

## Interdisciplinary Programmes

Academic year 2018-2019

### Agrarian Worlds: Practice, Power, Place

DE130 - Spring - 6 ECTS

#### Course Description

This course examines the social and political dimensions of food and agriculture. We consider the ways in which agriculture shapes and is shaped by households and communities, ecological and social environments, as well as state, corporate, and regulatory institutions. Beginning with some of the preeminent nodes of agrarian worlds—plantations, smallholder households, and factory farms—we then move to explore key contemporary debates that engage the complexities of practice, power, and place in food and agricultural systems. These include sustainable certifications, land acquisition, biofuel and bioenergy development, and carbon sequestration. By the end of this course, it is expected that students will develop an historically informed, multifaceted understanding of the social, political and cultural dimensions of food and agriculture.

#### > PROFESSOR

Shaila Seshia Galvin  
[shaila.seshia@graduateinstitute.ch](mailto:shaila.seshia@graduateinstitute.ch)

[Office hours](#)

#### > ASSISTANT

Aikokul Arzieva  
[aikokul.arzieva@graduateinstitute.ch](mailto:aikokul.arzieva@graduateinstitute.ch)

[Office hours](#)

#### Syllabus (subject to revision)

**Attendance and Class Participation (20%):** I expect you to come to class on time, having read and reflected on the readings, ready to participate by contributing your ideas and questions. Please inform me in advance should you need to miss class. Repeated absences will hinder not only your participation but also your success in the class overall. On the days when you submit a reading response (see below), I may ask you to help kick-off class discussion by briefly summarizing a key idea presented in the reading or by raising a question or issue for discussion.

**Reading Responses (20%):** Over the course of the semester, you will be required to post on Moodle several reading responses by 9pm the night before class. Your responses should be 700 words in length, please attach them as a Word document and also paste the text into the Moodle forum. Your responses should briefly highlight the central idea of each reading, discuss connections, similarities, or differences among them; and where relevant make connections to course material and discussions from other sessions. You may also choose to discuss what you perceive to be their merits and/or weaknesses, raise questions and provide critical assessment of the arguments and ideas. In

evaluating your responses, I will look for demonstration of careful reading, as well as original, creative and reflective thought.

Once enrollments have stabilized, you will be able to submit your preferences for the weeks for which you would like to write a response.

**Food (and fuel) for thought : case study research presentations (20%)**

During Weeks 5 – 9, part of each class will be dedicated to the presentation of a case study which articulates closely with the theme of class for that day, and is focused on a set of agrarian practices and/or a real or potential agricultural commodity. The purpose of the case study presentation is to explore a real-world example, which illuminates some aspect of the theme we are taking up in class, and allows us collectively to place the case in conversation with issues, questions, and problems raised by the assigned readings. The following are provisional case study topics, although there is considerable scope to refine or revise their focus.

Date	Class Theme	Case Study
March 20	The factory farm	Vertical integration in the meat industry
March 27	Certifying sustainable futures?	Sustainable Cotton
April 3	Land acquisitions & enclosure	Oil palm
April 10	Farming fuel	Soybean
April 17	Carbon sequestration	Anthropogenic dark earths and/or biochar

To facilitate your research and making connections with the class for that day, groups are strongly advised to meet with me and the course TA to discuss their ideas and plans for the case study. This project will require you to work in groups to research and prepare your presentation (no written work need be submitted). The formation of groups, and circulation of further guidelines, will take place early in the semester.

**Final Research Paper & Workshop Participation (40%):** The culminating requirement for this class will be a research paper of 3,000 words that extends course themes and/or readings on a topic of your choosing. I encourage you in the first weeks of the semester to use my office hours to discuss possible ideas for your paper. A 250-word abstract, outline, and preliminary bibliography will be due by email on April 1, 9am.

Weeks 13 & 14 will be dedicated to work-shopping drafts of your final papers. These drafts should be approximately 1,000-1,500 words in length, and should be uploaded to Moodle by 9am on the Monday of the week you are presenting. All members of class are expected to read and comment on each other's drafts, and during this workshop you will also act as a discussant for the draft paper submitted by one of your peers. Final papers are due on June 4 at 9am.

**Contact**

Email is the best way to contact me, and between 9am and 5pm during the working week I will do my best to respond to your email as soon as possible. At other times of day, and on the weekends, it may take me longer to respond. I will use Moodle to circulate class announcements, assignments, resources, and other course-related information. I encourage you to attend my office hours, and I can also meet with you by appointment.

**Academic Honesty**

The free exchange of ideas, at the Graduate Institute and as members of a larger intellectual community, hinges on academic honesty and integrity. Plagiarism involves deliberately or inadvertently representing the work of others as one's own. Please refer to the Graduate Institute's

policy on academic honesty and plagiarism, available in the "Academic Policies and Regulations" section of the Student Portal.

While research and knowledge advance in part because we use and build on the ideas of others, it is vital that we always acknowledge our sources. I encourage each of you to develop a consistent system for note taking, referencing, and citing your sources. Please use the Chicago author-date system for both in-text citations and bibliographies. See:  
<http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>

I encourage you to visit the Graduate Institute's Library where you will find information on training presentations for using bibliographic and referencing software such as EndNote and Zotero.

Please do not hesitate to see me if you ever have any questions about academic honesty and how it applies to your work.

### **Late Work**

Late assignments will lose  $\frac{1}{4}$  point for each day of lateness. Extensions will be granted only in exceptional circumstances.

### **Technology in the Classroom**

Use of technology within the classroom must be limited to only that which is necessary for note-taking or consulting course material. Please disable Wi-Fi settings on laptops or tablets to minimize sources of distraction to you and others during class. I do not allow the use of cell phones or other mobile devices inside the classroom.

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### **Week 1 | February 20: Introduction**

Ehrlich, Paul R., and John P. Holdren. 1971. "Impact of Population Growth." *Science* 171(3977): 1212-1217.  
Sharp, Philip A., and Alan Leshner. 2016. We Need a New Green Revolution. *New York Times*, January 4.  
*Nero's Guests*. 2009. Directed by Deepa Bhatia. (56 min.) Available on YouTube:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4q6m5NqrCJs>

### **Week 2 | February 27: Agricultural revolutions and questions of power**

Evenson, R. E., and D. Gollin. 2003. Assessing the Impact of the Green Revolution, 1960 to 2000. *Science* 300 (5620):758-762.  
Scott, James C. 1998. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Chapter 1: Nature and Space.

### **Week 3 | March 6: Plantations, past and present**

Mintz, Sidney Wilfred. 1985. *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*. New York, N.Y.: Viking. Chapter 2: Production.  
Besky, Sarah. 2008. "Can a Plantation Be Fair? Paradoxes and Possibilities in Fair Trade Darjeeling Tea Certification." *Anthropology of Work Review* 29 (1):1-9.

### **Week 4 | March 13: Smallholder cultivation**

McC. Netting, Robert. 1993. *Smallholders, Householders: Farm Families and the Ecology of Intensive, Sustainable Agriculture*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. pp. 28-101.  
Dove, Michael R. 2000. "The Life-Cycle of Indigenous Knowledge, and the Case of Natural Rubber Production." In *Indigenous Environmental Knowledge and Its Transformations: Critical Anthropological Perspectives*, edited by R. Ellen, P. Parkes and A. Bicker, 213-51. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers.

**Week 5 | March 20: The factory farm**

Dunn, Elizabeth. 2007. "Escherichia Coli, Corporate Discipline and the Failure of the Sewer State." *Space and Polity* 11 (1):35-53.

Pachirat, Timothy. 2011. *Every twelve seconds : industrialized slaughter and the politics of sight*, New Haven: Yale University Press. Chapter 3, "The Kill Floor"; Chapter 6, "Killing at Close Range".

Blanchette, Alex. 2015. "Herding Species: Biosecurity, Posthuman Labor, and the American Industrial Pig." *Cultural Anthropology* 30(4):640-669.

❖ Case study presentation on vertical integration in the meat industry

**Week 6 | March 27: Certifying Sustainable Futures? Organic agriculture and Fair Trade**

Jaffee, Daniel. 2009. "'Better, but Not Great': The Social and Environmental Benefits and Limitations of Fair Trade for Indigenous Coffee Producers in Oaxaca, Mexico'." In *The Impact of Fair Trade*, edited by Ruerd Ruben, 195-222. Wageningen: Wageningen Academic Publishers.

Flachs, Andrew. 2016. "Redefining Success: The Political Ecology of Genetically Modified and Organic Cotton as Solutions to Agrarian Crisis." *Journal of Political Ecology* 23 (1):49-70.

Seshia Galvin, Shaila. 2018. "The Farming of Trust: Organic Certification and the Limits of Transparency in Uttarakhand, India." *American Ethnologist* 45 (4):495-507.

❖ Case study presentation on sustainable cotton

**Week 7 | April 3: Transforming land relations through acquisition and enclosure**

Li, Tania Murray. 2011. "Centering Labor in the Land Grab Debate." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 38 (2):281-98.

Levien, Michael. 2012. "The Land Question: Special Economic Zones and the Political Economy of Dispossession in India." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 39 (3-4):933-69.

Li, Tania. 2014. *Land's End : Capitalist Relations on an Indigenous Frontier*. Durham ; London: Duke University Press. Required: Chapter 3; Recommended: Introduction.

❖ Case study presentation on oil palm

**Week 8 | April 10: Farming fuel**

Borras, Saturnino M.; Jennifer C. Franco; S. Ryan Isakson; Les Levidow, and Pietje Vervest. 2016. "The Rise of Flex Crops and Commodities: Implications for Research." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 43 (1):93-115.

Baka, Jennifer. 2017. "Making Space for Energy: Wasteland Development, Enclosures, and Energy Dispossession." *Antipode* 49 (4): 977-96.

Hitchner, Sarah; John Schelhas, and J. Peter Brosius. 2017. "'Even Our Dairy Queen Shut Down': Risk and Resilience in Bioenergy Development in Forest-Dependent Communities in the US South." *Economic Anthropology* 4 (2):186-99.

❖ Case study presentation on soybean

**Week 9 | April 17: Agrarian economies/ecologies of carbon sequestration**

Reno, Joshua. 2011. "Motivated Markets: Instruments and Ideologies of Clean Energy in the United Kingdom." *Cultural Anthropology* 26 (3):389-413.

McAfee, Kathleen, and Elizabeth N. Shapiro. 2010. "Payments for Ecosystem Services in Mexico: Nature, Neoliberalism, Social Movements, and the State." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 100(3):579-599.

Leach, Melissa, James Fairhead, and James Fraser. 2012. Green grabs and biochar: Revaluing African soils and farming in the new carbon economy. *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 39 (2):285-307.

❖ Case study presentation on terra preta, anthropogenic dark earths, and/or biochar

**Week 10 | April 24 | Vacances de Pâques (no class)**

**Week 11 | May 1 | Fête du Travail (no class)**

**Week 12 | May 8: Agriculture and the anthropocene: Re-imagining agrarian worlds through interspecies relations**

Ives, Sarah. 2014. "Uprooting "Indigeneity" in South Africa's Western Cape: The Plant That Moves." *American Anthropologist* 116 (2):310-23.

Chapman, Susannah. 2018. "To Make One's Name Famous: Varietal Innovation and Intellectual Property in the Gambia." *American Ethnologist* 45 (4):482-94.

Chao, Sophie. 2018. "In the Shadow of the Palm: Dispersed Ontologies among Marind, West Papua." *Cultural Anthropology* 33, (4): 621–649.

**Week 13 | May 15: Final Paper Workshop**

**Week 14 | May 22: Final Paper Workshop**

**Week 15 | May 29: Wrap-up discussion**