Interdisciplinary Programmes

Academic year 2019-2020

Agrarian Worlds: Practice, Power, Place

DE130 - Spring - 6 ECTS

Monday 10h15 - 12h00

Course Description

This course examines the social and political dimensions of food and agriculture. It considers 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. With attention to the close interlinkages of agriculture and environment in a world marked by ecological crises and intensifying inequality, at 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

Office hours

ASSISTANT

Facundo Daniel Rivarola Ghiglione

Office hours

Syllabus

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. As part of your participation grade, you are additionally expected to attend and participate in the Lunch Briefing I will offer on May 5.

Discussion Questions (10%): Beginning in week 2, you will be required to post on Moodle two discussion questions linked to the readings assigned for that week. Your questions should be posted by 9am on the morning of class, and you should take some time to read through the questions that
others have posted before class. Your questions may address each reading separately, or they may link the readings together. You may use the questions to highlight aspects of the ideas, arguments, or suggestions in the readings that you would like to explore in greater depth, or had difficulty understanding.

Discussion questions will be assessed in terms of how well they engage with and offer a reflection on the assigned readings. They will be graded as follows:
6 – excellent (showing close reading and thoughtful reflection)
5 – good (some evidence of close reading and reflection, but questions are somewhat more general or less well connected to the readings)
4 – pass (submitted)
3 – not submitted

Discussion questions will be due every week (with the exception of Weeks 6, 14, and 15). Of the 11 weeks for which you will post questions, I will count only the best 9 toward the tally of your cumulative grade for this requirement.

Food (and fuel) for thought: case study research presentations (20%)
During Weeks 7-13, 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 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.

Possible topics for case studies will be circulated at the beginning of the semester, once enrollments have stabilized.

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. 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.

Two essays (50%)
To permit you to engage independently, and in greater depth, with the readings, as well as broader themes of the course, you will be required to write a shorter mid-term essay, and a longer final essay.

Mid-term essay (20%): You will have a choice of essay prompts to respond to, and these will be circulated at the beginning of the semester. This essay will require you to engage mainly with the course readings. The essay should be individually authored and 1,500 words in length. This essay will be due on Friday, April 3, 2020 at 9am.

Final essay (30%): Prompts for this essay will also be circulated at the beginning of the semester. The selection of prompts for this essay will allow you either to address a theme closely related to the course readings, or to craft your own question or problem that will allow you to pursue independent research beyond the course material. These essays may be written either individually, or in pairs. Single-authored essays should be 2,000 words in length, and co-authored essays 3,000 words. This essay will be due on Friday, May 29, 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 ¼ 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 17: Introduction**

Nero’s Guests. 2009. Directed by Deepa Bhatia. (56 min.) Available on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4q6m5NgrCJs


**Week 2 | February 24: Agriculture and ecological crisis I: the Dust Bowl**

Week 3 | March 2: Agricultural revolutions and questions of power

Week 4 | March 9: Spaces and scales of agrarian worlds: smallholder and plantation systems

Week 5 | March 16: Ethical life and agrarian societies: from moral economies to food sovereignty

Week 6 | March 23: Invisible Hands: Labor and Migration in American Agriculture
Film: The Harvest/La Cosecha: The Story of the Children Who Feed America (Shine Global 2010, 80 minutes)

Week 7 | March 30: The factory farm

Week 8 | April 6: Transforming land relations through acquisition and enclosure

Week 9 | April 13: Vacances de Pâques (no class)

Week 10 | April 20: The new food/energy complex: farming fuel
Week 11 | April 27: Agriculture and ecological crisis II: land, agriculture, and climate change

Week 12 | May 4: Certifying Sustainable Futures? Fair Trade

May 5 *Lunch Briefing: Sustainable Agriculture's Promise and Perils*

Week 13 | May 11: Certifying Sustainable Futures? Organic agriculture

Week 14 | May 18: Endings and beginnings: the future of food and agriculture
In class discussion of key themes and questions addressed in and emerging from the course

Week 15 | May 25: Consultations on final papers in lieu of class