

GEOG 3445G: Global Agriculture and Food Systems

Course Outline – Section 001 – Winter 2022

1. Course Information

1.1. Class delivery (and room location if conditions allow):

Asynchronous lectures will be posted on OWL on Tuesdays & Thursdays until at least January 31
If circumstances allow a to return to in person learning in February or March, classes will occur on:

- Tuesdays, 12:30-2:30pm, room: SSC-3014
- Thursdays, 1:30-2:30pm, room: SSC-3014

1.2. Contact Information:

Instructor: Dr. Tony Weis

Office Hours: 2 pm on Fridays at the end of each unit: optional office hours via Zoom (links posted in OWL in the Zoom tab).

Phone: 661-2111 x. 87472

Email: tony.weis@uwo.ca

Teaching Assistant:

Kamaldeen Mohammed (kmoham27@uwo.ca)

2. Calendar 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 credit. No prerequisites.

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

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. Readings

There is no required textbook. Readings for each unit are available for free on OWL in the unit folders (in the Resources tab), along with details of how to access a few documentary films.

The PowerPoint slides that accompany the lectures will subsequently be posted as PDF files, organized by units rather than individual days. The PDF files contain an abundance of additional links to short videos, valuable websites, reports, and news items. In including so many additional active links, I do not expect you to follow everything – my hope is that they might provide a starting point that allow you to dig into subjects you are most interested in a bit further.

4. Format

The course content is organized into 6 units, as outlined below (in *Units and Schedule*), which are based upon lectures and readings. There will be roughly 3 lecture hours per week, either recorded and posted in shorter segments, or in-person if circumstances allow. All PowerPoints will be posted to OWL at pdfs shortly *after* the lecture. The readings for each of the 6 units should take about 3-4 hours in total. The key is to balance your time in a way that allows you to keep up with lecture material and readings on a unit-by-unit basis. The evaluation is based on 2 short written assignments, 1 mid-term test, and a final exam (dates are indicated below).

Google Chrome or Mozilla Firefox are the preferred browsers to optimally use OWL; update your browsers frequently. Students interested in evaluating their internet speed, please click here. Using the right browser is important, especially when using different features integrated with OWL. If you need technical assistance, support can be found on the OWL Help page or by contacting the Western Technology Services Helpdesk (which can also be reached by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800).

5. Course delivery with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic

This course will be delivered online asynchronously until at least January 31, with lecture material posted on OWL twice weekly to be viewed at your convenience. We will return to the classroom in February and/or March if Western determines that the changing COVID-19 landscape allows courses to be delivered in-person. The assessments, due dates, and grading scheme will not change.

When deemed necessary, tests and examinations in this course will be conducted using a remote proctoring service. By taking this course, you are consenting to the use of this software and acknowledge that you will be required to provide personal information (including some biometric data) and the session will be recorded. Completion of this course will require you to have a reliable internet connection and a device that meets the technical requirements for this service. More information about this remote proctoring service, including technical requirements, is available on Western's Remote Proctoring website at: <https://remoteproctoring.uwo.ca>.

6. Overview

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 virtually 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 key historical, geographical, political economic, and technological dimensions of how modern agro-food systems came to be. The second half of the course focuses 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 increasing control of transnational corporations over all aspects of the agro-food system (food retailing, distribution, processing, and packaging, and agricultural inputs and other aspects of farm production), and struggles to build alternatives. The ultimate aim is to provide a framework for understanding both contemporary problems and possibilities, and to contextualize struggles to build more equitable, sustainable, and humane agro-food systems.

7. 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.

8. Units and Schedule

Date	UNIT
Jan. 10	Introduction: the big picture of global agriculture and food
Jan. 13	Agroecosystems and peasants in the longue durée
Jan. 18	some key subjects: domestication and dispersion; biophysical organizing imperatives; diversity of peasantries; divergent colonial transformations between temperate and tropical regions
Jan. 20	
Jan. 25	Divergent colonial transformations
Jan. 27	some key subjects: between temperate and tropical regions; agrarian question of the 19 th century; rise of globalized agro-food systems
Feb. 1	
Feb. 3	

Feb. 8	Technological change and increasing long-distance flows
Feb. 10	some key subjects: uneven industrialization; scale pressures and the polarization of farming; the Green Revolution; dietary change/surplus absorption with industrial livestock
Feb. 15	
Feb. 17	Mid-term test (20%)
Feb. 21-25	Reading break
Mar. 1	Environmental dimensions of modern agro-food systems
Mar. 3	some key subjects: biophysical contradictions and overrides; resource budgets and pollution loads of industrial monocultures and livestock production Summary and Reflection Paper #1 (25%)
Mar. 8	accelerating contradictions (i.e. intensifying challenges), with focus on energy and climate change
Mar. 10	
Mar. 15	Increasing corporate power and polarization of farming
Mar. 17	some key subjects: the concentration power and value in agriculture ('upstream' and 'downstream' from farms); neoliberal prescriptions and multilateral rules-making; the agrarian question today
Mar. 22	
Mar. 24	
Mar. 29	Contemporary agro-food movements
Mar. 31	some key subjects: food sovereignty; agroecology; 'locavores' and other food movements; nexus of environment and health concerns; core dimensions of more equitable and sustainable agro-food systems
Apr. 5	
Apr. 7	Summary and Reflection Paper #2 (25%)
Apr. 9	Study days
Apr. 10 – 30	Final exam (30%) in examination period – date TBD

January 18, 2022: Last day to add a second-term half course

March 14, 2022: Last day to drop a second term half course without penalty

9. Communication

- if you have questions you wish to discuss beyond the class, Dr. Weis is typically available after each class and you can attend the optional Friday drop-in session
- if Friday doesn't work, you can also schedule an individual zoom meeting via email if necessary.
- you are encouraged to check the OWL site every 24 – 48 hours
- you should post general course-related queries (whether content or logistics) to the Forums tab in OWL, so that the clarifications can be seen by everyone
- Forum posts will get monitored daily and you can expect to receive a response in 24 – 48 hours be organized (and these will be organized into folders as the term unfolds)
- some communications about the course will arrive through your university email account. It is your responsibility to ensure that email received from the University at your UWO address is attended to in a timely manner. You can read about the privacy and security of the UWO email accounts [here](#).

10. Evaluation

Evaluation Components	% of Course Grade	Assignment Schedule
2 summary & reflection papers (x 25% each)	50%	Paper #1: March 3 Paper #2: April 7
Mid-term test	20%	Feb. 17
Final exam	30%	In exam period: Apr. 10-30

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.

Short papers: unit summaries & reflections (2 x 25% = 50% of course grade)

You are expected to prepare 2 **1500-word** (~6 double-spaced pages) papers based on 1 unit you've selected:

- Paper #1 – focus on one of Unit 1, 2, or 3
- Paper #2 – focus on one of Unit 4, 5, or 6

These papers have 3 basic parts:

- 1) a summary and discussion of the significance of 3 major subjects in the unit you've selected, drawing on material from the lectures and readings (~**800 words**)
- 2) a reflection on how 1 or more of the subjects in the unit challenge you to think more critically about a food item (or items) that you consume regularly (~**350 words**)
- 3) a reflection on how 1 or more of the subjects in the unit challenge you to think more critically about an agricultural landscape you are familiar with (~**350 words**)

There is no blueprint for these papers. You do not need to worry about whether you have identified *the* 3 major subjects – in every unit, there are many more than 3 subjects you could conceivably choose to focus on.

Consider the unit as a whole, including the lectures and the readings, and then identify 3 subjects to discuss clearly and succinctly. These might be chosen based on: what you see as being most significant; what you find most interesting; what you feel most confident discussing; subjects you think can most easily be discussed together; and subject(s) you would most like to critically reflect on in parts 2 and 3.

For parts 2 (food) and 3 (landscapes), a good starting point is to ask yourself: how has the unit sparked attention to environmental, social, political economic, or inter-species issue (or issues) that you hadn't previously thought about and now recognize to be important?

The papers should not exceed 1500 words, and part 1 should have the most substance, but there is some flexibility in how you allocate the words. For all segments, 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*.

Format: use 12 pt. font, double space, and save and submit your work as a Word document in the Assignments tab in OWL. You can follow whatever formatting convention you are comfortable with (just be sure to follow it correctly and consistently)

Length: 1500 words max. (about 5 double-spaced pages), not including references.

Save as: LASTNAME-FIRSTNAME-UNIT#.doc

Submit: on OWL via Turnitin (see statement in policies below)

Grading:

A+	90-100	One could scarcely expect better from a student at this level
A	80-89	Superior work which is clearly above average
B	70-79	Good work, meeting all requirements, and eminently satisfactory
C	60-69	Competent work, meeting requirements
D	50-59	Fair work, minimally acceptable
F	below 50	Fail

In general, top grades (**A / A+**) will be given to papers that demonstrate a very strong grasp of the subjects, incorporate some material from the readings, contain thoughtful reflections, and are very well-written and edited. 1500 words is not a lot of space, but writing with concision is an important skill to foster, and for top marks it is important to be specific and avoid ambiguities and grammatical problems.

Low grades (**C and below**) will be given to papers where major subjects are conveyed inaccurately, unclearly, or indicate serious confusion, fail to draw upon the readings at all, and have sloppy writing. It is usually quite apparent if something has been prepared in great haste and without seriously engaging with the material.

Notes:

- plagiarized or copied work will receive a grade of **zero** (see notes on academic offences below).
- after an assessment is returned, if you have concerns you should wait 24 hours to digest feedback before contacting your TA. To ensure a timely response, reach out within 7 days.
- click [here](#) for a detailed and comprehensive set of policies and regulations concerning grading.

Late policy

- late papers without illness self-reports subject to a penalty of 10%/day
- late papers with self-reported absence or other documented accommodation should be submitted within 24 hours after the end of the period covered by either accommodation.

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.

11. Online Participation and Engagement

- students can attend on-line office hours at the conclusion of each unit
- students can post questions and thoughts in the Forums tab in OWL, and expect a response within 24 – 48 hours

12. Professionalism, Privacy, and Online Etiquette

Western students are expected to follow the Student Code of Conduct. Additionally, the following expectations and professional conduct apply to this course:

- students are expected to follow online etiquette expectations provided on OWL
- all course materials created by the instructor(s) are copyrighted and cannot be sold/shared
- recordings are not permitted (audio or video) without explicit permission
- be courteous toward the instructor and your peers in optional synchronous sessions
- be professional and scholarly in all online postings in Forums: the exchange of diverse ideas and opinions is part of the scholarly environment. “Flaming” is never appropriate.

13. Accommodation Policies

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#).

Academic Consideration for Student Absence

Students will have up to two (2) opportunities during the regular academic year to use an on-line portal to self-report an absence during the term, provided the following conditions are met: the absence is no more than 48 hours in duration, and the assessment for which consideration is being sought is worth 30% or less of the student’s final grade. Students are expected to contact their instructors within 24 hours of the end of the period of the self-reported absence, unless noted on the syllabus. Students are not able to use the self-reporting option in the following circumstances:

- for exams scheduled by the Office of the Registrar (e.g., December and April exams)
- absence of a duration greater than 48 hours,
- assessments worth more than 30% of the student’s final grade,
- if a student has already used the self-reporting portal twice during the academic year

If the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence are *not* met, students will need to provide a Student Medical Certificate if the absence is medical, or provide appropriate documentation if there are compassionate grounds for the absence in question. Students are encouraged to contact their Faculty academic counselling office to obtain more information about the relevant documentation.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds, or for other

reasons. **All documentation required for absences that are not covered by the Self-Reported Absence Policy must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's Home Faculty.**

For Western University policy on Consideration for Student Absence, see:

[Policy on Academic Consideration for Student Absences - Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs](#)

For the Student Medical Certificate (SMC), see:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf.

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Multicultural Calendar](#).

14. How to be successful in this class

Students enrolled in this class should understand the level of autonomy and self-discipline required to be successful.

- 1) Invest in a planner or application to keep track of your courses. Populate all your deadlines at the start of the term and schedule time at the start of each week to get organized and manage your time.
- 2) Make it a regular habit to log onto OWL to ensure you have seen everything posted to help you succeed in this class.
- 3) Take notes as you go through the lesson material. Treat this course as you would a face-to-face course. Keeping handwritten notes or even notes on a regular Word document will help you learn more effectively than just reading or watching the videos.
- 4) Do not be afraid to ask questions. If you are struggling with a topic, post questions in the Forums tab and follow the responses there.
- 5) Attend the optional end-of-unit synchronous sessions.
- 6) Reward yourself for successes. It is often easier to motivate ourselves knowing that there is something waiting for us at the end of the task.

15. 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](#).

Written components of exams 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 (www.turnitin.com).

16. 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.

17. 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.

18. Support Services

Western's Support Services
Student Development Centre

19. Important Dates

January 10: Classes resume

January 18: Last day to add a second term half course

February 21: Family Day – Department Office Closed

February 21-25: Spring Reading Week (No classes; Department Office open)

March 14: Last day to drop a first term half course without penalty

April 8: Classes end

April 9: Study day

April 10-30: Examination Period