

**Sustenance and Sustainability:  
Sociology and Political Ecology of Agro-Food Systems**

**ESPM 155AC, 4 credits**

Fall Semester, 2020

Tuesdays & Thursdays 11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Online

**Instructor: Associate Professor Kathryn De Master**

Contact: [Kathryn.DeMaster@berkeley.edu](mailto:Kathryn.DeMaster@berkeley.edu)

Office hours: Tuesdays, 1-4 pm <https://kathryndemaster.youcanbook.me>

*Please email Kathy to set up an appointment if you cannot meet during scheduled office hours*

**Graduate Student Instructors**

**Alejo Garcia Aguilera**, [alejo\\_garcia@berkeley.edu](mailto:alejo_garcia@berkeley.edu), Disc 101 TUE 1-2, 105 W 11-12

Office hours: Mondays 12-1 p.m., Weds 10-11 a.m., <https://alejogarcia.youcanbook.me/>

**Chelsea Andreozzi**, [candreozi@berkeley.edu](mailto:candreozi@berkeley.edu), Disc 109 TH 9-10, 110 TH 10-11

Office hours: Tuesdays 9-11 a.m., <https://candreozi.youcanbook.me/>

**Jaye Mejia-Duwan**, [jaye.mejia.duwan@berkeley.edu](mailto:jaye.mejia.duwan@berkeley.edu), Disc 106 W 12-1, 112 W 11-12

Office hours: Mondays 5-6 p.m., Weds 1-2 p.m., <https://jayemejiaduwan.youcanbook.me/>

**Michelle Sims**, [michelle\\_sims@berkeley.edu](mailto:michelle_sims@berkeley.edu), Disc 107 W 1-2, 108 W 2-3

Office hours: Mondays 2-4 p.m., <https://sims-office-hours-fall20.youcanbook.me/>

**Natasha Shannon**, [natasha\\_shannon@berkeley.edu](mailto:natasha_shannon@berkeley.edu), Disc 102 TUE 10-11, 111 TUE 1-2

Office hours: Wednesdays, 10 a.m.-12 p.m., <https://natashashannon.youcanbook.me/>

**Rose Benjamin**, [rosebenjamin@berkeley.edu](mailto:rosebenjamin@berkeley.edu), Disc 103 W 9-10, 104 W 10-11

Office hours: Mondays, 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., <https://rosebenjamin.youcanbook.me/>

**Course description**

This intermediate sociology and political ecology of agro-food systems course explores the nexus of agriculture, society, and the environment. Two overarching questions guide us: First, how might societies create ecologically, socially, and economically regenerative agricultural systems? Second, how can we do so in ways that foster justice, equity, and respect for diverse cultures and farming practices? We explore the agro-food system from an interdisciplinary perspective and analyze ways that contemporary agricultural practices intersect with environmental, economic, and socio-cultural crises. We also analyze various alternative agricultural initiatives such as local food, organic farming, food justice/sovereignty movements, diversified farming, and agroecology.

### **Guiding principles**

Collaboration, **engaged participation**, and **respect** for fellow members of the class community are this course's guiding principles. We aim for students and teachers alike to contribute significantly to discussion sections, classroom conversations, and written work. We endeavor to create a welcoming atmosphere in which everyone is actively engaged in learning together. We kindly request that you please contribute constructively to this effort by giving your full attention to our conversations. Please help create a learning space free of distractions for yourself and others: we politely request that you avoid social media and put other work aside during class. Thank you for demonstrating compassion, patience, kindness, and empathy toward *all* class members and their diverse perspectives, identities, and positions. This creates a **supportive learning community** where we all may curiously and freely explore ideas in a **BRAVE space**, some of which can generate healthy disagreement. Disruptive, insulting, or offensive behavior toward **any** members of the class community will not be tolerated. Thank you for upholding these guiding principles.

### **Privacy expectations**

Please kindly **respect the privacy of your fellow students and instructors by not recording or distributing any portion of our lectures or discussions**. Please do not take and distribute screen shots of our meetings. Please protect the privacy of all of your class members (even and especially those with whom you may disagree). In an era when doxing, online bullying, stalking, identity theft, and trolling have become commonplace, we wish to create a safe haven for free and open learning. No one's life should be ruined by a careless comment made in class or a message taken out of context. No one's privacy should be invaded when their videos are turned on, revealing details of their home life they do not wish to broadcast to the world. To protect one another's dignity and our learning community, thank you for respecting and honoring these **critical guidelines**.

### **Course content note**

Our course examines multiple social and economic injustices, differential power relations, and environmental and cultural destruction in the agro-food system. At times we necessarily delve into some deeply disturbing material that, in spite of its pervasiveness, should never be normalized. For example, images and/or topical accounts of global famine, agricultural slavery, pesticide drift, oppression, the weaponization of particular agro-food policies for political ends, racialized and gendered violence in agriculture, and animal cruelty are an essential part of the curriculum. To the best of our ability, we will endeavor to share, with sensitivity, contextual information prior to various presentations of disturbing topics. If you also suspect that specific material is likely to be particularly distressing or otherwise challenging for you, please do not hesitate to contact Kathy or your GSI to discuss any concerns you might have prior to the topic arising in class. If you ever wish to discuss course material, we welcome such conversations. One of the pillars of our approach to the course is that you engage with course material as independently as possible, in ways that specifically facilitate you forming your own diverse opinions and conclusions, irrespective of the views of your instructor(s) or peers.

## **Accessibility**

We endeavor to create accessible and equitable learning environments in this course. If you encounter barriers based on the impact of a (dis)Ability or health condition, please access the resources available to you through Berkeley's Division of Equity & Inclusion Disabled Students' Program: <https://dsp.berkeley.edu/> to establish accommodations. Please also feel free inform Kathy and/or your GSI if you need assistance overcoming any barriers to your learning; we are here to support you.

## **Basic Needs**

If you are in need of economic, food, or housing support, you can find help and information at [basicneeds.berkeley.edu](https://basicneeds.berkeley.edu). You may be eligible for money to buy groceries via [calfresh.berkeley.edu](https://calfresh.berkeley.edu) or our [Food Assistance Program](#). If you are in Berkeley and are in need of food immediately, please visit the UC Berkeley Food Pantry at [pantry.berkeley.edu](https://pantry.berkeley.edu).

## **Campus Resources for Mental and Physical Health**

If you find yourself in either physical or mental ill health or distress, please do not hesitate to avail yourself of the resources at UC Berkeley to assist you, through the Tang University Health Services. Tang can assist you with counseling services, medical care, and referrals. For more information concerning these services, please see: <https://uhs.berkeley.edu/students> and for a detailed directory, please see: <https://uhs.berkeley.edu/gotang>

## **Resources for Careers in Agri-Food Systems**

Many students inquire with us about various careers in agriculture and food systems. This is exciting; we need many more people to engage in helping address agriculture and food systems challenges, as well as take advantage of the many opportunities to do so. If you are interested in a career related to agriculture and food systems, this list-serve is a great resource: <https://elist.tufts.edu/www/subscribe/comfoodjobs> Another wonderful resource here on campus is the Career Counseling Library. For more information, see: <https://uhs.berkeley.edu/counseling/career-library>

## **Learning objectives:**

We will collectively determine our learning objectives during the first 2 weeks of class. These learning objectives will combine your individual learning goals for this class with those of your instructor(s). This section of the syllabus will be revised following our collaborative process.

## **Grades and Standards**

Grading for this course involves instructor, self, and peer assessments. Our grading aims to foster a dialogue marked by fairness, clarity, and transparency. We tailor assessments to help you achieve your own learning goals. Thank you for maintaining your academic integrity and honesty; academic misconduct of any kind runs counter to the guiding principles of the course (collaboration, engaged participation, mutual respect). Academic misconduct of any kind will result in a failing grade. Grading scale: <https://academic-senate.berkeley.edu/coci-handbook/3.3.7>

## **I. Course participation and engagement • 30 points •**

We eagerly anticipate your active engagement in weekly lectures and discussion sections and lecture. We place an unusually high value on active, engaged participation. We will assess your participation grade through the following measures:

### **1. Active, engaged participation in lecture (15 points)**

We will assess participation in lecture in various ways—including Zoom polls, participation in breakout room discussions, responses to in-class **ungraded** free writes, consistent attendance, and the posing of thoughtful questions.

### **2. Active, engaged participation in discussion section (15 points)**

This includes attending, contributing, and sharing your insights from course readings and lecture. Active engagement also applies to any online forums we may have. Your GSI will organize your weekly discussion group, but you will collaboratively determine your community guidelines. Please note: “Active engagement” neither implies dominating conversations nor “checking out” during discussions but a careful balance of “stepping up and stepping back.”

**Discussion sections will begin during Week 2.**

### **A special note on attendance**

Occasionally illness, other priorities, or religious holidays may prevent attendance, but if you participate actively and attend consistently, an occasional absence will **not** adversely affect your grade. It is not necessary to request permission or inquire about an absence; we expect that some absences will occur and do not “police” them.

## **II. Course Assignments**

### **1. Reflection papers • 20 points •**

You are responsible for submitting **9 one-page single-spaced reflection papers** throughout the semester that directly engage the readings and respond to specific prompts. Kathy will provide prompts for each of these reflection papers each week: 14 prompts will be given, so you may select 9/14 papers to complete. These reflections are designed to help you analyze and synthesize key concepts from the readings and prepare you for your discussion section. Each reflection should be a concise, first person **~350-500-word analysis**, directly responding to assigned readings and films. Outside sources are not expected. As you write, consider:

- **Analysis:** How **directly** do you address the question/prompt? Have you **avoided summarizing** and engaged in robust **analysis**? (1/2 a point)
- **Applicable content:** Have you adequately and appropriately engaged **all of the applicable assigned readings and films**? (1/2 a point)
- **Originality:** Do you creatively share **your original views**? (1/2 a point)
- **Writing style:** Is your essay **well written and concise**, giving attention to diction, syntax, grammar, spelling, with engaging prose? Have you limited your response to **no more than 350-500 words**? (1/2 a point)

**Due dates:** Wednesdays by 9 p.m. PST (bCourses submission, details TBA)

## 2. Cultural Cookbook • 20 points •

Research your own food culture and create your own cultural cookbook. If you identify as multicultural, feel free to select one or all cultures with which you identify to tell your cultural food story. Research the historical origins of your cultural foodways. Conduct at least two interviews with people who share your food culture (e.g. family members, local chefs, friends in your community). Consult other cookbooks (cite sources). Investigate whether ingredients are available to cook your culturally important dishes at area markets. Consider the expenses of cooking these foods. Informed by your investigations, create your own cookbook (~20 pages), in online format. Include recipes, family stories, pictures, and graphics. If possible, please include original photos and/or artwork rather than graphics easily obtained online. If you are able to do so given your access to a cooking space and ingredients, prepare at least one dish from your food culture; describe this in your cookbook. If you do not have access to a cooking space or ingredients, describe in detail the process involved in preparing a signature dish from your food culture, including obtaining ingredients, preparation, cooking, and serving. Include a 2-page, single-spaced essay reflection within the cookbook. What did you learn about your own food culture? How do you envision adapting your food culture to your current lifestyle and practices today? More details on this assignment to be announced.

**Early due date:** October 1, 2020 by 5:00 p.m. PST for 2 points extra credit

**Mid-range due date:** October 15, 2020 by 5:00 p.m. PST for 1 point extra credit

**Final due date:** October 29, 2020 by 5:00 p.m. PST for 0 points extra credit

## 3. Final Group Project • 30 points •

The final project for this course is a creative, original applied research project. Everyone will join a small collaborative project group formed within your discussion section (6 students each, formed the fourth week of class). There is *considerable flexibility* for each group to determine your topic, your approach, subtopics, and selecting the format/medium for presenting your work. You might consider reviewing a series of food and agriculture-related films, creating a children's book, mapping the community gardens of your various places and curating a website about them. You could create a podcast or a film or a grade school curriculum. Consider creating an agricultural voter's guide. Decide to start a backyard or dorm-room garden and create a collective blog tracking your projects. Read and review a series of food-related books. Create a career guide for those interested in food and agriculture careers. You might create an app to help people assess the fairness of their food. Create a Zine or online art installation related to agriculture and food. Start a band! Begin a cooking club! Delve into the difference between cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation of food! Investigate the impacts of COVID on various food supply chains! These are simply a few POSSIBILITIES. More details to follow on this project in coming weeks.

**Early due date:** December 3, 2020 by 5:00 p.m. PST for 2 points extra credit

**Mid-range due date:** December 10, 2020 by 5:00 p.m. PST for 1 point extra credit

**Final due date:** December 16, 2020 by 5:00 p.m. PST for 0 points extra credit

### **Final exam/presentations**

We will have **no final exam** in this class. In *lieu* of a final exam, brief presentations of group projects and a culmination celebration will be held during the final exam period, **Wednesday, December 16, 8 a.m.-11 a.m. PST**. Final projects are also due at that time.

### **Readings**

All required readings will be available on bCourses or through the **optional** course reader. If you cannot access readings on bCourses, please notify your GSI or Kathy. It is your responsibility to obtain the necessary reading material and to download readings for each week in advance, in case of bCourses service interruptions that occur intermittently.

### **Assigned films**

One film is assigned for this course. *Food Chains* is available for viewing free online through some outlets or for a modest rental fee of approximately \$2-3.

### **Guest speakers and panels**

In our ongoing efforts to highlight the diverse perspectives of multiple actors in the agro-food system, we will host a range of guest speakers and panelists this semester. For guest speaker visits, please make a special effort to be on time and prepare to ask thoughtful questions. Kathy will announce guest speaker visits in advance.

### **Course syllabus adjustments**

This **syllabus is a living document**. We anticipate that we will adjust it from time to time based on student needs and interests, in response to events such as power outages or unavoidable crises, based on the availability of guest speakers, or to take advantage of interesting opportunities that arise throughout the semester. We may alter or adjust readings or adjust the approach assignments to enhance the learning goals of the class. If we make any adjustments, we will do will inform in advance of any changes that would affect your work and will always remain flexible.

### **During Berkeley time**

Class will begin, following “Berkeley time,” at 11:10 a.m. and will finish at 12:25 p.m. PST. During Berkeley time, we will occasionally play music, relevant videos, comedy sketches, and news reports. We may also share announcements that may connect in some way to the class themes. We hope you enjoy these “warm-ups” to lecture!

### **You!**

This class has **365 students**, but ***we care about you*** and helping to facilitate ***your individual learning***. Please contact us regularly with questions, concerns, ideas, thoughts, and suggestions! Please make a point of visiting our office hours at least once. Please email us to make an appointment if you cannot make our scheduled office hours, as we will make time for you! We are looking forward to learning *with* you this semester!!

***Welcome to the class, and thanks for participating!***

***Kathy, Alejo, Chelsea, Jaye, Michelle, Natasha, and Rose***

## WEEKLY COURSE SCHEDULE

### I. FOUNDATIONS and AGRARIAN QUESTIONS

#### Week 1, August 27: Introductions

- Agriculture: Foundations, Crises, and Possibilities

#### Week 2, September 1 & 3: Agri-Culture and Colonization

*Please read the following readings prior to class on September 1:*

- Hartman Deetz. 2016. "More Than a Bingo Hall: A Story of Mashpee Land, Food, and Sovereignty," *Food First Backgrounder: Dismantling Racism in the Food System*: No. 3.
- Bernstein, Henry. 2010. *Class Dynamics of Agrarian Change*, Introduction, pp. 1-11.
- *The ESPM 155AC course syllabus*. Pp. 1-11.
- Optional and interesting:  
<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/aug/26/hawaii-fish-waters-native-commercial-fishers>

#### Week 3, September 8 & 10: Agrarian Visions, Agrarian Questions

*Please read the following readings prior to class on September 8:*

- Jack R. Kloppenburg, John Hendrickson and G.W. Stevenson, 1996. "Coming in to the Foodshed" *Agriculture and Human Values* 13:3 (Summer): 33-42.
- Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture*, Chapter 4 only
- Calo, Adam. 2020. "The Yeoman Myth: A Troubling Foundation of the Beginning Farmer Movement," *Gastronomica* (2020) 20 (2): 12-29.
- Optional and interesting:  
Bernstein, Henry. 2010. *Class Dynamics of Agrarian Change*, Chapter 1-2.

Selections to be announced from Guthman, Julie. 2004. *Agrarian Dreams: The Paradox of Organic Farming in California*. University of California Press: Berkeley.

## II. LAND

### Week 4, September 15 & 17: Farm Bill, Federal Policy, and Racialized Land Grabs

Please read the following readings prior to class on September 15:

- Hossein Ayazi and Elsadig Elsheikh. 2015. "The U.S. Farm Bill: Corporate Power and Structural Racialization in the United States Food System." Berkeley, CA: *Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society*, pp. 5-19, and Part III: "Farmland and Federal Support," pp. 50-60.
- Robert Lee and Tristan Ahtone. 2020. "Land-grab universities: Expropriated Indigenous land is the foundation of the land-grant university system," *High Country News*, March 30, 2020.
- Additional readings to be announced

### Week 5, September 22 & 24: Toxicifying Land and Life

Please read the following readings prior to class on September 22:

- Harrison, Jill Lindsey Harrison, 2020. "Pesticide Purveyors and Corporate Power," pp. 51-62 in, *Bite Back: People Taking on Corporate Food and Winning*, Saru Jayaraman and Kathryn De Master, eds., University of California Press: Berkeley.
- Dave Getzschman, Earthjustice, 2014. "The Toxic Secret of California's Salad Bowl: Dangerous Pesticides a Way of Life for Farmworkers." *Photo essay: Earthjustice*: <https://earthjustice.org/features/the-toxic-secret-of-california-s-salad-bowl>
- Dashka Slater "The Frog of War," by, Mother Jones, January/February 2012.
- Dan Charles, 2017. "Monsanto Attacks Scientists After Studies Show Trouble for Weedkiller *Dicamba*," *NPR, The Salt*, October 26.
- Hartman Deetz, 2016. "Everyone is Downstream" *Food First Backgrounder*, Volume 22, No. 3.

### Week 6, September 29 & October 1: Food Regimes: Land and Accumulation

Please read the following readings prior to class on September 29

- Harriet Friedmann and Phil McMichael, 1989. "Agriculture and the State System: The Rise and Decline of National Agricultures, 1879 to the Present," *Sociologia Ruralis* Vol. XXIX- 2.
- Madeleine Fairbairn. 2010. "Framing Resistance: International Food Regimes and the Roots of Food Sovereignty," **Pp. 16-19 only** in *Food Sovereignty: Reconnecting Food, Nature and Community*, edited by Wittman, Desmarais, and Wiebe.



### III. LABOR

#### Week 7, October 6 & 8: A Global Commodity and Local Agricultural Slavery

Please read the following readings prior to class on October 6:

- Barry Estabrook. Chapters 1, 2, and 4 in *Tomatoland: How Modern Agriculture Destroyed Our Most Alluring Fruit*, 2011.
- Watch film: *Food Chains*
- Enrique Balcazar, 6.16.17. "Why I'm Marching to Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream Plant," <http://civileats.com/2017/06/16/why-im-marching-to-ben-jerrys-ice-cream-plant/>
- Additional readings to be announced

#### Week 8, October 13 & 15: Labor in the Fields

Please read the following readings prior to class on October 13:

- Jason De León, Chapters 1, 2 (pp. 23-61) and 4 (pp. 89-106) in *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*. 2015. UC Press.
- Selections to be announced: Seth Holmes, *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farmworkers in the United States*. 2013. UC Press.
- Richard Marosi, "Hardship on Mexico's farms, a bounty for U.S. tables," <http://graphics.latimes.com/product-of-mexico-camps/>:

#### Week 9, October 20 & 22: Labor in the Food Chain

Please read the following readings prior to class on October 20

- Eric Schlosser. 2001 "The chain never stops." *Mother Jones* 26:4 (July-August)
- Joann Lo and Jose Oliva. 2020. "Food Workers versus Food Giants," pp. 99-106 in *Bite Back: People Taking on Corporate Food and Winning*, Saru Jayaraman and Kathryn De Master, eds., University of California Press: Berkeley.
- Saru Jayaraman. 2020. "Food Workers Taking on Goliath," pp. 107-120 in *Bite Back: People Taking on Corporate Food and Winning*, Saru Jayaraman and Kathryn De Master, eds., University of California Press: Berkeley.
- Additional readings to be announced

## IV. CAPITAL

### **Week 10, October 27 & 29: Corporate Power in the Food System**

*Please read the following readings prior to class on October 27:*

- Saru Jayaraman and Kathryn De Master, *Bite Back: People Taking on Corporate Food and Winning*, Introduction, pp. 1-11
- Hossein Ayazi and Elsadig Elsheikh. 2015. "The U.S. Farm Bill: Corporate Power and Structural Racialization in the United States Food System." Berkeley, CA: *Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society*, pp. 20-35 Part I. Corporate Power

### **Week 11, November 5 & 7: Capital, Accumulation, Crises**

*Please read the following readings prior to class on November 5:*

- Eric Holt-Gimenez and Annie Shattuck (2011) Food crises, food regimes and food movements: rumblings of reform or tides of transformation? *JPS*, 38(1)
- Anuradha Mittal, 2002. "On the true cause of world hunger." *The Sun* (February): 4-13.
- Peter Singer, 1999. "The Singer solution to world poverty." *The New York Times Magazine*
- Frances Moore Lappé and Joseph Collins, 2015. "World Hunger: 10 Myths," *Food First Backgrounder*, Volume 21, No. 2.

### **Week 12: November 10 & 12: Chasing the Techno-fixes**

*Please read the following readings prior to class on November 10:*

- Maywa Montenegro, 2015. "The Complex Nature of GMOS Calls for a New Conversation," *Enzia Magazine*, October 7.
- Danny Hakim, 2016. "Doubts About the Bounty of Genetically Modified Crops," *New York Times*, October 29.
- Glenn Davis Stone, 2015 "Golden Rice: Bringing a Superfood Down to Earth," *Field Questions Blog*, August 28.
- Additional readings to be announced

## V. DECOLONIZING and SOWING SOVEREIGNTY

### Week 13, November 17 & 19, Sowing Sovereignty, Healing Land

Please read the following readings prior to class on November 17:

- Hoover, Elizabeth. 2017. "You Can't Say You're Sovereign if You Can't Feed Yourself": Defining and Enacting Food Sovereignty in American Indian Community Gardening." *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 41:3
- White, Monica. 2018. Selections to be announced from *Freedom Farmers Agricultural Resistance and the Black Freedom Movement*. University of North Carolina Press.
- Myers, Gail P. 2015. "Decolonizing a food system: Freedom Farmers' Market as a place for resistance and analysis," *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, 5(4), 149–152.
- Additional readings to be announced

Optional, interesting:

- Kloppenburg, Jack. 2010. "Impeding Dispossession, Enabling Repossession: Biological Open Source and the Recovery of Seed Sovereignty," *Journal of Agrarian Change*, Volume 10, No. 3 July 2010.

### Week 14, November 24: "Good Food" Framings and the Missionary Impulse

Please read the following readings prior to class on November 24:

- Marcelo Felipe and Garzo Montalvo, 2015. "To the American food justice movements: A critique that is also an offering," *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*.
- Julie Guthman, 2008. "Bringing good food to others: investigating the subjects of alternative food practice," *Cultural Geographies* 15(4) 431-447.
- Melanie DuPuis, "Angels and Vegetables: A Brief History of Food Advice in America" in *Gastronomica*, Summer 2007.

### Week 15, December 3 & 5: Cultivating Hope

Please read the following reading prior to class on December 3:

- Blain Snipstal, 2016. "Toward a People's Agroecology," *Why Hunger Blog*

**Final presentations, Tuesday, December 16 from 8-11 a.m. PST**