Geography 350
GLOBAL FOOD SYSTEMS
T-Th 2:30-3:45 pm, MS 227

Contact Dr R
Email: randlett@unr.edu or thru WebCampus
Office phone: 784-4762
Office: MS 325C
Office hrs: Th 1:30-2:30, or by appt

Course Description
In this course we will take a systems approach to understanding our food supply and our food choices. The food supply of most of the world’s seven-odd billion people is now globally sourced and/or globally marketed. Few peoples or places produce purely for local consumption, using only traditional or even local methods and inputs. Food and all aspects of its production, distribution, and consumption have been folded into a global system of economic, political, social, and environmental dimensions. Even so, food remains a deeply held part of cultural identity and traditions. Taking a systems approach to food will allow us to explore the complex interconnections among these dimensions, emphasizing both their geographies and consequences – for human and environmental health, for cultural and political integrity, for global and local economies. We will investigate the development of industrial farming and agri-business, global supply chains, food security and food sovereignty, and the values and policies that underlie them.

Catalog Description
Geographic dimensions of food production and consumption systems, emphasizing agri-business development; food supply globalization; “food” security; scale, distribution, and cultural influences.

Course Goals: and Objectives
This course meets Silver Core Curriculum Objective 11, “Global Contexts”:
Students will apply modes of academic inquiry, creative expression, or results of research to problems in historical and contemporary global contexts. Students will understand the connections
among local, national, and international contexts and evaluate the way that historical and contemporary global influences affect their local situations.

More specifically, students will pursue a greater understanding of:

1. the geographies of food sources and the globalization of food supply
2. the geographical extent and complexity of global food networks
3. the origins and development of modern industrial agriculture
4. some of the political, economic, cultural, environmental, and health implications of the current agro-food system
5. the historical and geographical contexts for development of global agricultural and food trade processes
6. Our own diets as parts of a global system as well as of individual, local, regional, and national systems

**Student Learning Outcomes**

Students will be able to:

1. Recount a complex historical and geographical narrative of the origins and development of contemporary agro-food systems
2. Critically analyze aspects of food systems as presented in contemporary media (book or film)
3. Devise, research, and present a collaborative project on global food systems that will both analyze and assess current systems and develop practical ‘real-world’ solutions for perceived problems.
4. Be conversant in a systems approach that recognizes food systems as complex, interconnected webs of many factors and dimensions that, even when they can be investigated separately, can only be understood together.

**Required texts:**

Lisa Chase and Vern Grubinger, *Food. Farms, and Community: Exploring Food Systems*, University of New Hampshire Press 2014


**Additional readings** as assigned, available on WebCampus

**Evaluation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book (1) or Films (2) Analysis</td>
<td>100 pts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes and exercises</td>
<td>120 pts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Field Trip Reports (2@50 pts)</td>
<td>100 pts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term Project</td>
<td>150 pts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance &amp; Participation</td>
<td>30 pts</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>500 pts</strong></td>
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Points will be deducted for: more than 2 absences; any late or incomplete work; inadequate citation of sources in all assignments.

Grading will be letter grades with the possibility of a plus or a minus, on the following scale:

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<th>Grade</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<th>Wk</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8/25 &amp; 27</td>
<td>Course Introduction; Project brainstorming</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>9/1 &amp; 3</td>
<td>What are food or agro-food systems? What is the Global Food System (GFS)? DUE: Prioritized list of Term Project interest areas (9/3)</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>9/8 &amp; 10</td>
<td>Emergence of modern food systems, Pt 1 Configuration of Project Pairs and Teams (9/8)</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>9/15 &amp; 17</td>
<td>Emergence of modern food systems, Pt 2 Guest: Chad Kleidosty, HOPS ENVY, Inc.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>9/22 &amp; 24</td>
<td>Non-US food systems Project Teams meeting (9/24)</td>
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<td>9/26 (Sat.)</td>
<td>Main Station Field Day (required field trip)</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>9/29 &amp; 10/1</td>
<td>Values and food policy DUE: Main Station Field Day report</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>10/6 &amp; 8</td>
<td>Political economies of the GFS. Pt 1 DUE: Food Sleuth Exercise (10/8)</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>10/13 &amp; 15</td>
<td>Political economies of the GFS. Pt 2 DUE: Pairs Progress Report 1</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>10/20 &amp; 22</td>
<td>Processing and marketing</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>10/27 &amp; 29</td>
<td>Food and the Environment; agro-ecology, Pt 1 DUE: Teams Progress Report 1</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>11/3 &amp; 5</td>
<td>Food and the Environment; agro-ecology, Pt 2 DUE: Film/Book Analysis</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>11/10 &amp; 12</td>
<td>Food and health – basic considerations</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>11/24</td>
<td>Food and culture DUE: Final Deadline for 2nd Field Trip reports</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>12/1 &amp; 3</td>
<td>Improving the GFS – think globally, act locally? DUE: Teams Progress Report 2</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>12/8</td>
<td>Remaking food systems: final project presentations (4) DUE: Thanksgiving Meal exercise</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>12/16</td>
<td>Remaking food systems: final project presentations (4-5)</td>
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Due Dates Checklist

- **Wk 2** 9/3 Prioritized list of Term Project interest areas
- **Wk 6** 10/1 Main Station Farm Field Day report
- **Wk 7** 10/8 Food Sleuth Exercise
- **Wk 8** 10/13 Pairs Progress Report 1
- **Wk 10** 10/29 Teams Progress Report 1
- **Wk 11** 11/5 Book or Films Analysis
- **Wk 13** 11/19 Pairs Progress Report 2
- **Wk 14** 11/24 Deadline to Complete Self-directed Field Trip reports
- **Wk 15** 12/3 Teams Progress Report 2
- **Wk 16** 12/8 Thanksgiving Meal exercise
- **Final** 12/16 Completed Term Project

Other Important Information

Special Accommodations

The Geography Department is committed to equal opportunity in education for all students, including those with documented physical or learning disabilities. University policy states that it is the responsibility of students with documented disabilities to contact instructors during the first week of each semester to discuss appropriate accommodations to ensure equity in grading, classroom experiences, and assignments. If you have a disability and will be requiring assistance, please speak to me and to the Disability Resource Center (Thompson Building Suite 100) as soon as possible to arrange for appropriate accommodations.

Academic Success Services

Your student fees cover the usage of the Tutoring Center (784-6801 or www.unr.edu/tutoring/), and University Writing Center (784-6030 or www.unr.edu/writing_center). These centers can support your classroom learning; it is your responsibility to take advantage of their services. Keep in mind that seeking help outside of class is the sign of a responsible and successful student.

Use of Electronics

In consideration of your fellow students and the instructor, turn off cell phones, IPODs, and laptop computers during class time unless you have prior permission to use them or have been asked to bring them for work in class.

Audio and Video Recordings

Surreptitious or covert video-taping of class or unauthorized audio recording of class is prohibited by law and by Board of Regents policy. This class may be videotaped or audio recorded only with the written permission of the instructor. In order to accommodate students with disabilities, some students may have been given permission to record class lectures and discussions. Therefore, students should understand that their comments during class may be recorded.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty

The university, this department, and I take academic dishonesty very seriously. It is unethical, and against university rules, to use all or part of other people's work – including all web-sourced information - without attribution or citation. This does not merely apply to direct quotations; phrases, sentences, ideas, statistics and data, paraphrases or change-a couple-of-words-around – if you use it, cite it. If it didn't come out of your own head, cite it. Citation means a footnote or in-text source acknowledgement plus a full source description in your bibliography. Attempting to present any part of anyone else's work as your own will result in, at minimum, an 'F' for the assignment. A second incidence will result in an 'F' for the course. It is
department policy to check paper and essay work against WWW-accessible sources. We may also require you to retain and provide all drafts, edits, and intermediate versions of your work. Failure to provide this requested documentation can mean an ‘F’ for the course.

**Description of Assignments**

A. **Readings**
   All reading assignments are to be completed by Tuesday of the week where assigned. You are expected to have read the material and attempted to make some sense of it. While some classes will be primarily lecture-based, most will involve structured discussion of the readings. This means you.

B. **Film or Book Analysis (3-5 pages; 100 pts)**
   For this paper you will present a critical analysis – not an opinion review – of 1 book or 2 films. Your analysis must include a general assessment of the work’s main ideas and the effectiveness with which they are presented; even more importantly, you must discuss the relevance of the book or films to course content and its/their contribution to your understanding of Global Food Systems. Be specific and clear in your discussion of course concepts and your references to course readings.

   I will hand out a starter list of possible books and films. I encourage you to come up with your own suggestions and to share them with the class. Please get my approval before you begin for books or films not on course lists.

   There are several helpful guides available on the Web which can be adapted to this assignment, for example (links are posted to WebCampus):

   - [http://www.sebts.edu/files/dmin/bookreview.pdf](http://www.sebts.edu/files/dmin/bookreview.pdf)
   - [http://www.write.armstrong.edu/handouts/BookReview.pdf](http://www.write.armstrong.edu/handouts/BookReview.pdf) for books; and
   - [http://www.angelfire.com/or/sociologyshop/docreview.html](http://www.angelfire.com/or/sociologyshop/docreview.html) for films (adapting from sociology to geography, of course).

C. **Field Trips (100 pts)**
   You are required to attend and report on 2 field trips to a local agricultural operation over the course of the semester. One of these trips should be to the UNR Main Station Farm Field Day. The other may be either an organized class field trip or a self-directed individual or small-group field trip to a place of your choosing (please get my approval on your idea).

   Organized field trips will be scheduled to coincide as closely as possible with class periods, except for the Main Station Farm Field Day, Sat., 9/26, between 9 & 2pm (see below). Please see me asap if you have irresoluble work or family conflicts.

   If scheduling your own visit, please keep in mind that the first half of the Fall semester is an extremely busy time for local farmers – harvest, preparing fields and flocks for the winter, fixing things before the rain and snow and cold set in. Although that also means it is a great time for us to see local ag in action, we must balance a respect for farmers’ time concerns with our desire to learn what they do. Therefore I must ask you to be flexible with this part of our course. I will give you as much advance notice as I can, and as many alternative options as are reasonable.

   **ALL FIELD TRIPS REQUIRE A SUBSTANTIVE REPORT ON THE EXPERIENCE:**
   - Where did you go and why?
   - What did you see?
   - What did you learn? What questions did you ask?
   - How does what you learned relate directly and indirectly to:
     - course concepts & materials?
Your understanding of local food systems and their connections to systems beyond the local?

1. Field Trip, Main Station Farm Field Day. 9/26 (50 pts)
The Field Day is a Geography 350 institution. It is free, but you must pre-register at: http://www.cabnr.unr.edu/fieldday/. You may go whenever you wish and stay for however long you like - this is not a guided trip. Keep in mind, however, that you must produce a report of your experience and what you learned that day. I expect you to partake of as many of organized learning opportunities as possible.

2. Field Trip, Local Agriculture Possibilities (50 pts)
- River School Farm, West Reno – there will be class field trip to the farm; the River School is not available for tours on Thursdays (see www.riverschoolfarm.org)
- Lost City Farm, Reno Midtown – limited availability for tours, though you can go by and see it anytime. (on Facebook or at www.lostcityfarm.com)
- UNR Greenhouses and Hop Houses, Valley Rd–ag experimentation and research complex run by CABNR. Lots of interesting stuff going on here, including biotechnology research. Please contact CABNR about a tour.
- Girl Farm, Bordertown – farm owned and operated by Geography professor Jill Heaton and Wendy Baroli. Always worth a visit, tho a bit of a drive. (www.girlfarm.org)
- Hops Envy Hop Farm, Gardnerville – Chad Kleidosty of UNR and his wife have just begun cultivating several varieties of hops near Gardnerville. Chad will be giving a guest lecture in class, you are welcome to schedule a visit to the farm as well. (www.hopsenvy.com for more info; note that the "Tours" links are not yet live.)
- Lattin Farms, Fallon – One of the oldest (over 100 yrs) and most important family-run farms in Northern NV, Lattin Farms is now certified organic. We will have a class visit by Rick Lattin; he also encourages visits and can give a tour Mon-Sat (except Saturdays in October, when the farm hosts its Fall Festival. (www.lattinfarms.com)

The above is just a small sample of farms in our region. For a list of more Northern Nevada farms and information about each, go to the Nevada Grown website: http://nevadagrown.com/farms-list/

A list of producers supplying the Great Basin Food Coop is here: http://www.greatbasinfood.coop/our-food/local-producers/

D. Quizzes and Exercises (120 pts)
From time to time we will have very short unannounced quizzes to evaluate your understanding of the readings and discussions. Please stay current with your readings. Homework and in-class exercises other than 1 & 2 below may be assigned during the term.

Exercises 1 & 2
1. Food Sleuth exercise: the Hidden Values in Your Food (30 pts)
This exercise coincides with our reading of Food, Farms, & Community Ch 4 ("Values in Food Systems"). This is basically the same exercise as the Thanksgiving Meal exercise below, but with a slightly different emphasis and only one food item to research. Using the chapter's criteria for 'good food' and sustainability, and its discussion of consolidation, food chains, and hubs, research and analyze an item from your week's diet. Keep in mind that while the item -- say, an egg -- might appear to be straightforward, in the modern food system it is probably anything but.

Once you have found out and recounted as much as you can about the item, from raw production through processing, distribution, and your consumption, ask yourself some
additional questions pertinent to this chapter: for example, what is important to you as you choose food? Do values other than price influence your choices? If so, what are they, why, and how much do they matter to you? What did your research discover that you might not already have known about the item? Will that research influence your choice of that food in future?

Explain and justify your answers in terms of specific chapter ideas and information.

2. Thanksgiving Meal exercise (50 pts)
For this exercise, you will research and analyze some of the food and beverages that comprise your Thanksgiving meal. Since you’ll want to ask questions of whoever prepares the food (including yourself), this works best if this is not a restaurant meal.

The exercise involves both a general set of questions about why the meal includes the foods and beverages it does – family tradition, national tradition, things specific to your cultural heritage, and so on – and a more detailed look into at least 3 several meal components. Here’s what your research and analysis should include:

- the historical and geographical provenance of your foods and how they came to be part of your Thanksgiving meal
- the travels of your particular food items – where were they raised or grown, where processed or prepared, how far did their components travel to be assembled, how far did the assembled product then travel to you, etc.
- What methods were used to grow, produce, and process your food – a small-scale organic farm, an industrialized feedlot or ‘factory farm’, organic agri-business facility? Chinese or Brazilian processing or packing plant? Fair-trade coffee co-op? etc.
- Do your foods definitely or probably contain GMOs, or not? Can you tell? How?
- What kind of social, economic, political, and environmental regimes produce your foods?
- What are the implications of the above information for food supply, security, and cost? Are there also important environmental or even geopolitical implications?
- What might be some of the implications of the above issues for your own health?
- How hard was it to find all this stuff out? Explain how & why? What are the implications, if any, of that?
- Does this research affect your food decisions, or not? What are some of the factors in your choices of what to eat? What difference, if any, does knowing more about your food and the GFS make to you?

E. Term Project (150 pts) – BUILDING A BETTER FOOD SYSTEM
Using the systems approach elaborated in Food, Farms, and Community (particularly in Ch 15) as a guide, we will move beyond analyzing the current world food systems to crafting practicable solutions for improvement. For example, the solutions we propose should follow the basic “Principles of Healthy, Sustainable Food System...” per Box 15.1.

The plan you come up with must be specified at two spatial scales minimum, one of which must be local or regional: local/national, regional/national, etc. Your plan will incorporate discussions of goals, and values, adaptation and mitigation, and resilience into something similar to the "Food Action Plan" and "Food Economy Scorecard" in Tables 15.1 and 15.2.

We will do this in stages, due throughout the semester. More detailed instructions beyond Phase 1 are forthcoming.

Phase 1 (Wk 1 & 2): "Identifying critical issues" and (FFC pp 231) and interest areas
a. Choose 3 aspects of food systems (health, environment, economy, policy, etc.) that particularly interest you and on which you might want to focus over the term. Prioritize this list. (Due end of Wk 2)

b. Based on your list, I will assign each of you to a 2- or 3-person partnership. You will then have class time to meet with your assigned partner and others in the class to create a project team. During this time you may reconfigure your partnerships, as long as you are not focusing on the same systems aspect.

You will work with your partner(s) throughout the semester; your project team will put together the final system plan. Final plans will be presented to the class during our final class period (Tue 12/8) and our final meeting (Wed 12/16), when the completed project will be due.

F. Attendance and Participation (30 pts)
Even though there’s a lot of material to cover, we will try to balance lecture with exercises (including short field trips) and discussion each week. You are expected to show up and to be prepared to discuss the week’s topic, and generally be an active part of the class.