

GGR 107H1-F

Environment, Food, and People

University of Toronto, Fall 2020

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Online Office Hours: Thursdays: 10am to 2pm via Bb Collaborate

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Course Description

This course critically examines the relations between food, nature, and society. Food is fundamental to human existence and is different across different cultures – it also shapes and is shaped by physical and social environments. This course uses food as a lens to explore human-environment interactions locally and globally and introduces students to the study of geography by exploring the ways food is produced, processed, distributed and consumed. The course will begin with a description of the actors and institutions that contributed to the formation of the contemporary food system (Module 2 and 3). Next we will look at the ecological resources that are necessary for the food production (Module 4) and the challenges that are arising from climate change, water use and dietary change (Module 5). We will specifically look at the increasing consumption of meat products and evaluate its impact on the environment (Module 6). We will also highlight the human labour necessary for our growing our food, which people do such work and why (Module 7). Module 8 and 9 will focus more on consumption and examine health consequences of our food system. Module 10 will critically evaluate the concept of food security, and Module 11 will look at possible models for alternative agri-food systems. The final module will review course themes.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will:

- Possess academic research skills including the ability to identify, evaluate, and synthesize arguments in peer-reviewed journal articles
- Possess critical, self-directed reading habits.
- Understand the historical and contemporary forces that created (and continue to shape) the global food system.
- Understand concepts and theories that help explain the complex social, environmental, and economic relations that exist behind the everyday food items we consume.

Course Organization

Access to Course Materials

This is an online course that has both synchronous and asynchronous components. Course content will be accessible on Quercus. This includes links to lectures, videos, podcasts, readings, and quizzes, as well as online tutorials, online office hours, and assignment submissions. For this course, Quercus will essentially be your one-stop-shop for the course; by the end of the term I'm sure we will all be experts at navigating it.

The course content is organized into 12 Modules. Each Module will have a "To Do List" of all the activities you must do to complete the module. This will often include watching a recorded (and brief) lecture, reading specific chapters and articles, watching and/or listening to supplementary material, attending tutorials, and completing the module's quiz.

Required Text

Sage, C. (2011). *Environment and food*. Routledge.

There are 70 copies of the text available at the University of Toronto bookstore for those wanting a hard copy of the course text. You may also find new and used copies from other sellers online (Amazon, Indigo, Abebooks, etc). An e-book version is also available to purchase through Amazon, Kobo, the Google Play Store, and other retailers. A pdf version of the entire book is also available **for free** through the University of Toronto Library. You will need you UTorID to access the book. Please connect with library services if you are having trouble. All other required readings (articles and book chapters) are available either online or through the University's library website.

Tutorials:

Tutorials are synchronous and mandatory! Attendance will be taken, and participation expected. Each tutorial will be held synchronously online at scheduled times. Please double check the time of the tutorial you selected when you registered for the course. Each tutorial is scheduled for 2 hours. I doubt tutorials will last for the full two hours, but please be available during that time.

Tutorials are a way to generate discussion about the week's content in smaller groups. This space is meant to be less structured than lectures and provide you, the student, with the opportunity to put into words your thoughts about the issues and concepts presented in the readings, lectures, and other content. It is also a space where you are free to ask questions to clarify course content and assignment instructions.

Online tutorials are likely new for all of us, so please do not hesitate to speak with myself, or your TA about possible ways to improve the experience.

Each module will come with a tutorial guide that will also help you prepare for tutorial. These guides will help you focus on the most relevant information for the tutorial. Please look on Quercus for more strategies to effectively engage in tutorials.

There will be 9 tutorials throughout the term. Your first tutorial will be during the week of Sept. 14 – 18.

Please note there will be no tutorials during the following weeks:

- Oct. 12 – 16 (Thanksgiving)

- Nov. 9 – 13 (Reading Week)
- Nov. 22 – 28 (Week of Final Assignment)
- Dec. 7 – 11 (Final Week)

You will spend a significant amount of time preparing, attending, and engaging in tutorials. As such, tutorials are worth 20% of your final grade, and attendance is mandatory. Half of the 20% is based solely on attendance (approximately 1.1% per tutorial). The other half (10%) is based on the quality of your participation during the tutorial and other engagement in the course, such as discussion forums (See the rubric posted at the bottom of the Assignment>Tutorial link in Quercus)

Please make sure you attend the tutorial for which you are registered:

TUT0101: Monday 14:00 to 16:00, TA: Katherine
 TUT0201: Tuesday 10:00 to 12:00, TA: Nil
 TUT0301: Tuesday 14:00 to 16:00, TA: Jaimie
 TUT0302: Tuesday 14:00 to 16:00, TA: Katherine
 TUT0401: Wednesday 14:00 to 16:00, TA: Benjamin
 TUT0401: Wednesday 14:00 to 16:00: Natasha
 TUT0501: Tuesday 09:00 to 11:00, TA: Jaimie
 TUT0601: Wednesday 10:00 to 12:00, TA: Nil
 TUT5101: Monday 17:00 to 19:00, TA : Katherine
 TUT5201: Monday 18:00 to 20:00, TA : Benjamin
 TUT5301: Tuesday 19:00 to 21:00, TA: Jaimie

“Experiments” with Food at Home (Voluntary):

A major theme of this course is how the simple act of purchasing food hides all sorts of social and environmental relationships, including all the biological processes involved in food production and transformation. As such, I thought it might be fun to reacquaint ourselves with growing and transforming food in our own households. I will upload some videos throughout the term under the “Discussions” tab that provide ideas on how to grow/bake/ferment some food commodities. You can post your own photos and write brief descriptions about your experiences, successes, and inevitable failures.

Please note, this is **NOT a mandatory part of the class and failure to participate will not impact your grade in any way**. It is meant to simply add a bit more fun and practical learning you can do at home. However, any discussions, posts, photos, or questions can contribute to your tutorial participation mark (not the attendance portion), as such work provides further evidence of your engagement in this online class. As such, this is more like “bonus” or “make up” marks which might be particularly relevant for those of you who feel like you haven’t participated in the tutorials as much as you would have liked.

Assignments and Evaluation

1. Tutorial Participation	20%	Ongoing
2. Quizzes	10%	See Quizzes in Quercus for specific due dates
3. Annotated Bibliography	20%	Oct. 14, 2020 at 11:59pm
4. Commodity Story	30%	Nov. 29, 2020 at 11:59
5. Take Home Exam	20%	Dec. 11, 9am to Dec. 14, 9am

Assignment Details

1. Tutorial Participation (20%)

Please review the Tutorial section as outlined above.

2. 10 Reading Quizzes (10%) – Due Date: Ongoing throughout the term

There is a total of **10 reading quizzes** throughout the term. I am sure you will do well on the quizzes assuming you have actually read the appropriate chapter, watched the online lecture, and completed the other supplementary materials!

Each quiz will be made up of 10 multiple choice questions that correspond to the week's content. Quizzes are not cumulative. That means, for example, Module 2's content will only appear on Module 2's quiz and will not appear on later quizzes.

Once you start the quiz, you will have up to 90 minutes to answer all the questions (If you have done the readings and taken notes, quizzes will likely take less than 15 minutes).

You may start each quiz whenever you like. However, please note that each quiz will have a deadline approximately one week after the module. Failure to begin a quiz prior to its deadline will result in a zero on that quiz. If, for example, the quiz deadline is Oct. 4 at 11:59pm, as soon as the clock turns to 12:00am, you will no longer be able to access the quiz. Please refer to the course calendar or "Quizzes" tab on the left to see the quiz deadlines.

After you submit the quiz, you will immediately see your score (out of 10). Correct answers, however, will not be visible until the quiz deadline.

3. Annotated Bibliography (20%) – Due date: Oct. 16th at 11:59pm

For this assignment, you will select a particular food commodity which will serve as your topic for the final assignment. Please do not select sugar, papaya, or strawberries as we discuss these in detail in class. For this food commodity, you will prepare an **annotated bibliography using five peer-reviewed articles**.

The objective of this assignment is to gain experience finding, summarizing, and evaluating peer-reviewed journal articles on a topic of your choice. The ability to quickly read and summarize an author's argument in your own words is an indispensable skill that will greatly benefit you throughout your university experience. We will use time during tutorials to address any questions or concerns you have about the annotated bibliography.

More details and instructions for the assignment are available on Quercus.

4. Food Commodity Story (30%) – Nov. 29th at 11:59pm

"Commodity Stories" are methodological analyses that seek to uncover the diverse social, environmental, political, and economic relationships that underpin the production, distribution, and consumption of everyday items we purchase. In 2000 words or less, write a "food commodity story" that follows the journey of one particular food item from field (or sea) to plate.

You may choose any food commodity you wish (other than Sugar, Papayas, or Strawberries), assuming you will find enough relevant information to complete the assignment. I think it would be best to choose a primary commodity that has not yet been mixed with other ingredients (for

instance, writing about "pizza" would be challenging because you would have to discuss wheat, tomatoes, and cheese... at a minimum!). Talk to your TA if you have any questions about your topic choice.

The paper should address all of the following questions in a clear and logical manner:

- Where, when, and why did the food commodity become a commodity in the first place?
- Where and how is the food commodity currently produced?
- What environments are necessary to produce the food item and what impact (if any) does the commodity have on the environment?
- Who are the labourers that produce the commodity?
- Which actors, companies, or organizations are responsible for processing, trading, and distributing the food commodity?
- Which of the actors in the commodity chain that profit the most; which actors (if any) suffer?
- Who consumes the food commodity and why do they consume it (taste, culture, cost, meaning, etc).

For more detailed instructions please see the assignment description and assignment rubric posted on Quercus.

5. Take Home Exam (20%) – December 11th 9am to December 14th 9am.

Your final assessment will be a three-day take home exam that will require you to write a 1500 – 2000 word essay that uses the course material as your sources. At 9am EST on December 11th, I will post the exam, which will be comprised of three, strongly worded, provocative statements. You must choose ONE of the statements and evaluate its validity. For example, one of the statements might say something like: *“The only sustainable agricultural system is an organic agricultural system!”* You will have three full days to provide an evaluative response to one of the three statements.

The objective of the exam is to demonstrate your engagement in the class (have you done the readings, watched the lectures, and attended the tutorials?) and your ability use this knowledge to evaluate a provocative statement about our relationship to food and the environment. I will provide more details during the final module to help you prepare.

Submissions

The Food Commodity Story and Take Home Exam will be automatically submitted to Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University’s use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site. *Students may opt out of submitting their assignment to Turnitin.com. In such cases, the student may be required to submit additional documentation to demonstrate the originality of their work such as previous drafts, or copies of notes.*

Late Penalties

A late penalty of 5% of the total value of the assignment will be deducted from the grade per day for late work (including weekend days). Extensions will be granted in the case of illness or other

emergencies, with appropriate documentation. If you require accommodation for a disability or long-term illness, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible at disability.services@utoronto.ca.

Course Schedule

Module 1 – Sept. 14 - 20

Topic: Introduction to Food, Environment, People

Readings:

- Sage, C. (2012) Chapter 1 -- Introduction: Why environment, why food, p 1-14
- Course Syllabus
- Berry, W. (1989) -- [The pleasures of eating](#)

Module 2 – Sept. 21 - 27

Topic: The global food system – Part I

Commodity of the week: Sugar

Readings:

- Sage, C. (2012): Chapter 2 -- The global agri-food system, p 14-66
- Podcast: [Sweetness and Desire: A short history of Sugar](#) (5 episodes, 14 minutes each).

Module 3 – Sept. 28 – Oct. 4

Topic: The Global Food System – Part II: Competing Paradigms

Commodities of the week: The Three Sisters

Readings:

- Lang & Heasman (2015): Chapter 2 -- The food wars thesis, p. 16-53 (online available on University of Toronto Library via Taylor & Francis Group)
- Kimmerer, R. W. (2013). *Braiding sweetgrass: Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge and the teachings of plants*. Milkweed Editions. Chapter: The Three Sisters p 128-140.

Module 4 – Oct. 5 - 11

Topic: The Agro-ecology of Primary Food Production.

Commodity of the Week: Papaya

Readings:

- Sage, C. (2012): Chapter 3 -- The agro-ecology of primary food production, p 67-111
- Cook, I. (2004). Follow the thing: Papaya. *Antipode*, 36(4), 642-664.

Podcast: [Culinary Commodities](#). (First 12 minutes only)

Module 5 – Oct. 12 - 18

Topic: Challenges to Food Production

Commodity of the Week: Coffee and Maple Syrup

Readings:

- Sage (2012): Chapter 4 -- Global challenges to food production p 111-156
- Hickel (2019): [The Global Food Crisis is Here](#).
- Dewey, C. (2017). [The race to save coffee Chicago Tribune](#).

Videos:

- [Can the Maple Syrup Industry Weather the Effects of Climate Change](#)

Module 6 – Oct. 19 - 25

Topic: Meatification

Commodity of the week: Meat Cells

Readings:

- Richie, H (2020) [Environmental Impacts of Food Production](#)
- Weis, T. (2013). The meat of the global food crisis. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 40(1), 65–85. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2012.752357>

Video:

- The Future of Meat, Season 2 *Explained*, available on Netflix.

Module 7 – Oct. 26 – Nov. 1

Topic: Labour and Food

Commodity of the Week: People

Readings

- Preibisch, K. (2010), Pick-Your-Own Labor: Migrant Workers and Flexibility in Canadian Agriculture. *International Migration Review*, 44: 404-441.
- Guthman, J. (2018), Chapter six: Scarce Labour, Disposable Bodies, in *Wilted: Pathogens, Chemicals, and the Fragile Future of the Strawberry Industry*. University of California.

Videos: [How a boom in migrant farm workers is transforming Leamington](#)
[Migrant workers left unpaid in Ontario, Canada Farm](#)
[Seasonal Agricultural Workers in Canada: An employee perspective](#)

Module 8 – Nov. 2 – 8

Topic: On Consumption

Commodity of the Week: New Jersey Wine

Readings:

- Sage (2012) Chapter 5: Final Foods and their Consequences p 156-208.
- Allen, P, and Sachs, C 2012. Women and Food Chains: The Gendered Politics of Food. In (eds) P. W. Forson and Counihan, C. Taking food public: redefining foodways in a changing world (Electronic version of the chapter is available through the University's library with your U of T id)

Podcast:

- [New Jersey Wine, Planet Money](#) (20 minutes)

Reading Week: Nov. 9 – 15

Module 9 – Nov. 16 – 22

Topic: Human Health

Commodity of the Week: Corn and its derivatives

Readings:

- Guthman, J. (2007) Chapter 6 "Does farm policy make you fat?" and Chapter 7 " Will fresh, organic, local food make you thin? In: *Weighing In: Obesity, Food Justice, and the Limits of Capitalism*.
- Interview with Karen Washington, [The Guardian](#).

Videos: (watch these short videos in order).

- [The Pitfalls of Nutritionism](#) (3 minutes)

- [Too much sugar](#) (3 minutes)
- [Calorie Conveyor Belt](#) (3 minutes)
- [The food deserts of Memphis: inside America's hunger capital](#) (13 minutes)

Module 10 – Nov. 23 –29

Topic: Rethinking Food Security

Commodity of the Week: Rice

Readings:

- Sage, C. (2012). Chapter 6 Rethinking Food Security p. 209-248

Video: [The Politics of Rice in Haiti](#) (17 minutes)

Module 11 – Nov. 30 – Dec 6

Topic: Toward a Sustainable Food System

Commodity of the Week: Kernza Wheat

Readings:

- Sage, C. (2012) Chapter 7: Toward a Sustainable Food System, p 250-292
- Coté, Charlotte. 2016. “Indigenizing” food sovereignty: Revitalizing Indigenous food practices and ecological knowledges in Canada and the United States. *Humanities* 5(3), 57
- [With New Perennial Grain, a Step Forward for Eco-Friendly Agriculture.](#)

Video: [The Land Institute](#) (9 minutes)

Module 12 – Dec. 7 – 10

Topic: Toward a sustainable Food System Part II, Concluding Thoughts, and Final Assessment

Readings:

- Sage, C. (2012) Conclusion. p 293 to 296.
- Course Evaluation
- Final Assessment Assignment Instructions

Course Policies and Expectations

Communication

Your TA will be the first point of contact for any of your questions or concerns about the course. Please allow 48 hours for (excluding weekends) for a response. Each TA will hold online office hours (through Bb collaborate on Quercus) and students are encouraged to use that time for individual attention. Do not expect detailed answers to your questions via email. If you are not available during office hours, you may set up an appointment at another time with the TA. The Instructor will also be happy to answer any additional questions or concerns during his online office hours (On Bb Collaborate)

General Questions regarding course content or assignments should be posted publicly on Quercus, as many other students will likely have similar questions. Please note that any public discussion, including questions about assignments, can contribute to your participation grade. There is a discussion tab in Quercus: don't be afraid to use it.

Accessibility Services

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me

and/or the [AccessAbility Services Office](#) as soon as possible. I will work with you and AccessAbility Services to ensure you can achieve your learning goals in this course. Enquiries are confidential. Please note the following message regarding COVID 19 measures:
While in-person classes and exams have been cancelled and moved to other means (e.g., online platforms), AccessAbility Services remains available to provide you supports through phone and other online platforms.

Mental Health

Mental health is a significant issue on university campuses. Students finding themselves in distress or facing emotionally challenging times are strongly encouraged to consult the counselling and wellness services and supports available on campus. Please consult the following websites [here](#) and [here](#) for information on the various supports available on campus:

Extension Requests/Missed Quizzes

The University is temporarily suspending the need for a doctor's note or medical certificate for absences from academic participation. Please use the **Absence Declaration tool on ACORN** to declare an absence if you require consideration for missed academic work. You are responsible for contacting your instructors to request the academic consideration you are seeking. Record each day of your absence as soon as it begins, up until the day before you return to classes or other academic activities.

Contesting Grades

A student may contest their grade only under the following conditions: i) they have waited at least 24 hours from the time they received their grade, and no later than two weeks. Please do not contact the TA immediately after receiving a grade; ii) they have read *in detail* all comments and corrections by the TA; iii) they describe in writing the specific reason(s) why they believe the grade is unjustified. **This must include reference to the assignment instructions, the assignment rubric, as well as the TA comments;** iv) they send this description in a cordial email to the TA stated their request for a second evaluation. The TA will, when necessary, review the grade and comments and consult with the Instructor and respond to the request within an appropriate time frame.

Recording/electronics usage

The unauthorised use of any form of device to audiotape, photograph, video-record or otherwise reproduce lectures, course notes or teaching materials provided by instructors is covered by the Canadian Copyright Act and is prohibited. For an online course, this includes screen captures or unauthorized sharing of unlisted lecture links. Students must obtain prior written consent for such recording or sharing. In the case of private use by students with disabilities, the instructor's consent must not be unreasonably withheld.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is fundamental to learning and scholarship at the University of Toronto. The University of Toronto treats cases of academic misconduct very seriously. At the University of Toronto, examples of academic offences include:

- Using someone else's ideas without appropriate acknowledgement (in-text citation)
- Copying material word-for-word from a source and not placing the words within quotation marks (it isn't enough to put a citation there – the author's own words **MUST** be in quotations)
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor
- Making up sources or facts, or including references to sources that you did not use
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment including:
 - having someone else complete part or all of an assignment for you
 - working in groups on assignments that are supposed to be individual work
 - having someone rewrite or add material to your work while editing (having someone read your work is a good idea, but they should tell you what is wrong, not fix it for you)
- Lending your work to a classmate who submits it as his/her own

The consequences for academic misconduct can be severe, including a failure in the course and a notation on your transcript. If you have any questions about what is or is not permitted in this course, please do not hesitate to contact the instructor or TAs. More information is available [here](#).

On Writing:

The ability to write a well-organized paper, report or essay in clear and correct English is an essential skill for a university student. Completing the assignments for this course will give you the opportunity to receive advice on weaknesses in your writing skills and on how to improve them. A proportion of the mark for the Annotated Bibliography Assignment and the Food Commodity Assignment will be allocated to the quality of the writing.

The University of Toronto has an excellent Writing Centres and resources [here](#).