

Sustainable Food: Politics, Policy and Ethics

11:374:289
Day and time TBD
Location TBD

Professor	Department	Contact*	Office Hours
Ethan Schoolman	Human Ecology	ethan.schoolman@rutgers.edu	TBD (before class and by appt.)

*Please put “SF” in the subject line of all course-related emails

Course Description

Walk through a grocery store, and the range of options for “eating ethically” can seem overwhelming. Organic, free-range, antibiotic-free, humanely-raised, local, fair trade, product of the USA, GMO-free (or GMO), grass-fed... the list goes on. Individual consumers and big organizations increasingly want their choices about food to reflect their values about sustainability and social justice. But as any philosopher will tell you, it’s not easy to know what our values obligate us to do. And where food is concerned, we don’t just want to feel good about making an “ethical” choice. We also want to know if our ethical choices are making a difference—if they are succeeding in making the world a better place.

In this course, we explore how food systems can be made more environmentally sustainable and socially just. Drawing on tools from social and environmental sciences, we undertake an in-depth examination of four major food-related social movements: organic agriculture, local food, fair trade, and animal welfare. Each of these "food evolutions" has political, economic, and social dimensions, and reflects efforts by government, citizens groups, and food producers to accomplish certain goals (and block others). Therefore, for organic farming, local food, fair trade, and animal welfare, we ask: Where does it come from? What are its goals? What problems is it meant to solve? What is working—and what is not? Who is benefiting—and who is left out? And especially: Given the strengths and weaknesses of existing attempts to transform food systems, what should be the focus of the next generation of responsible, food-literate citizens—like the students in this class?

Learning Goals

This course has two main learning goals. First, students will develop an in-depth understanding of how social trends and governance approaches have both contributed to the current state of food systems, and shaped alternative food movements aimed at changing these systems. Second, students will build the conceptual and methodological tools required to identify, evaluate, and effectively communicate their own thinking regarding, policies and plans that seek to make contemporary food systems more sustainable.

For EPIB majors. This course counts as part of the *Globalization, Development, and Sustainability* cluster.

Canvas

I use Canvas to post all course materials, including readings, lecture slides, and assignments. Please make sure you have access to the Canvas site for this course, and familiarize yourself with the various folders. Please also make sure that you have set your Notification options (under Account on the far left) to receive an alert (via email) when I post an Announcement, and, if you want, when I post new materials. It is your responsibility to do this! Otherwise, you may miss important information about the course.

Canvas is pretty user-friendly once you get the hang of it. Under the Files tab on the left, you can see the several folders I've made: *Lecture Slides*, *Readings*, etc. The *Readings* folder here contains all the readings for the entire course, and so does the *Lecture Slides* folder. But if you click on the Modules tab to the left, you can see the different "modules" where readings are grouped by the module they're associated with. Since just one module can spread over several class sessions, you'll want to look at the Class Schedule (in the Main Course Documents module) to see what readings are assigned for what days. If this sounds a little confusing, don't worry, I'll go over it in class on the first day. And speaking of which...

Class Schedule

In addition to this Syllabus, I have created a separate PDF with the schedule of what topics we'll be covering in each lecture, what things to read, etc. You can find the Class Schedule in the Main Course Documents module on Canvas. Sometimes I add or subtract readings as the class goes along, but I will always announce on Canvas when I do this.

Assignments and Grading

Assessment for the course will be based on the following:

- *Class Participation*: 20% of the final course grade will be based on attendance and in-class participation. I understand and am sympathetic to the fact that people's participation styles are different. Everyone should do their best to verbally participate at least once a class. If there is anything you would like me to know about your participation style, please visit office hours asap so we can chat.
- *Mini-Essay on a sustainable agricultural practice*: 10% of the final course grade. This assignment comes up quick, so be ready!
- *Paper 1: Organic Food*: 35% of the final course grade (5-7 pages). This paper will be assigned after the module on organic food is completed.
- *Paper 2: Local Food*: 35% of the final course grade (5-7 pages). This paper will be assigned after the module on local food is completed.

Final course letter grades will be awarded based on the following scale:

Minimum Points (out of 100)	Course Grade
95	A+
90	A
87	B+
80	B
77	C+
70	C
65	D
<65	F

Readings

Most readings for this class are posted on Canvas, as PDFs or weblinks inside each module. For instance, before you watch the lecture for Monday, Jan. 25, you should do the assigned readings from Conkin and Lyson. These are all contained in Module B.

Course Policies

Academic Integrity. DO YOUR OWN WORK! The point of college is to learn to do things yourself. This includes developing the skills to *judge* sources and use them properly. If you cheat or plagiarize, you will be investigated through the Rutgers Academic Integrity process and may fail the class.

Late Papers. I do not give extra credit assignments or accept revised papers for re-grading. Instead, have me read drafts of your work before it is due. Late assignments drop one step on the letter grade scale for each calendar day late (e.g., from a B to a C+, or from a B+ to a B).

Illness or Emergencies. *If you will miss a deadline or exam due to illness or emergency, notify us on or before the due date.* Send your recitation instructor and Dr. Schoolman an email (with “SF” in the subject line) AND report your absence to: <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/Links to an external site.>

Disabilities. Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. Please visit this webpage if you have not registered already: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. To begin this process, please complete the ODS Registration form: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>[Links to an external site.](#)

Let me also say that I do my best to create an environment where all students can do their best work. If you need accommodations related to any kind of special condition or disability, please see me as soon as possible.

Learning Environment. Some of the topics we discuss may provoke debate. I ask that everyone treat each other with respect.

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY RESOURCES FOR STUDENT WELLNESS

Just In Case Web App <http://codu.co/cee05e>

Access helpful mental health information and resources for yourself or a friend in a mental health crisis on your smartphone or tablet and easily contact CAPS or RUPD.

Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)

(848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu/

CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA)

(848) 932-1181 / 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / www.vpva.rutgers.edu/

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181.

Disability Services

(848) 445-6800 / Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854 / <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation:

<https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at:

<https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

Scarlet Listeners

(732) 247-5555 / <http://www.scarletlisteners.com/>

Free and confidential peer counseling and referral hotline, providing a comforting and supportive safe space.

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY POLICY ON ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The university's policy on Academic Integrity is available at

<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy> [Links to an external site.](#) The principles of academic integrity require that a student:

- properly acknowledge and cite all use of the ideas, results, or words of others.
- properly acknowledge all contributors to a given piece of work.

- make sure that all work submitted as his or her own in a course or other academic activity is produced without the aid of impermissible materials or impermissible collaboration.
- obtain all data or results by ethical means and report them accurately without suppressing any results inconsistent with his or her interpretation or conclusions.
- treat all other students in an ethical manner, respecting their integrity and right to pursue their educational goals without interference. This requires that a student neither facilitate academic dishonesty by others nor obstruct their academic progress.
- uphold the canons of the ethical or professional code of the profession for which he or she is preparing.

Adherence to these principles is necessary in order to ensure that

- everyone is given proper credit for his or her ideas, words, results, and other scholarly accomplishments.
- all student work is fairly evaluated and no student has an inappropriate advantage over others.
- the academic and ethical development of all students is fostered.
- the reputation of the University for integrity in its teaching, research, and scholarship is maintained and enhanced.

Failure to uphold these principles of academic integrity threatens both the reputation of the University and the value of the degrees awarded to its students. Every member of the University community therefore bears a responsibility for ensuring that the highest standards of academic integrity are upheld.

Class Schedule for Sustainable Food

Class	Date	Unit	Topic	Materials	Assignments
1	TBD	Where we are, how we got here	Course overview	Syllabus; Course handouts	
2	TBD		Farming in the U.S. before and after WWII	Paul Conkin, "The traditional family farm: A personal account" and "WWII and its aftermath: A family report," pp. 31-49, 77-96 in <i>A Revolution Down on the Farm</i>	
3	TBD		Agribusiness: Growing, making, and moving food	Thomas Lyson, "Going global" and "The global supply chain," pp. 30-60 in <i>Civic Agriculture</i>	Mini-essay on a sustainable agricultural practice will be assigned
4	TBD		Barriers to change	Marion Nestle, <i>Food Politics</i> , chapters 4-6	
5			Consumers and credibility: If farmers grow it, will people come?	RESOLVE Steering Committee, "Toward sustainability: The roles and limitations of certification," pp. 1-56	
6	TBD	Food and Environment: Organic Agriculture	The environment and modern agriculture	Paul Conkin, "Agriculture and the environment," pp. 168-173 in <i>A Revolution Down on the Farm</i> ; Michael Wines, "Behind Toledo's water crisis, a long-troubled Lake Erie" in <i>New York Times</i>	
7	TBD		Visions of environmentally responsible farming	Aldo Leopold, "The land ethic," pp. 201-226 in <i>A Sand County Almanac</i> ; Stephen R. Gliessman, "The agroecosystem concept"	
8	TBD		Organic food: From counterculture to mainstream	George Kuepper, "A brief overview of the history and philosophy of organic agriculture," from the Kerr Center for Sustainable Agriculture	
9	TBD		How do we know it's organic?	Peter Laufer, "Uncertified and self-certified: A sojourn to Costa Rica" and "The Oregon tilth certification routine," pp. 71-86, 171-180 in <i>Organic: A Journalist's quest to discover the truth behind food labeling</i>	Mini-essay on a sustainable agricultural practice is <u>due today</u>
10	TBD		The rise of "big organic": Do small farmers still have a place? Can GMOs be organic?	Wenonah Hauter, "Organic food: The paradox," pp. 98-115 in <i>Foodopoly</i> ; Stephanie Strom, "Has 'organic' been oversized?," in <i>New York Times</i>	
11			<i>Guest speakers on organic food</i>	<i>No new readings</i>	
12	TBD	Food and Community: Local Food	Agrarianism, small towns, and American ideals	R. Douglas Hurt, "Agrarianism," pp. 72-77 in <i>American Agriculture</i> ; Wendell Berry, "The idea of a local economy" in <i>Orion Magazine</i>	Paper on Organic Food (Assignment #1) will be assigned
13	TBD		Why do people want to "eat local"?	Wendell Berry, "The pleasures of eating," pp. 145-152 in <i>What Are People For?</i> ; Jack Kloppenburg, "Coming into the foodshed" in <i>Agriculture and Human Values</i>	
14	TBD		"Know your farmer, know your food": The organized local food movement	Thomas Lyson, "Civic agriculture and community agriculture development," pp. 84-98 in <i>Civic Agriculture</i> ; U.S. Department of Agriculture, "The what and why of local and regional foods"	
15	TBD		Is local food for everyone? Local food and food justice	Patricia Allen, "Realizing justice in local food systems" in <i>Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society</i> ; Christine Grace, "Barriers to using urban farmers markets" in <i>Journal of Hunger and Environmental Nutrition</i>	
16	TBD		Can local food "scale up"? Food hubs, direct-to-institution sales, and other innovations	Michigan Good Food, "The Michigan Good Food Charter: A Summary"; Watch in class: "Food Hub Tour" (https://youtu.be/3c0jWJnaMc), 11 min., "Beyond Food Hubs" (https://youtu.be/YpeamcBmraM), 10 min, and "Aerofarms" (https://youtu.be/HLL3CEhNz0), 20 min.	
17	TBD		<i>Guest speakers on local food</i>	<i>No new readings</i>	
18	TBD	Food and Labor: Fair Trade	Global injustice and the fair trade movement	"Product of Mexico," article series in <i>LA Times</i>	Paper on Organic Food is <u>due today</u>
19	TBD		How fair is fair trade?	Jonathan Rosenthal, "The Greatest Challenge," pp. 157-172 in <i>The Fair Trade Revolution</i> ; Harriet Lamb, "Scale without compromise," pp. 187-204 in <i>The Fair Trade Revolution</i>	Paper on Local Food (Assignment #2) will be assigned
20	TBD		Is organic food fair to farmworkers?	Daniel Jaffee, <i>Brewing Justice</i> , chapter 5; Bren Smith, "Don't let your children grow up to be farmers," in <i>New York Times</i>	
21			Is local food fair to farmworkers?	Margaret Gray, <i>Labor and the Locavore</i> (excerpts)	
22			<i>Guest speakers on farmwork and Fair Trade</i>	<i>No new readings</i>	
23	TBD		The industrialization of raising animals for food	Peter Singer, "Down on the factory farm," pp. 95-158 in <i>Animal Liberation</i>	
24	TBD	Food and Animals: Animal Welfare	Can we kill to eat?	Tom Regan, "The case for animal rights," pp. 13-26 in <i>In Defense of Animals</i> ; David Petersen, "Modern Hunting, Ancient Philosophy" in <i>Mother Earth News</i>	
25	TBD		Vegetarian-vegan ethics	Frances Moor Lappé, "Diet for a small planet," pp. 59-114 in <i>Diet for a Small Planet</i>	

26	TBD		Living a meat-eating life to its fullest	Michael Pollan, "An animal's place" in <i>New York Times</i> ; Meredith Leigh, "Introduction: The ethical meat eater," in <i>The Ethical Meat Handbook</i>	
27	TBD		<i>Guest speakers on animal welfare</i>	<i>No new readings</i>	Paper on Local Food is <u>due</u> today
28	TBD	Putting it all together	Reflections on the class	<i>No new readings</i>	