

# **Transforming Food Systems: Culture, Science, & Policy**

## **Prof. Sally Geislar**

Spring 2020  
Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, IN

### **Course Schedule Information.**

Number: ENVS 2xx  
Class Meets: TBD  
Room: TBD  
Website: Available in Blackboard

### **Instructor Contact Information**

Office & Hours: Spes Unica 352  
TBD  
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\*\*Please allow at least one 24 hour business day  
for email replies

### **Course Description**

Over the past 150 years, food systems have been transformed by developments in society, technology, science, and policy. At the same time that many of these changes have improved the human condition, they have also created new challenges. For instance, new technologies in farming equipment and synthetic fertilizers vastly increased the per-acre output of farms, but also contributed to the collapse of rural communities and the eutrophication of water ways. This class examines how the relationship between society and food has affected and been affected by the intertwining forces of industrialization, urbanization, and globalization. We will interrogate positions that the industrial food system is 'inevitable' or 'indispensible' to feeding a global population of 9 billion. This class will explore how technology and policy has helped bring about societies in which high levels of obesity, food insecurity, and food waste coexist. Students will examine critical case studies (e.g., GMOs, biofuels) to learn how these challenges are understood as policy problems and how science and technology are mobilized to address these problems.

### **Learning Outcomes**

#### **Course Evaluation**

15 %	Participation (including in-class exercises and discussion)
20 %	Current Events (best 4 of 5, 5% each)
25%	Food Systems Action
40 %	Oral History Food Systems Project
	2% Interview Guide
	3% Field Notes from Interview
	5 % Paper Outline & Review with Professor
	10 % Presentation
	20 % Oral Histories Food Systems Paper

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100 %	Total
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### **Assignment Details**

**Current Events (20%; 4 current events, lowest one dropped, 5% each)** (approx 700 words)  
Students will identify a current event (via news articles, policy documents, or technical / white papers etc) on an issue related to food systems. Students will summarize the article by identifying what the problem is, how the problem comes about, who/what is affected, and possible or proposed solutions. Students should use concepts from the course in their writing in a manner that demonstrates comprehension. will also discuss how the current event links to major themes and specific readings covered in the course. What would this or that author say about this current event?

Students will submit four (4) Current Event Assignments. The lowest grade will be dropped so that the three assignments with the highest grade are counted. Each assignment must cover a different week's topic. Two must cover the first half and two must cover the last half of the course. The first two are due before class on Week 8 (Mon Oct 17). The remaining two are due before class on Week 14 (Mon Dec 5). (approx 650 words each)

### **Oral History Project (60%)** (approx. 1,800-2,000 words)

The oral history interview(s) is meant to be a starting position in which to ground your exploration of a food systems issue(s). Students will conduct oral history interviews with elder(s) of their choice. This could be your parents, an aunt or uncle, grandparents, a friend of the family, or an acquaintance; though you should interview someone your parents' age or older to learn about their experiences with and recollections of food systems.

Key topics may include: where food was produced, where they obtained it, what stores were like in their youths, what they ate, how much time was spent on food preparation, how were foods used medicinally, for holidays, or for special life events, how and why they think these things have changed since their youth, and ideas about what is needed to make the food system healthier and more sustainable.

Interviews should last at least one hour. You may need to plan to conduct more than one interview with the same person (or with additional elders) if you are not able to interview for at least one hour.

#### *Oral History Project Deliverables:*

*These deliverables are meant to build up toward the Oral History Project.*

**Interview Guide (5%):** We will learn about how to conduct interviews and practice conducting them in class (Note: No previous interviewing experience is necessary!). Interviews will be conducted in a semi-structured interview format. The guide should be a list of topics and questions that you plan to discuss with your interviewee in roughly the order you will address them. Questions should be framed in a way that encourages story-telling--use "why" and "how" to ask your questions, ask them to "Tell me about a time when...". The guide should also include the date and time of your scheduled interview.

**Field Notes (5%):** Submit notes recorded during your interview.

**Paper Outline & Review with Professor (5%):** Submit a brief, bullet-pointed outline of your paper and meet with the professor to review your plans for the paper. This deliverable is intended to help you structure your paper. Each bullet-point in the outline should include descriptive key words or one brief sentence.

**Presentation (15%):** Students will prepare a brief, 5 minute presentation summarizing the interview and linking it to major themes and readings in the class.

**Oral Histories Paper (30%):** Students will write a paper that identifies and presents evidence (i.e., quotes) of major themes in the interview and links the stories from the interviews to major themes from the class and from current events. Students should link at least 3 readings from the class to the interview, being sure to explain and discuss these linkages. The paper should be between 1,800-2,000 words.

#### COURSE SCHEDULE

Week   Date		Lecture Activity / Topic	Reading Assignment	Submissions Due
1		Syllabus, Oral Histories Project, How to Interview		
<b>Pre- and Early-Industrialized Food Systems</b>				
2		Man and Machine	Diamond, 1997. <i>Guns, Germs, and Steel</i> , Ch 4-6: pp. 83-113	
3		Big Ag	Berry, 1977. <i>Unsettling America</i> Ch 5 & Ch 6 : pp 51-96	<b>Fri: Interview Guide</b>
4		Spoils of War	Pollan 2006. <i>Omnivore's Dilemma</i> Ch 2 pp 32-56; Carson, 1962. <i>Silent Spring</i> Ch 2-3, 5: pp5-37 & 53-61; Santlofer, Food City Ch 2 War Boom & Ch 3 War and Sugar	
5		Industrial Animal Farming	Pollan, 2006. pp. 65-84; Leonard, <i>The Meat Racket</i> 2014. Selected Chs.	
6		Spring Break	No Class	
<b>New Technology and New Science in a Globalized Food System</b>				

7		Forces of Cultural Transformation	Freedman, Paul. 2011. "American Restaurants and Cuisine in Mid Nineteenth Century." <i>New England Quarterly</i> . P. 5-59; Patel. 2007 <i>Stuffed and Starved</i> . Selected Ch	<b>Field Notes</b>
8		Processed Foods	Pollan, 2006. pp. 85-99; Patel. 2007 <i>Stuffed and Starved</i> . Selected Chs	<b>Two Current Events</b>
9		GMOs	Roberts, <i>End of Food</i> , Ch 8; Dahl 2012. To Label or Not to Label: California Prepares to Vote for Genetically Engineered Foods	
10		Food and Climate	Nabhan, 2013. <i>Growing Food in a Hotter, Drier Land</i> (Selection) Additional readings TBD	<b>Paper Outline &amp; Scheduled Review w Prof</b>
11		Food Insecurity & Food Sovereignty	Gottlieb and Joshi 2013 <i>Food Justice</i> Selected Chs.; Holt-Gimenez & Altieri, 2012. Agroecology, Food Sovereignty & New Green Rev pp. 90-102;	
<b>Old Ways and New Ways</b>				
12		No Such Thing as Waste	Thyberg & Tonjes, 2016. "Drivers of Food Waste & Implications for Sustainable Policy Development."; Stuart 2009. Ch 17 Islands of Hope: Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea. <i>Waste</i> ; <b>Recommended:</b> Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic. Opportunities to reduce food waste in the 2018 Farm Bill	
13		Alt Ag: Urban Farms & Localism	Kaufman & Bailkey 2000 Farming inside cities; Clancy & Ruhf, 2011. "Is Local Enough? Some Arguments for Regional Food Systems"; Knupfer 2013. <i>Food Co-ops in America</i> . Selected Chs.	<b>Two Current Events</b>

14		Alt Ag: Agroecology and Future of Food Systems	Obersteiner et al. 2010. Green Food Systems for 9 billion. p301-317; Jackson & Berry, 2009. "A 50-year Farm Bill."; Lyson, 2007. "Civic Ag & the North American Food System" pp.19-32	<b>Presentations</b>
15		In-Class Exercise	Student Presentations	<b>Presentations</b>
16		No Class		<b>Final Paper</b>