

## **GEOG 3445F: Global Agriculture and Food Systems**

### **Course Outline: Section 001 – Fall 2019**

#### **1. Course Information**

##### 1.1. Classroom Location:

Tuesdays, 12:30-2:30 pm, room: UC-1105  
Wednesdays, 1:30-2:30 pm, room: UCC-59

##### 1.2. Contact Information:

Instructor: Dr. Tony Weis  
Office: SSC 1403  
Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:30-3:30 pm or by appointment  
Phone: 661-2111 x. 87472  
Email: [tony.weis@uwo.ca](mailto:tony.weis@uwo.ca)

#### **2. Calendar Description**

##### 2.1. Course Description

Food is a basic human need and agriculture is one of the most fundamental ways that societies interact with their habitats. This course examines the diversity of world agriculture and the rise of a dominant industrial system, focusing on both the social and environmental dimensions of agrarian change and their interrelation.

3 lecture hours, 0.5 course

Prerequisite(s): Third or fourth year status at the University

##### 2.2. Senate Regulations

Senate Regulations state, “unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you will 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.”

#### **3. Course Readings**

All expected readings are available on OWL, grouped by unit folders.

Some of the additional readings for each unit (for the longer reflection) are available on OWL, some are held on reserve at Weldon, and some will require you locating or purchasing them.

## Course Objectives and Format

Agriculture and food starkly reflect global inequalities: nearly 1 billion people are chronically hungry or food insecure, many of them small farmers, while roughly 2 billion people are obese or overweight. World markets in food products and agricultural inputs are increasingly dominated by a small number of very large transnational corporations, and world food security has become ever more tied to industrialized agriculture, much of which is heavily subsidized and entails large resource budgets and pollution loads. Meanwhile, 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. Almost everywhere, small farm livelihoods are becoming more and more precarious.

This course focuses on key dynamics shaping contemporary agriculture and food systems, which have increasingly global dimensions that play out in very uneven ways and pose momentous environmental questions. The first half of the course focuses on the increasing control of transnational corporations over food retailing, distribution, processing, and packaging, as well as agricultural inputs and other aspects of farm production. 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 to contextualize struggles to build more socially just and sustainable agro-food systems.

The format is 3 lecture hours per week. You are expected to regularly attend class and keep up with assigned unit readings. I will follow the schedule closely, but it is subject to slight flexibility with notice (i.e. some units might run slightly longer or shorter). Evaluation is based on a series of short written assignments, a mid-term test, and a final exam.

## 4. Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students should:

- have advanced their critical reading, listening, and analytic skills;
- have advanced their writing skills, with a particular focus on synthesizing information and clear and concise articulation of ideas;
- be able to understand and explain major social and ecological dynamics of agrarian and dietary change;
- be able to critically engage with debates, conflicts, and policy issues surrounding agriculture and food systems;
- have a conceptual basis for further studies in subjects relating to agriculture and food;
- be challenged to think about food choices, agrarian change, and 'food movements' in an ongoing way.

## 5. Schedule

Date	UNIT
Sept. 10	Introduction: the big picture of global agriculture and food
Sept. 11	Agroecosystems and peasants in the <i>longue durée</i>
Sept. 17-18	some key subjects: domestication and dispersion; biophysical organizing imperatives; diversity of peasantries; divergent colonial transformations between temperate and tropical regions
Sept. 24-25	
Oct. 1-2	Technological change, global market integration, and rising corporate power
Oct. 8-9	some key subjects: uneven industrialization; scale pressures and the polarization of farming; the Green Revolution; neoliberal prescriptions (SAPs and multilateral rules-making); the concentration power and value in agriculture ('upstream' and 'downstream' from farms)
Oct. 15-16	
Oct. 22	<b>Mid-term test</b>
Oct. 23	Environmental dimensions of modern agro-food systems
Oct. 29-30	some key subjects: biophysical contradictions and overrides; resource budgets and pollution loads of industrial monocultures and livestock production; accelerating contradictions (i.e. intensifying challenges)
Nov. 5-6	<b>Fall reading break (week of Nov. 4-8)</b>
Nov. 12-13	
Nov. 19-20	Contemporary agro-food movements: struggles for more equitable and sustainable agro-food systems
Nov. 26-27	
Dec. 3-4	some key subjects: food sovereignty and Via Campesina; agroecology; 'locavores' and other food movements; nexus of environment and health concerns; the right to food

December 6 and 7: Study days (a question-driven review session will be organized on one of the study days)

## 6. Evaluation

Evaluation Components	% of Course Grade	Assignment Schedule
3 short summary & reflection papers (x 10% each)	30%	all are due 1 week after the unit concludes
1 longer summary & reflection paper	20%	
Mid-term test	20%	October 22
Final exam	30%	In exam period: Dec. 8-19

### **Midterm test (20%) and Final Exam (30%)**

The midterm test is a combination of multiple choice, short answer, and paragraph questions, and the final exam combines multiple choice, short answers, and an essay question. Students are responsible for material covered in the lectures as well as the assigned readings. More detailed instructions will be given in advance of both mid-term and final.

### **Unit summary and reflection papers (50%)**

#### **SHORT – 3 x 10% each = 30%**

For 3 of the 4 units, you are expected to prepare a short summary and reflection based on the course lectures and expected readings. Each should be roughly 750 words, or 3 double-spaced pages.

The short papers have 2 basic parts:

- 1) summarize at least 3 major subjects covered in the unit and identify why they are important, drawing upon material from *both* lectures and expected readings.
- 2) reflect on how 1 or more of the subjects covered in the unit (which don't need to be the same ones discussed in the first section) challenge you to think about some of the food you are consuming more critically (i.e. with attention to social and/or environmental considerations you did not previously think about). This discussion can be focused on as little as one item and might be assisted if you keep a running food diary throughout the course (~1 page).

#### **LONG – 1 x 20%**

For 1 of the 4 units, you are expected to prepare a slightly longer summary and reflection based on the course lectures, expected readings, and some additional reading on a subject that you are especially interested in – at least one book or multiple journal articles. A number of suggestions are provided and some are posted on OWL, some are held on reserve at Weldon, and some you could purchase or order through the library system. You can also identify and pursue other readings beyond those listed, but to do so it is a good idea to run these by me beforehand to make sure they relate to the material in the unit. This should be roughly 1250 words, or 5 double-spaced pages.

The longer response has 3 basic parts:

- 1) summarize at least 2 major subjects covered in the unit and identify why they are important, drawing upon material from lectures and expected readings (~ 1½ pages)
- 2) discuss at least 3 major subjects covered in the additional reading(s) you have pursued, why they are important, and how they have deepened your understanding of material covered in the unit (~2 pages).

- 3) reflect on how 1 or more of the subjects covered in the unit (which don't need to be the same ones discussed in the first section) challenge you to think about an agricultural landscape you have observed recently more critically (i.e. with attention to social and/or environmental considerations you did not previously think about) (~1½ pages).

For both cases, do not copy lines from PowerPoints. You can use direct quotations from the readings occasionally (when effectively used, this can help indicate your grasp of the readings) but keep them to a minimum and be sure to cite them. Most of the writing should be *in your own words* (~2 pages).

These assignments are designed to ensure you are engaging with the course material on an ongoing basis, and should also help in preparing for the midterm test and final exam. The challenge is for you to distil key issues, arguments, and debates covered in each unit, and to write with concision. Bullet points are not acceptable.

A physical copy of both short and long responses is due in class the week following the conclusion of each unit and should also be submitted through OWL.

These assignments should not accumulate. Late assignments will receive a 20% reduction for every week they are overdue up to a maximum of 50%.

## 7. Requesting Academic Consideration

Students who experience an extenuating circumstance (illness, injury, or other extenuating circumstance) sufficiently significant to temporarily render them unable to meet academic requirements may submit a request for academic consideration through the following routes:

- (i) Submitting a Self-Reported Absence form provided that the conditions for submission are met;
- (ii) For medical absences, submitting a Student Medical Certificate (SMC) signed by a licensed medical or mental health practitioner in order to be eligible for Academic Consideration; or
- (iii) For non-medical absences, submitting appropriate documentation (e.g., obituary, police report, accident report, court order, etc.) to Academic Counselling in their Faculty of registration in order to be eligible for academic consideration. Students are encouraged to contact their Academic Counselling unit to clarify what documentation is appropriate.

Students seeking academic consideration:

- are advised to consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying handing in work;
- are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific circumstances, recognizing that minor ailments (upset stomach) or upsets (argument with a friend) are not normally an appropriate basis for a self-reported absence;

- **must communicate with their instructors no later than 24 hours** after the end of the period covered by either the self-reported absence or SMC, or immediately upon their return following a documented absence.

Academic consideration is not normally intended for the following circumstances:

- **Students who require academic accommodation based on an ongoing physical or mental illness (recurring or chronic) or an existing disability.** Students with an ongoing physical illness or mental disorder (recurring or chronic) or an existing disability are responsible, in consultation with their doctors or other health professionals, to determine if they are capable of pursuing their studies and, if so, with what accommodations. Students are expected to seek and arrange reasonable accommodations with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) as soon as possible in accordance with the [Policy on Academic Accommodation for Students with Disability](#). Students with pre-existing accessibility plans arranged through SAS may not need to provide additional documentation when seeking academic consideration where such request for consideration relates to their disability and where their accessibility plans allow for coursework deferral or deadline extensions.
- **Students who experience high levels of stress related to academic performance** (including completing assignments, taking part in presentations, or writing tests or examinations). Students with academic or exam stress should access supports through [Student Health and Wellness](#) and [Learning Skills Services](#) in order to deal with this stress in a proactive and constructive manner.

**Grades will not be adjusted on the basis of need. It is important to monitor your performance in the course. Remember: *You* are responsible for your grades in this course.**

Please refer to Western's [Policy on Accommodation for Illnesses](#) and the Academic Calendar's section on [Academic Rights and Responsibilities](#).

## 8. Make-up Examinations

Makeups will be granted with approved documentation only. All documentation for missed exams must be provided to the Academic Counselling Office within 48 hours of the scheduled exam, otherwise the instructor will assign a grade of zero.

The format and content of make-ups may differ substantially from the scheduled test or examination.

For Western's Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and a downloadable SMC please refer to the [Academic Handbook](#).

## 9. Use of Electronic Devices

No electronic devices will be allowed during tests and examinations.

## 10. 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.

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 The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

## 11. Western's Commitment to Accessibility

The Department of Geography strives at all times to provide accessibility to all faculty, staff, students and visitors in a way that respects the dignity and independence of people with disabilities.

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 519-661-2147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation. Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website.

More information about Accessibility at Western is available.

## 12. Mental Health

If you or someone you know is experiencing distress, there are several resources here at Western to assist you. Please visit Western's Health and Wellness website for more information on mental health resources.

## 13. Support Services

Western's Support Services  
Student Development Centre

## 14. Important Dates

September 5: Classes resume

September 13: Last day to add a first term half course

October 14: Thanksgiving Holiday – Department Office Closed

**October 22: Geo 3445 mid-term**

November 4 to November 10: Fall Reading Week (No classes; Department Office open)

November 12: Last day to drop a first term half course without penalty

November 30: Last day to drop a full course without penalty

December 5: Classes end

December 6 and 7: Study days

**December 8-19: Examination Period**