



# World Agriculture and Food Systems

Geo 3445G

Winter 2015

**times & location:** Wednesdays 12:30-2:30 pm (SSC 3026) – LECTURE

Thursdays 12:30-1:30 pm (UCC 59) – LECTURE & TUTORIAL (see pg. 4)

**instructor:** Dr. Tony Weis

**office:** SSC 2314

**office hours:** Wednesdays 2.30-3.30, or by appointment

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**phone:** 519-661-2111 x. 87472

**prerequisites:** Third or fourth year status at the University. Two full courses in Geography or equivalent; enrollment in the Minor in Environment and Culture; or special permission.

## Overview

Food starkly reflects global inequalities: nearly 1 billion people are chronically hungry or food insecure (many of them farmers), while roughly 2 billion people are obese or overweight. Small farm livelihoods are becoming ever more precarious. The vast majority of the world's farming population lives in the Global South, constrained by marginal land access, limited capital and technology, and almost no state support, while global food markets are dominated by large-scale, industrialized agriculture, much of which is heavily subsidized.

This course focuses on key dynamics and institutions which have shaped agriculture and food systems, and how these have been increasingly industrialized and globalized over time, in very uneven ways. The first half of the course focuses primarily on changing social relations with respect to agriculture and food, giving particular attention to the vulnerability of small producers on one side, and the increasing control of transnational corporations over production, processing, marketing, and consumption patterns on the other. The second half of the course focuses centrally on the environmental impacts of agriculture and food systems and the precarious biophysical conditions of the current trajectory; in short, why the cheap food we take for granted is not so cheap. The ultimate aim is to provide a framework for understanding both contemporary problems and possibilities, and struggles to build more socially just and sustainable systems.

## Objectives

In general, this course seeks to:

- promote critical thinking with respect to debates, conflicts, and policy issues surrounding agriculture, development, and sustainability
- enhance analytical and communication skills
- help build a theoretical basis for further studies in food and agrarian studies, political ecology, and environmental change
- inspire ongoing thinking about your relationship to food, farmers, land, and animals.

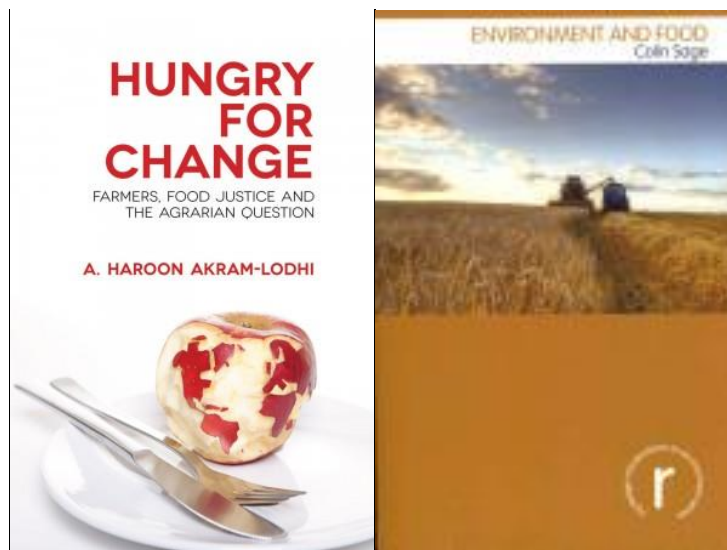
## Format

This course is based upon lectures, readings, 6 seminars and memos, a major research paper, and concludes with an integrative final exam. We will work our way through 2 books, one focused on agrarian political economy and the other on the environmental impacts of food systems, written by leading authors in both fields. The course will follow the thematic and reading outline on page 4 (subject to some flexibility). A basic expectation of the course is that you keep up with the assigned weekly readings, and come to tutorials with prepared notes and questions. This will also benefit you in preparing for the assignment and the final exam.

## Course Materials

There are 2 required texts:

- Akram-Lodhi, H. (2013): *Hungry for Change: Farmers, Food Justice, and the Agrarian Question*. Halifax: Fernwood.
- Sage, C. (2012): *Environment and Food*. New York: Routledge.



## Evaluation

<u>Seminar attendance, participation, and memos</u>	<u>15%</u>
<u>Research paper</u>	<u>50%</u>
• Proposal (10%) (due: <b>February 12</b> )	
• Paper (40%) (due: <b>March 31</b> )	
<u>Final exam</u>	<u>35%</u>
• in exam period: <b>April 11-30</b>	
• a combination of multiple choice, short paragraph and essay questions, covering the course lectures and readings.	

### **Memos and seminar participation (15%)**

To encourage you to keep up with the assigned readings, you are expected to come to the 6 tutorials with a short point-form summary of the key points and questions you identify (½–1 page) from the week's assigned readings. These summaries will be collected after the tutorial. In addition to making sure you keep up with assigned readings, this will help you prepare for the assignment and final exam.

### **Research paper (50%)**

The **proposal (due Thursday, February 12)** will indicate a preliminary outline, lines of exploration, and an annotated bibliography of at least 5 academic sources (the summary of each source can be brief, and should summarize the value of the particular book or article to the subject of the paper). This is to get you moving on the topic, give you constructive feedback at an early stage, and help you focus your topic if need be (you are also encouraged to discuss your proposed topic prior to the initial proposal). The proposal counts for 10 of the 50% total assignment grade.

The **final paper (due April Wednesday, 1)** will be evaluated based on the quality of the introduction, clarity of the thesis, support for the argument, analysis, overall style (organization, grammar, and concision of writing), and conclusions. The final paper counts for 40 of the 50% total assignment grade. *Length: no more than 2500 words for individual, 4500 words for pairs (not counting references).* DETAILS ON PAGES 6-7.

### **Final Exam (35%)**

The final exam combines multiple choice, short paragraph questions, and an essay questions, covering the content of both course lectures and readings. The intent is to give you a chance to demonstrate your understanding of the key concepts and theories. There will be some choice, and more detailed instructions will be given as the exams approach. If you fail to write the exam on the scheduled date and time, you will be given zero, unless you communicate with me *prior* to the exam, in which case you will require a note from your physician (see note on special examination policy below).

## Thematic and Reading Schedule

Classes	TOPICS	Readings
<b>CRITICAL AGRARIAN STUDIES</b>		
Jan. 7	<i>Course Introduction</i>	Akram-Lodhi Preface + Ch. 1
Jan. 8	<i>The big picture: Global food and agrarian inequalities</i>	
Jan. 14	<i>Market imperatives, dispossession, and the 'agrarian question'</i>	Akram-Lodhi Ch. 2-3
Jan. 15		
Jan. 21	<i>Peasant incorporation, resistance, and technological change</i>	
Jan. 22	<b>Tutorial #1</b>	Akram-Lodhi Ch. 4-5
Jan. 28	<i>The uneven playing field of global market integration</i>	
Jan. 29	<b>Tutorial #2</b>	Akram-Lodhi Ch. 6
Feb. 4	<i>The agrarian question of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and food sovereignty</i>	
Feb. 5	<b>Tutorial #3</b>	Akram-Lodhi Ch. 7-8
Feb. 11	<i>Alternatives and contemporary social struggles</i>	
Feb. 12	<b>Paper proposal – Feb. 12 (10%)</b>	Akram-Lodhi Ch. 9
Feb. 16- 20	<b>*CONFERENCE WEEK*</b>	
<b>AGRICULTURE, FOOD, &amp; ENVIRONMENT</b>		
Feb. 25	<i>Conceptualizing modern agro-food systems</i>	Sage Ch. 1-2
Feb. 26		
Mar. 4	<i>Environmental dimensions of agro-food systems</i>	
Mar. 5	<b>Tutorial #4</b>	Sage Ch. 3
Mar. 11	<i>Intensifying environmental challenges: agriculture</i>	
Mar. 12	<b>Tutorial #5</b>	Sage Ch. 4
Mar. 18	<i>Intensifying environmental challenges: food consumption</i>	
Mar. 19	<b>Tutorial #6</b>	Sage Ch. 5
Mar. 25	<i>Global food security in a world of 9+ billion</i>	Sage Ch. 6
Mar. 26		
Apr. 1	<i>Dimensions of sustainable food systems</i>	
Apr. 2	<b>Final paper due – Wed. April 1 (40%)</b>	Sage Ch. 7
Apr. 8	<i>Conclusions</i>	Sage Ch. 8
Apr. 11-30	<b>FINAL EXAM (35%)</b>	

**NOTE: schedule subject to some flexibility**

April 9-10 study days

## **Additional Information**

### **Support Services**

- Registrarial Services: <http://www3.registrar.uwo.ca/index.cfm>
- Social Science Academic Counselling: <http://www.counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/>
- Student Development Services: <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

### **Geography Counselling**

- Angelica Lucaci: [alucaci@uwo.ca](mailto:alucaci@uwo.ca)

### **Mental Health**

If you or someone you know is experiencing distress, there are several resources here at Western to assist you. Please visit the site below for more information on mental health resources:

<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/>.

### **Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness:**

- [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf)
- for a downloadable Student Medical Certificate (SMC) see <https://studentservices.uwo.ca> under the Medical Documentation heading.

### **Statement on Use of Electronic Devices**

No electronic devices will be allowed during tests and examinations.

### **Special Examinations**

A special examination is any examination other than the regularly scheduled exam. Special exams will be allowed only on receipt of medical documentation verifying a serious illness that kept the student from writing the exam as originally scheduled. Such documentation is strictly confidential and kept in the student's file. In the case of missing a final exam for documented medical reasons, a special exam will be set within 30 days. Special exams will not be granted for occasions such as employment interviews, weddings, bar mitzvahs, family reunions, vacations, misreading an exam timetable, or oversleeping. Neither will special exams be granted in order to facilitate transportation arrangements, such as booking flights for home for holidays. It is the policy to discourage informal arrangements by faculty which circumvent this regulation.

### **Western's Commitment to Accessibility**

The University of Western Ontario is committed to achieving barrier free accessibility for persons studying, visiting and working at Western. Please contact Dr. Weis as soon as possible if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you, and to facilitate a positive learning environment. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.

### **Prerequisite checking: your responsibility**

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

## RESEARCH PAPER

This is a slide we will look at both the beginning and the end of the course, which indicates a spectrum of contemporary struggles to reorganize agriculture and food systems – some are closely interrelated, while some have little bearing on one another. Your task for this paper is to identify one struggle/movement (or at most 2, if they are either closely interrelated or in some degree of tension with one another) and pursue a research paper that analyzes it in relation to some aspect of the course material.



### Each paper should:

- start by assessing the nature of the problem that the movement is confronting
- develop an argument that relates to the strengths, weaknesses, limitations, or tensions in the movement (this can involve considering how it relates to other agrarian/food movements)
- connect your discussion to relevant issues raised in class lectures and readings
- draw on *at least* 10 academic sources. Academic sources are refereed journal articles, book chapters, or books – not non-scholarly short articles found on the Internet.

This project can be approached individually or in pairs. If you choose to work in pairs, obviously the expectations are obviously higher, in terms of word length (2500 vs. 4500 words) and the

level of research. Grades will be given evenly to group partners, so it is your responsibility to ensure that it is a shared and even endeavour.

### **Style Guidelines**

Format Use 12 pt. font, 1 inch margins, number pages, footnotes or endnotes where appropriate, and a list of references (choose a style, and be consistent). Have a title page with the title, your name and student number, and the date. Staple your paper in the top left corner (no fancy binders). Respect the guidelines for the assignment word length.

Referencing Be sure to reference all quotes, paraphrased ideas and arguments, and data drawn from other sources, using scientific in-text referencing of author and date (Garrett 2003), giving page numbers only when you use direct quotations (Garrett 2003:34-35). Direct quotations can be useful, but use them with care, and do not overuse. A complete set of references of all in-text references (and nothing not referenced) should be listed alphabetically at the end in a bibliography. See the UWO Geography website for instructions on essays and referencing.

### **Some General Tips for Writing a Successful Paper**

The success of a research paper depends upon having a good, unambiguous thesis statement – that is, the explicit argument that will guide your paper, proposing an explanation for the problem in question. Without a strong thesis, papers tend to read like mere collections of information, when the point is to critically interpret it – to demonstrate how particular evidence explains the issues at hand. You will need to contextualize the conservation and development issues in question but don't let the description run away with your paper; a good test for whether to include information or not is to ask: "does this have relevance to my thesis?"

It is important to begin with a strong introduction that clearly states your thesis, catches the reader's attention, telling them why the subject at hand is important, and outlines the organization that is to follow. Making an outline can be very helpful before you start writing, framing it by your thesis and listing the key ideas for and against. Style and presentation are important. The body of the paper should be well organized, developing arguments with examples, quotations, data, and references, and providing transitions between sections. Avoid vague and unsubstantiated generalizations – they greatly weaken the persuasiveness of your argument. Any use of maps, graphs, and tables should be clear and should serve an explanatory purpose, and must be integrated into the text and referred to. Mechanics, punctuation, and spelling do weigh in the overall impression of the paper. End with a clear conclusion that concisely and unambiguously summarizes the major arguments and points and re-iterates the significance of the issue. It should *not* introduce new ideas or data.

There is no substitute for hard work, and good writing will typically involve multiple drafts, so leave yourself time to edit and revisit your work (essays written at the last minute rarely read well).

### **Statement on Academic Offences**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between Western and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Any work that is found to have been plagiarized will receive a grade of **zero**.

### **Late Policy**

Deductions of 10% of grade per day will begin immediately after the class in which it is due ends. Term papers will not be accepted if they are more than 7 days late. Extensions will only be granted if there is documented evidence of exceptional circumstances.