

## **Sociology 4117: FOOD AND SOCIETY**

### **Professor Jill Harrison**

Office: 404 Fleming Hall  
Office hours: by appointment  
jill.harrison@colorado.edu  
(303) 492-1605

University of Colorado at Boulder  
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Tues/Thurs 9:30-10:45  
in ENVD 120

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course is an introduction to the sociology of food and agriculture. Particular attention will be paid to the theoretical, historical, and empirical issues of agriculture and food in the United States, with additional discussion of the global dimensions of many agrifood networks and issues.

### **COURSE OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES**

Much more than tractors and seeds, agriculture is a key economic sector, a way of life, a source of open space, a tremendous manipulation of natural resources, the source of essential staples and sustenance, and a space in which we interrogate and negotiate our relationship with the natural world as well as with each other. Agriculture has been conceptualized as “the middle landscape”: “that space, which is at once real and imaginary, between the city and the wilderness, wherein the agrarian and/or pastoral ideal resides, and where people live and work with nature” (Vos 2000: 246). Agricultural products provide food that not only nourish us but also play an important role in cultural traditions, identity, politics, and pleasure.

Cutting through these images, however, remain a host of problems that have become increasingly apparent in recent decades – including the economic vulnerability of many farmers, farm worker poverty, food safety crises, risky technologies, animal welfare abuses, and air and water pollution from pesticides, fertilizers, and animal waste. These problems make clear the utmost importance of thoughtful, well-informed, and interdisciplinary analysis of agrifood networks, associated dilemmas, and their potential solutions.

This course is a sociological exploration of agriculture and food networks from three distinct but interrelated vantage points: changes in the structure and dynamics of agrifood networks, historical and current social movement responses to social and ecological agrifood problems, and shifting trends in academic analysis of agrifood networks and politics. Throughout the course, we will examine the major structural forces that sociologists identify as shaping agrifood networks, paying particular attention to the associated consequences for the environment and social justice. We will also critically interrogate the struggles, accomplishments, and limitations of different efforts to address social and ecological problems in agriculture and to drive it in a more sustainable and/or socially just direction.

The problems we will confront throughout this course are complex and daunting, defying simple, ‘silver bullet’ solutions. Students should be prepared to grapple with, struggle with, consider, and deliberate multiple and often conflicting perspectives about the causes of serious agrifood problems, as well as equally varied (and inconclusive) debates about how these problems should be solved. Students should understand that I am more concerned with posing difficult questions (and showing why they matter) than with offering definitive answers. My primary goal is to help students generally develop their critical thinking skills and to be more compassionate and engaged citizens.

## REQUIRED READINGS

The following books are REQUIRED for all students and can be purchased from the campus bookstore:

Michael Mayerfeld Bell. 2004. *Farming for Us All: Practical Agriculture and the Cultivation of Sustainability*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Michael Pollan. 2006. *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. New York: Penguin Books.

All other readings, some lecture materials, and other key information are listed in this syllabus and are available through Desire2Learn (D2L). Please note that I will periodically assign additional short readings and make other small changes to the syllabus. You should log on to D2L and check your email regularly (i.e., at least several times per week) to stay informed of changes to the schedule and new materials.

## ASSIGNMENTS

Your final grade for this course will be based on the following requirements (1000 points total):

### 1. **Participation** (100 points)

This course requires active participation. You need not always have something to say, but your consistent and informed participation in class is a course requirement. To get full credit for your participation, you must attend regularly, show up on time, be prepared to discuss required readings, and participate regularly in class discussions, small group discussions, and/or office hours. Students who participate only occasionally *or* are often absent or late will receive 75 points. Students who participate only occasionally *and* are often absent or late will receive 50 points. Students who rarely attend class will receive fewer than 50 points, to be determined on a case-by-case basis.

### 2. **Reading Responses** (50 points total)

Every week, I will post reading questions on D2L to help guide you through the readings. On certain dates (those marked with "Reading response" on p. 8 of the syllabus), you have the opportunity to submit a reading response that addresses the reading questions posted about one or more of that day's readings (as indicated). These will help you prepare for class discussions on those dates, and they will help me gauge your comprehension of those readings. *You can submit up to five reading responses during the semester; each is worth a maximum of 10 points.*

Your reading response must demonstrate meaningful engagement with the reading(s) and the reading questions. Your responses must be less than one page in length, professionally composed, coherently organized, proofread, typed in 12-point Times New Roman font, and formatted with 1-inch margins. Be sure to put your name at the top of the document. These are due to the appropriate dropbox on D2L as a .pdf, .doc, or .docx file on the dates listed before the start of class. (Note: Do not copy and paste your essay into the 'comments' box in D2L; rather, you must upload the document.)

For each reading response, you will earn full credit for a response that demonstrates a "high" level of engagement with the reading(s) and the assignment prompt(s) and meets the assignment guidelines; half credit for a response that demonstrates a "medium" level of engagement with the reading(s) and the assignment prompt(s) and/or incompletely meets the assignment guidelines; or zero credit for a response that demonstrates little or no engagement with the reading and the assignment prompt(s).

*Late policy for reading responses:* I will only accept late reading responses for *documented* cases of illness, injury, family emergency, etc.

### 3. **Essays** (450 points total)

This semester, you are being assigned five essays. I have designed the assignments to get you to engage with particular course concepts and readings and to be ready to discuss them together in class. Each assignment poses several questions relating to a required reading, film, or course concept, and instructs you to write an essay in response to the prompts. The number of points you receive for each essay depends on how accurately and how meaningfully you address the specific questions/tasks for each assignment, and the degree to which you adhere to the assignment guidelines. You will not be judged on how well you adhere to what you believe my point of view is.

Assignment guidelines: Unless otherwise indicated, essays must be 2-4 double spaced pages, professionally composed, coherently organized, proofread, typed in 12-point Times New Roman font, and formatted with 1-inch margins and page numbers. Be sure to put your name at the top of the document. If you decide to use direct quotations from the readings, do so sparingly, and *do not allow quotations to replace your own statements*. Within your essay, be sure to cite your sources using the following in-text citation format: (lecture 9/2/11), (Smith 2007), or (Smith 2007, p. 1). You do not need an end-of-text references list (bibliography) unless you reference a source not assigned for this course. You **must** submit each essay to the appropriate dropbox on D2L by the date and time listed below as a .pdf, .doc, or .docx file; and you must also bring a hard copy to the start of class on the due date. You are welcome to print your essay double-sided. Be sure to staple your essay before you come to class. (D2L notes: Do not copy and paste your essay into the 'comments' box in D2L; rather, you must upload the document. For your own protection, keep documentation of each successful dropbox submission.)

*Late policy for essays:* Both the hard copy and the D2L copy must be submitted on time to be considered on time. If you submit the hard copy of your paper after class, I will consider it late. Your submission to D2L must be submitted in the correct file format and by the due date and time to be considered submitted "on time". It is your responsibility to make sure that your essay has been successfully uploaded to D2L and in an acceptable file format (.pdf, .doc, or .docx). If the hard copy is submitted on time but the D2L version is late, or vice versa, your essay will lose 10% of the points. If both the online and hard copies are late, your essay will lose 50% of the points it would have otherwise earned. I will not grade your essay until you submit it to D2L and in hard copy. I will waive a late penalty only for documented cases of illness, injury, family emergency, etc.

- a. Essay #1: Treadmill of production. Due to D2L and in class on September 8. (75 points) After completing the Bell 2009 chapter assigned for Week 2 and attending class on Sept 3, write an essay that addresses the following prompts:
  - i. What is 'the treadmill of production' a theory about? What does it seek to explain?
  - ii. *In your own words*, summarize Bell's main arguments about how the treadmill of production works.
  - iii. Identify a passage from the Striffler 2004 article that illustrates some aspect of the treadmill of production; be sure to explain your reasoning.
  - iv. Think about how society could lessen the problematic effects of the treadmill through policy reform. Identify at least one such reform that seems especially useful to you.
- b. Essay #2: Hired labor issues in the food system. Due to D2L and in class on October 8. (75 points). Watch the film "Food Chains" (available for online streaming through D2L, and the DVD is on reserve at Norlin Library), and then write an essay that responds to the following questions:
  - i. In light of what you have learned this semester, how well does "Food Chains" address hired labor issues in the food system? For example: How adequately does it describe major problems and their root causes?
  - ii. What do you see as the film's main strength? Why?
  - iii. What do you see as the film's main weakness? Why?

In your essay, use course concepts and at least four course readings to support your claims.

- c. Essay #3: Farming culture. Due to D2L and in class on October 29. (75 points) After reading Michael Bell's book, *Farming for Us All*, write an essay that addresses the following questions:
- According to Bell, which dominant cultural structures (norms, beliefs, values, etc.) reinforce unsustainable agriculture, and how do they do so?
  - Explain how the Practical Farmers of Iowa (PFI) (described in Part III of the book) differs from mainstream farming culture (described in Part II of the book). In your essay, be sure to address his distinction between 'monologic' and 'dialogic' social relations (knowledge relations).
  - Briefly reflect upon the dominant cultural structures in your own life. Here are some possible questions you could consider:
    - What types of dominant cultural structures constrain the way you act? How do you feel about them?
    - Bell described how some farmers experience "phenomenological ruptures" that compel or enable them to break free from dominant farming culture. Have you ever experienced a huge change in your own worldview like that? Explain.
- d. Essay #4: Thinking critically about the 'obesity epidemic'. Due to D2L and in class on November 19. (75 points) After doing the readings assigned for 11/19 (Campos et al 2006, Lupton 2013), write an essay that addresses the following questions:
- Identify what you see as each reading's overarching take-home messages.
  - What did you find most surprising about the readings?
  - Before doing these readings, how did you tend to feel and think about obesity? Why do you think you have viewed it in that way? How did these readings challenge your perspective?
- e. Essay #5: Book and film review. Due to D2L and in class on December 8. (150 points) Write an essay that critically evaluates Michael Pollan's bestselling book *The Omnivore's Dilemma* and the film "Fresh" (which is available for online streaming through D2L, and the DVD is on reserve at Norlin Library). As a way of critically evaluating how mainstream readers and viewers learn about the issues we have covered in class this semester, write an essay in which you address the following questions. You must use at least four additional course readings to support your arguments. Your essay may be up to *six pages* in length.
- Strengths: In light of what you have learned this semester, what do you see as the book's main strength and the film's main strength in relation to course content? Why?
  - Weaknesses: In light of what you have learned this semester, what do you see as the book's main weakness and the film's main weakness in relation to course content? Why?
  - Similarities: What do you see as the most striking similarity between the film and book in relation to course content?
  - Differences: What do you see as the most striking difference between the film and book in relation to course content?
  - Neoliberalism: Do you think the book/film are neoliberal, or not neoliberal? Why or why not? Compare the book and film to the alternative food movements we have studied this semester in this regard. Explain your reasoning.

#### 4. **Tests** (2 at 200 points each = 400 points total)

This semester, there will be two in-class tests. Each will include of a combination of multiple-choice and short essay questions. Test #2 focuses on material covered *since* the first test.

Test #1: 10/15 in class

Test #2: 12/10 in class

Note: On the day I return the first test in class, I will collect them from you before you leave the room. If you do not return your test to me before you leave the room, you will earn a zero on that test.

*Make-up policy for tests:* If you miss one of the tests due to a death in your family, a medical emergency, a court date, a religious conflict, or your participation in a university-supported activity in which you are obligated to participate, you must provide me with written documentation of that conflict in order to take the make-up exam. Such documentation must be provided prior to your absence. Or, if the situation is an emergency that prohibits prior notice, you must provide documentation within one week of your absence. I will then allow you to take a make-up exam during the scheduled final exam period (December 15, from 1:30-4:00pm). The make-up final exam will be an essay exam that will test your comprehensive understanding of *all* course material.

## GRADES

*In sum, your final grade will be based on the following:*

100 points	Participation
50 points	Reading responses
450 points	Essays
400 points	Tests
<u>1000 points total</u>	

Your total points earned will correspond to the following final letter grades:

930-1000	A	800-829	B-	670-699	D+
900-929	A-	770-799	C+	630-669	D
870-899	B+	730-769	C	600-629	D-
830-869	B	700-729	C-	0-599	F

## OTHER COURSE POLICIES

Preparation: I expect each student to come to class with the reading done on the day it is listed on the syllabus. “Doing the readings” well means carefully reading, taking notes about the main arguments and evidence, jotting down your questions, and re-reading. Please bring the reading materials and your notes with you to class and be prepared to ask questions or make comments that occurred to you while doing the readings. I expect you to actively engage with the readings in class, so preparation is essential. You are expected to spend an average of six hours per week preparing for this course (outside of our time together in the classroom).

Attendance: To do well in this course, you will need to regularly attend class. When you are absent, you are responsible for taking the initiative to find out what you missed. You should obtain notes from a fellow classmate; you may then come ask me about updates to the syllabus and clarifications on specific points that you do not understand. I will not post or otherwise share my slides or lecture notes.

Punctuality: It is very important that you arrive to class on time and stay for the entire class, as arriving late and leaving early are disruptive and distracting. Come see me ASAP if you anticipate that you will regularly be late. If you must leave early, sit near the door and slip out quietly.

D2L troubles: It is your responsibility to make sure that you are able to successfully upload your essays to the appropriate dropbox on D2L. Double-check to make sure that each submission actually gets uploaded to D2L, and keep documentation of each successful submission. If you have troubles with D2L, contact the CU IT Service Center at 303-735-4357. Because D2L could have problems, be sure to download your readings ahead of time, and keep copies of your own essays and course readings on a flash drive or other backup device.

Make-up exam: If you miss one of the tests due to a death in your family, a medical emergency, a court date, a religious conflict, or your participation in a university-supported activity in which you are obligated to participate, you must provide me with written documentation of that conflict. Such documentation must be provided prior to your absence. Or, if the situation is an emergency that prohibits prior notice, you must provide documentation within one week of your absence. I will then allow you to take a make-up exam during the scheduled final exam period. The make-up final exam will be an essay exam that will test your comprehensive understanding of *all* course material. I will not allow make-up exams for any other reason.

Grades: I will grade your work very carefully and try to be as transparent as possible about my grading decisions. If you want to discuss the grade you received on one of your essays or exams, you must put your concerns into writing, send it to me, and request an appointment to meet in office hours. If you decide to dispute a grade, I reserve the right to alter the grade as I see fit (i.e., either up *or* down).

Laptops, cell phones, and other electronic communication devices: Because the use of laptops, cell phones, and other such devices distracts both the user and other students, I generally do not allow their use in the classroom and require that they be stored out of sight during class. If I see you checking your cell phone, I will ask you to leave. There are two exceptions to the laptop rule. First: If you believe that you must use a laptop during class, please talk to me privately about this, bring documentation from the appropriate authority (e.g., Disability Services, or your doctor) stating that you need to use a laptop every day, and keep in mind that, if I decide to permit you to use it, you may only do so for taking notes. Second: When we are discussing a particular required reading, and you have it available in electronic form instead of in hard copy, you may use your laptop or other electronic communication device to view the required reading. I will revoke this right if I find that students are abusing this policy.

Classroom behavior: Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards will be subject to discipline. If you fall asleep, text, or chat during class, I will ask you to leave. If I have to do so more than once, I will drop you from the course. Such behaviors are disruptive to me and others around you and send a message of disrespect. Save your conversations for after class, and raise your hand to ask me questions when you need clarification or want to comment on course material.

## UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Disability accommodations: If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that we can figure out how to address your needs. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Their contact information is 303-492-8671 and [dsinfo@colorado.edu](mailto:dsinfo@colorado.edu). If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see Temporary Injuries under Quick Links at Disability Services website (<http://disabilityservices.colorado.edu/>) and discuss your needs with me.

CU-Boulder Honor Code: All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council ([honor@colorado.edu](mailto:honor@colorado.edu); 303-735-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html> and at <http://honorcode.colorado.edu>

Plagiarism is one important aspect of this honor code. All work that you submit for this class must be your own work, and you are required to quote and cite all references properly. Although this mandate appears straightforward, I am well aware of how murky the task can be. Wherever you are unsure about quoting and citing, please come see me to figure out the best strategy. If you want to cite an idea I proposed in lecture, cite it accordingly with an in-text citation such as (lecture 1/31/13). If you want to cite a direct quote from a Powerpoint slide, put it in quotes.

Discrimination and harassment: The University of Colorado Boulder (CU-Boulder) is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment. The University of Colorado does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status in admission and access to, and treatment and employment in, its educational programs and activities. (Regent Law, Article 10, amended 11/8/2001). CU-Boulder will not tolerate acts of discrimination or harassment based upon Protected Classes or related retaliation against or by any employee or student. For purposes of this CU-Boulder policy, "Protected Classes" refers to race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or veteran status. Individuals who believe they have been discriminated against should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Student Conduct (OSC) at 303-492-5550. Information about the ODH, the above referenced policies, and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at <http://hr.colorado.edu/dh/>

Respectful classroom environment: Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, color, culture, religion, creed, politics, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and gender expression, age, disability, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

Observance of religious holidays: Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled examinations, assignments, or required attendance. In this class, I will make every effort to accommodate all students who have such conflicts with scheduled examinations, assignments, or attending class; students must notify me of such absences by the second week of the semester.

**SCHEDULE OF TOPICS, REQUIRED READINGS, AND ASSIGNMENTS**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Written Work</b>
1	8/25	Introduction to Sociology of Agrifood Systems	Mills 1959, Carolan 2012 (pp. 1-8)	
	8/27	Farm Structural Change and the Industrial Ideal	Carolan 2011 (pp. 115-139), Fitzgerald 2003	
2	9/1	Corporate Consolidation Among Off-Farm Actors	Heffernan 1998, Philpott 2013a, Philpott 2013b, Fishman 2003	
	9/3	The Treadmill of Production: Capitalism at Work	Bell 2009, Striffler 2004	
3	9/8	Farm and Food Policy	MacDonald et al 2006, USDA 2009, Philpott 2008	Essay #1 due
	9/10		Carolan 2011 (pp. 190-222)	
4	9/15	Agricultural Science	Dowie 2001, Borlaug 2000, Food First 2006	Reading response
	9/17		Hightower 1973, Johnson 2013, and <i>skim</i> Gliessman 2007	
5	9/22	Neoliberalism and Livelihoods in the Global South	Moseley et al. 2010	
	9/24		Fernandez-Kelly and Massey 2007, Rosset 2003	Reading response
6	9/29	Food System Workers and Labor Policy	The Economist 2010, Marosi and Bartletti 2014, Liu and Apollon 2011	
	10/1	Immigration Enforcement and U.S. Farmworkers	Harrison and Lloyd 2012	Reading response
7	10/6	Worker Justice Activism	Majka and Majka 2000	
	10/8	Immigration Policy Reform and Advocacy	Food Chains 2014 (film), other readings TBA	Essay #2 due
8	10/13	The Agrarian Imaginary and Farmworker Invisibility	Berry 2001	
	10/15	Test #1 in class	[prepare for test]	Test #1 in class
9	10/20	Organic Agrifood Systems	Pollan book Ch. 9, Hoffman 2013	
	10/22		Getz et al 2008, Guthman 2004	Reading response
10	10/27	Farming Culture and Farmer Networks	Bell book: 1-147	
	10/29		Bell book: 151-250	Essay #3 due
11	11/3	Food System Localization	Kloppenburger et al 1996, Locavores website	
	11/5		Born and Purcell 2006, Guthman 2008	Reading response
12	11/10	Environmental Justice Activism	Harrison 2011	
	11/12		Clarren 2008	
13	11/17	Food Culture and Diet Reformism	Szabo 2011, Bobrow-Strain 2012	Reading response
	11/19		Campos et al 2006, Lupton 2013	Essay #4 due
	<i>Week of Nov 23rd</i>	<i>FALL BREAK</i> [no class]	<i>Start reading Pollan book...</i>	
14	12/1	Hunger and Food Justice	Goode 2015, Poppendieck 2000	Reading response
	12/3		Myers and Sbicca 2015	
15	12/8	Telling Agrifood Stories to Mainstream Audiences	Pollan book	Essay #5 due
	12/10	Test #2 in class	[prepare for test]	Test #2 in class



**FULL REFERENCES FOR REQUIRED ARTICLES, CHAPTERS, AND WEBSITES**

- C. Wright Mills. [1959]. The sociological imagination. Reprinted in *The Meaning of Sociology*.
- Michael Carolan. 2012. Selection from *The Sociology of Food and Agriculture*. London: Earthscan, 1-8.
- Michael Carolan. 2011. Selection from *The Real Cost of Cheap Food*. London: Earthscan, 115-139.
- Deborah Fitzgerald. 2003. The industrial ideal in American agriculture. From *Every Farm a Factory: The Industrial Ideal in American Agriculture*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 10-32.
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- Michael Mayerfeld Bell. 2009. Selection from *An Invitation to Environmental Sociology*. Los Angeles: Pine Forge Press, 58-67.
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- Peter Rosset. 2003. Food sovereignty: Global rallying cry of farmer movements. Food First Backgrounder 9 (4). <http://foodfirst.org/food-sovereignty-global-rallying-cry-of-farmer-movements/>
- The Economist. 2010. Fields of tears. December 16. <http://www.economist.com/node/17722932>
- Richard Marosi and Don Bartletti. 2014. Product of Mexico, Part I: Hardship on Mexico's farms, a bounty for U.S. tables. Los Angeles Times. Article, photos, and video. <http://graphics.latimes.com/product-of-mexico-camps/>
- Yvonne Yen Liu and Dominique Apollon. 2011. The color of food. Applied Research Center.

- Jill Lindsey Harrison and Sarah E. Lloyd. 2012. Illegality at work: Deportability and the productive new era of immigration enforcement. *Antipode* 44(2): 365-385.
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