceed
Learner document development process
The development of your learner document begins today and chronicles your entire class period. The first additions to your learner document are your personal profile questionnaire, your top five food system topics of interest questionnaire, and your mind map. Today’s additions include your Kolb learning styles inventory, and in-lab learning styles reflective writing assignment.

Protocol for keeping track of your assignments and compiling your learner document:
1. Create a learner document master file with two sub-files, one for electronic documents and one for paper documents. This master file will become the base material for your learner document.
2. Copies of all learner document-related assignments are to be added to your learner document (master file) at the same time each assignment is due in lecture or lab. You will be keeping a copy of all assignments, at all times, even copies of documents that you have turned in, but have not had graded or returned yet.
3. If an assignment is completed and due while in lecture or lab, and it is not in an electronic form (i.e., the TA or professor takes the only paper copy), add the assignment to your learner document upon its return to you.
4. If an assignment is due and collected in lecture or lab, but you were able to keep an electronic copy, you need to first place the original electronic copy in your master file, and then replace it with the one returned by the TA or professor. We want the copies of assignments that have comments or grades on them to be in the finalized learner document.
5. If a revision to an assignment is made at the request of the TA or professor, both the original and the revised final draft of the assignment are to be filed in the learner document.
6. A finalized learner document will be comprised of copies of all earlier assignments in their original and, if revised, final draft form (with comments, grades, etc.). The primary goal of the learner document is to provide an opportunity for reflective writing on your overall learning experience in the course. Therefore, the majority of the writing will not simply be summarizing work already done. Rather, the majority of the writing must focus on developing a synthesis of the overall learning experience. What new connections have you made between theory and practice, lectures, readings, discussions, and project fieldwork experience?
7. A final draft of your learner document is due in hard copy at the beginning of class on the day of the final exam.
Deadline and in-progress learner document evaluations
A current draft of your learner document is due for evaluation at three different periods during the course.
1. The first due date is at the end of the fifth (5th) lab session. The TA will conduct this evaluation.
2. The second due date is the beginning of the seventh (7th) lab session. This evaluation will be conducted by your peer(s). Students have the option of keeping any part or the entirety of their learner document from peer review.
3. The third and final due date for the finalized learner document is due at the beginning of class on the day of the final exam (8 a.m. on Tuesday, December 9). The TA and professor will conduct this evaluation.

Definition of Terms
Food systems terminologies
Terms that relate to food systems, including the processes of production, processing, distribution, consumption, and disposal/reuse, and concepts such as commodity chains, hunger, nature-society relations, globalization, etc.

Learning terminologies
Terms that relate to learning activities, including terms and phrases such as experience, observe, consider, reflect, conceive, interpret, deliberate, explore, experiment, express, adjust expectation, revise or improve understanding, etc.

Food system structure (what)
The material and social arrangements that constrain and shape food production, distribution, and consumption. Material structure refers to the biological and physical components of ecosystems. Social structure includes relationships between different groups (including social stratification along the lines of gender, race/ethnicity, class, sexuality, disability, etc.) and more or less institutionalized norms that shape the actions of social agents.

Food system functioning (what)
The ways in which people go about feeding themselves and others. This involves them (1) using and influencing material components (soil, fossil fuels, packaging, environmental consequences, etc.) and (2) assigning symbolic components (purposes, meanings, motivations, values, etc.) to their and others’ activities.

Process of food system analysis (how)
The statement and resolution of a research problem or question related to the food system. This includes specifying what is out there to know and what and how we can know about it, elaborating a methodology, executing a method or methods, and using sources of information (see Grix 2002 in course reader).

Goals and values involved in analyzing food systems (why)
Goals are the desired result of an action. For research, at the most basic level this involves creating knowledge, or a new understanding. Critical social science also involves the goal of making a change, or at least advancing change, along the lines of personally or commonly held values.

Values are one’s standards of personal and social behavior, and the judgment of what is important.

Reflect
To focus on a past experience in such a way as to examine something’s value, usefulness, or accuracy; it can be directed critically to scrutinize a viewpoint, claim, or argument, and its premise.