Food Diary
CRD 20: Food Systems, UC Davis, Fall 2013
Ryan E. Galt

Assignment overview
The food diary assignment asks you to individually (1) maintain a detailed record of your eating over a two-day period, (2) investigate and analyze the information by making connections to larger patterns and social and environmental impacts and by making a global map of the ingredients in your food, (3) write a 3- to 4-page paper (12 point font, double-spaced, 1000 words maximum), and (4) be prepared to discuss your findings in class the day it is due. The goal is to better understand your eating habits, their relationship to values and social structures, and their impacts.

Deadline
Your record keeping must occur between October 2 and October 9. You then have a week to write your 3- to 4-page paper (maximum of 1,000 words), which is due on SmartSite at 2:10 p.m. on October 15.

Course grade
This assignment is worth 15% of your total course grade.

Keep a record of your eating for two days
Over the next week, choose two full days (48 hours) and keep a detailed list of everything you eat, even snacks and beverages. Since it is difficult to recall what you ate even after one day, you are advised to keep your food diary with you and keep track as you go. A template is on p. 4 below, and is available as a spreadsheet on SmartSite.

You will be keeping track of not just the food you eat, but also the time eaten, when, where, and with whom — but don’t worry about measuring how much. You will also record who prepared your food and the ingredients in it. To obtain these, you are encouraged to enter the kitchens of the places you eat and speak with the people preparing your food and, if possible, examine the ingredients lists on the boxes and cans. For example, does it contain artificial colors, flavors, preservatives or aromas? Is it organic or certified in a different way? Does it contain genetically engineered ingredients? Record as much information as you can find, such as the retailer/wholesaler, the transporter, packager, and producer of the food.

Investigate and analyze your food
After you record your eating for two days, you will do three types of investigative work:

1 Adapted from Joshua Muldavin’s assignment on the educational version of The Future of Food by Deborah Koons Garcia. Adaptation supported by a 2008 Undergraduate Instructional Improvement Program grant from the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at UC Davis.
(1) Contact at least two companies that produced your food by phone or email to request additional product information, such as country of origin, location of processing plants, information on social and environmental impacts, etc. Keep a record of all information requests you make, including the date, time, and method of contact, and then see how many companies respond to your request for information. Be sure to contact them right after you've finished keeping your two-day eating record to give them time to respond.

(2) Create a global food map of where the main foods you ate were processed and where the various raw ingredients were grown (be sure to map at least eight commodities or ingredients). For example, was the coffee you drank from Colombia, Vietnam, or East Timor? Was your pasta produced in Italy, Morocco, or Sacramento? What can you find out about food transportation across borders, continents, hemispheres, and oceans? When you have this information, create a global food map whereupon you diagram the different growing locations, and where possible, the transportation routes and the processing and packaging sites. A blank map is provided on page 5 of this assignment, but feel free to be creative. Turn in your map along with your Food Diary Essay.

(3) Assess the social and environmental impacts of one (1) ingredient of a food you have consumed. This cannot be a food that you or a friend produced, i.e., it needs to be purchased. Look into the labor conditions in the place that produces it, and any relevant trade agreements or policies that impact the place where this food is produced. Who produces this food item (consider nationality, class, race/ethnicity, gender, etc.) and what are their working conditions and benefits? What are the environmental impacts of its production? For example, was rainforest cleared to make way for its production? Are pesticides and fertilizers used, and what might be their effects?

Write your paper
When you are far enough into this project and deep enough into your research to have gained detailed information about the origins of your food, you can start composing your 3- to 4-page, double-spaced paper about your consumption and your findings.

First, look for patterns in your personal consumption and try to find explanations for your behavior by considering the extent to which you are exercising “free choice” versus being subject to social structures. For examples of patterns, do your food habits change on the weekends? Do you eat alone or with others? How many times a week do you skip a meal? Do you think what you eat is representative of your current age or have you always eaten this way? Do you eat organic, fair trade, local? What is the ratio between highly processed and unprocessed foods that you consume? Are there any social circumstances that affect your eating habits, such as money, culture, illness, or guests? Why do you eat what you eat, and what relationship do you find between your personal values, social structure, and your food consumption? This should take less than a page.

Second, you need to present your analysis of the origins of what you eat. This should fill the remaining two pages, although charts, figures, and tables can be included and do not count toward the page limit. Discuss your geographic analysis of information on your food map, and the details of the one ingredient you chose, including where the
ingredient was grown and/or processed, possible transportation routes, and your assessment of its social and environmental impacts. Tell about your experience contacting two companies and consider their responses, or lack of responses. What information is difficult to locate? Why? What would it take to find out all of the information about all of the foods you ate? What kinds of research methods would you employ? How long would it take? What does this mean for the possibilities of shifting the food system based on informed consumerism? On this last point, watch and consider the arguments of *the Story of Change video* (about 20 minutes long).

**Come to class prepared**

Be ready to discuss your most important findings in class the day the assignment is due.

**Useful secondary sources**


**Internet resources**

http://whereismymilkfrom.com/

http://www.good.is/post/your-taco-deconstructed/

## Template for Food Diary, one day of data collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Food item</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Where</th>
<th>With whom</th>
<th>Prepared by whom</th>
<th>Ingredients</th>
<th>Geographical origin(s)</th>
<th>Processing plant location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
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<td>Snack</td>
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<tr>
<td>Snack</td>
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<td>Lunch</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dinner</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** an Excel spreadsheet is also available on SmartSite if you want to re-enter your information in it.
Note: for an on-line reference atlas with country names, see: http://www.infoplease.com/atlas/
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Excellent (1 x pts)</th>
<th>Good/adequate (0.8 x pts)</th>
<th>Marginal (0.5 x pts)</th>
<th>No credit (0 x pts)</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explanations for personal behavior (2 pts)</td>
<td>draws many connections between the raw data and larger explanatory framework(s) using at least two examples</td>
<td>draws connections between the raw data and larger explanatory framework(s) using one example</td>
<td>describes some data but does not offer any explanation</td>
<td>no description or explanation is presented</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic analysis, including contacting food companies (4 pts)</td>
<td>describes the geographic origins and transportation of many food items, documents &amp; describes many attempts to find the information</td>
<td>describes the geographic origins and transportation of at least one food and describes a few attempts to find the information</td>
<td>vaguely describes the geographic origins of food or does not describe any attempt to find the information</td>
<td>no analysis or contact attempts are presented</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of social and environmental impact of one purchased food ingredient (5 pts)</td>
<td>effectively documents at least two environmental and two social consequences, and at least two academic sources are cited</td>
<td>documents at least one environmental and one social consequence, and at least one academic source is cited</td>
<td>documents only one connection (environmental or social) and/or does not cite any academic sources</td>
<td>no assessment is presented</td>
<td>______</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food details on table or in spreadsheet (2 pts)</td>
<td>information is presented very clearly and allows for a detailed analysis of geographical origins and personal consumption patterns</td>
<td>information is presented clearly and allows for some analysis of geographical origins and personal consumption patterns</td>
<td>information is presented in a disorganized fashion and is not of sufficient detail for analysis</td>
<td>no information is presented</td>
<td>______</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food map (2 pts)</td>
<td>at least eight commodities or ingredients are portrayed; multiple locations in the food system for growing/production, processing, distribution, and consumption are shown</td>
<td>at least six commodities or ingredients are portrayed, and some data is present on locations in the food system for production, processing, distribution, and consumption</td>
<td>only a few commodities or ingredients are mapped or information is very difficult to understand</td>
<td>no map is presented</td>
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</tbody>
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Total (of 15): ______