

Geography 297, Spring 2015 (draft)
Geographies of Sustainability and Food

Instructor: Dr. Karl Zimmerer

Class Meeting: Monday, 4:30-6:30, plus two half-day field trips

Office Hours: Wednesday, 1:30-3:30 (Room 309)

Note: This course is the partial pilot of a new NSF-funded course on earth system science and food being developed through Penn State; SUNY-Bingham; Colorado-Mesa; and Carleton College. It will be offered regularly in subsequent years. For enrollment information contact Ms. Jodi Vender in the Geography Department (jvender@psu.edu).

List of Topics

Week 1 – Course Overview: Geographic integration of foodways and paths to sustainability

Week 2 – Basic Ingredients in Space and Time: Global food plants and animals, climate, water, nutrients

Week 3 – Social-Ecological Interactions: The multi-scale webs of food and farming

Week 4 – Food in Local and Global Cultures and Society (paper proposals due and discussed)

Week 5 – Geographies of Food Systems: Surplus and scarcity (exam 1)

Week 6 – Social-Ecological Insights: Resilience, adaptive capacity, and vulnerability issues (RACV) (field trip-1; Saturday, half-day)

Week 7 – Lessons from the Past: Food RACV over 8,000 years

Week 8 – Global Climate Change and Food RACV (5-6 page draft of paper due and discussed)

Week 9 – Health, Diet, and Nutrition

Week 10 – Toward Holistic Food Movements: Eating and stewardship

Week 11 – Food and Wildlife (exam 2)

Week 12 – Local Food Issues (field trip-2; Saturday, half-day)

Week 13 – Presentations-Discussions of Individual and Group Projects

Week 14 – Presentations-Discussions of Individual and Group Projects

Week 15 – Concluding Activities

Course Description:

Food and agriculture are examined through geographic integration and an emphasis on active learning. Issues in the course include human-biogeophysical systems; resources; nutrition-health, and social-ecological sustainability and resilience. The course takes a holistic, geographic view of food as an integral part of human ecosystems and landscapes. Through geographic integration it encourages students to place themselves actively in the center of understanding current food issues from the local to global scales. The course engages with *both* nature- *and* human-based ways of understanding food and its relations to health, the environment and land use. It places emphasis on current opportunities and challenges involving personal choices, policy, and management, ranging from health and sustainability to food security and sovereignty. The course uses a geographic and interdisciplinary approach throughout to examine the ongoing dynamics, future trajectories, and past legacies of food and sustainability. A moderate cost may be required for the field trips.

Requirements of the Course:

- 1) Participate in weekly meetings and the discussions and presentation of readings. Readings are moderate. Required 2 chapters or journal articles are read closely each week. Sign-up for reading presentations in-class in Week 1---top three choices. Each presentation requires a 2-page written summary with questions due Monday morning of the same week. (20% of grade)
- 2) Preparation and presentation of individual papers that include (a) a paper proposal of 2 pages (due wk 4); (b) a draft of the paper (due wk 8); (c) a discussion copy of the near-final paper (due wk 13/14); and (d) one course research paper, due Wk 15. Paper text (minus end material) should be approximately 10 pages and is graded on the basis of themes and ideas of course. (35% of grade)
- 3) Two in-class exams (1 hr each). Short answer and essay questions. (30% of grade)
- 4) Participation in two half-day field trips and short reports. (15% of grade)