INTRODUCTION

The production of food is the single most important arena of human interaction with the environment: it impacts most of the world's land, fresh water, and marine ecosystems; it has profound effects on human health, equity and well-being; and it contributes significantly to—and will be strongly affected by—climate change. How is food produced, distributed and consumed today? How did the world’s food system come into being? What are its social and environmental implications? How might it change, or be changed, in the future?

Not surprisingly, the issue of food has long been central to both political economy and environmental activism. Adam Smith and Karl Marx saw strong links between wages and the price of food, and therefore between food and the economy as a whole. In his famous Essay on the Principle of Population, Thomas Malthus argued that food production could not increase as fast as population, and that “misery and vice” were therefore inevitable. In the US, concerns about contaminated food and food-borne diseases led to some of nation’s earliest federal regulations. Struggles over food—how and where it is produced, by and for whom, and with what consequences—can be found almost everywhere today.

This course begins from the proposition that human-environment relations are always social relations. How food and other natural resources are produced, distributed, valued, consumed, conserved and degraded are historically- and geographically-specific questions whose answers cannot be reduced to simple formulas. To be sure, the world’s population has never been larger, and its environmental prospects have never been so dim as at present. But the outcomes of human-environment interactions are neither preordained nor very predictable.

The question is how to understand these relations as simultaneously social and ecological. We will examine food, population and the environment geographically and historically and take a closer look at Malthus's famous essay and its place in classical political economy. We will examine case studies of colonial famines, the Dust Bowl, the Corn Belt, meat production and population control. We will also consider the politics of food, food related social movements, issues of public health and obesity, and the prospects for agriculture in the face of climate change. We will see that issues of food and the environment are always intimately related to political and economic relations—colonialism, capitalism, the state, and scientific knowledge—and that to abstract “the natural” from “the social” is at best naïve and at worst dangerous.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING CRITERIA

Discussion section attendance and participation (25% of final grade): Attendance at discussion sections is required. Students are expected to arrive each week prepared to participate actively in discussion, and to complete homework assignments on time.

Mid-term exam (20%): A take-home mid-term exam will be handed out at the end of lecture on March 2nd and will be due at the beginning of lecture on March 9th. The exam will consist of 3-5 essay questions, of which you will be asked to answer two. Taken together, your essays should total 8-10 pages in length (double-spaced, 12-point font).

Research paper (20%): A 5-7 page paper will be due in lecture on April 11th. Papers must address the topic of processed food through an examination of a specific crop or food product of your choosing. What exactly does “processed” food mean? Why is processed food generally cheaper than unprocessed or “fresh” food?

Final exam (35%): The final exam will be given on Thursday, May 11th, from 8:00 to 11:00 a.m.

Please Note:
• You must complete all four components to receive a passing grade in the course.
• You are responsible for all material in the assigned readings, whether or not it is covered in lecture.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Any test, paper, report or homework submitted under your name is presumed to be your own original work that has not previously been submitted for credit in another course. All words and ideas written by other people must be properly attributed: fully identified as to source and the extent of your use of their work. Cheating, plagiarism and other academic misconduct will result in a failing grade on the assignment, paper, quiz or exam in question and will be reported to Student Judicial Affairs.

ASSIGNMENT AND EXAM POLICY

The paper, midterm, and any other assignments are due at the beginning of lecture on the assigned date. One letter grade will be deducted for each day past the due date that late work is submitted. If you anticipate a non-negotiable scheduling conflict for a paper or exam, let your GSI know as soon as possible in order to make appropriate alternate arrangements.
ATTENDANCE POLICY

Success in this class depends on regular attendance and participation. Students will be allowed one unexcused absence from discussion section.

OFFICE HOURS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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PODCAST AND WEBSITE

Audio of the course lectures will be available five days after the lectures are given from: http://webcast.berkeley.edu/courses. Please note that technical problems may cause any given lecture to be unavailable in this way. Powerpoint slides from the lectures will be posted to bcourses; in most cases they will be available the night before the lecture.

READINGS

Readings marked with an asterisk (*) below are recommended. Unmarked readings are required. Two readers are available at Vick’s Copy (corner or Hearst and Euclid): reader A contains the required readings, reader B contains the recommended readings. All readings are also available through the “Files” tab on the course website, accessible through bcourses.berkeley.edu.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Food is in the news every day, and it is a topic of intense activism and debate locally, nationally and internationally. You are encouraged to follow (and participate in) these debates during the semester, whether through visiting local markets, gardens, and organizations; volunteering; or online. Here are some websites that may be of interest:

- worldpoultry.net
- beefmagazine.com
- biofuelsdigest.com
- cornandsoybeandigest.com
- garynabhan.com
- michaelpollan.com
- http://www.leopold.iastate.edu/pubs
- http://rodaleinastitute.org/
- http://calclimateag.org/
SCHEDULE AND READINGS
* = recommended reading

I. INTRODUCTION

19 January: Food and Agriculture—a Global Perspective

24 January: Pastoralism, Fire and Grass: A Nation’s Battle for Life (film in lecture)

26 January: Feeding people or “feeding the world”? Why are so many people hungry, and what can we do about it?

II. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

31 January: Malthus and “the Dismal Science”

2 February: The Market as the Solution

7 February: The Market as the Problem
Karl Marx. 1867. *Capital*, vol. 1, ch. 15, section 10: “Large-scale industry and agriculture”; ch. 25, sections 3 and 4: “The Progressive production of a relative surplus
population or industrial reserve army” and “Different forms of existence of the relative surplus population. The general law of capitalist accumulation.”

III. UNDERSTANDING U.S. AGRICULTURE

9 February: The Columbian Exchange

14 February: Commoditying Space and Time

16 February: Environmental Crisis and the Agricultural Welfare State

21 February: Hybrid Seeds and Plant Biotechnology

23 February: California—Exception or Rule?

28 February: Chemicals

2 March: Industrial Animal Production

2 MARCH: TAKE HOME MIDTERM EXAM HANDED OUT AT THE END OF LECTURE
IV. GLOBAL FOOD AND POPULATION

7 March: Colonial Famines and the Making of the Third World
Mike Davis. 2002. Late Victorian Holocaus, pp. 25-59, 119-121.

9 MARCH: MIDTERM EXAM DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF LECTURE

9 March: Neo-Malthusianism and the Cold War

14 March: Fertilizer and the Green Revolution

16 March: Darwin’s Nightmare (film in lecture)

V. PROBLEMS AND CRITIQUES OF THE FOOD SYSTEM

21 March: Agrarian Critiques of Modern Agriculture
23 March: Obesity and Hunger


4 April: Agriculture and Climate Change


6 April: Corporate Consolidation and *Food, Inc.* (film in lecture)

11 April: PAPERS DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF LECTURE

11 April: Race and Labor

Saru Jayaraman. 2014. Shelved: How wages and working conditions for California’s food retail workers have declined as the industry has thrived. UC-Berkeley Labor Center Report, pp. 1-16.


13 April: Dangerous Mutations


*Mary J. Gilchrist, Christina Greko, David B. Wallings, George W. Beran, David G. Riley, and Peter S. Thorne. 2007. The Potential Role of Concentrated Animal


VI. WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

18 April: Encourage Local/Urban Agriculture


20 April: Encourage Certified/Organic Agriculture


25 April: Reform Agricultural Research and Policy


27 April: Strengthen Political and Economic Democracy