Agricultural and Food Systems (AFS) 590
3 credits

SOCIOLOGY OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

Spring Semester 2015
Wednesday, 1:10–4 pm
104E Johnson Hall

Instructor
Jessica Goldberger (Associate Professor and Rural Sociologist)
Department of Crop and Soil Sciences
263 Johnson Hall (office location)
509-335-8540 (office phone)
jgoldberger@wsu.edu
Office hours: By appointment

Course Description
The primary purpose of this course is to introduce students to some of the major theories, concepts, debates, and methods associated with the sociology of agriculture and food systems. Topics covered include public agricultural research and the Land Grant system; the diffusion and adoption of agricultural innovations; agricultural industrialization, consolidation, and power; agricultural industrialization, farm size, communities, and workers; commodities, consumption, and culture; sustainable agriculture; critiques of alternative agrifood movements; and race, class, and food justice. The course exposes students to the varied research designs and methods used by social scientists who study agriculture and food systems topics. The course focuses primarily on U.S. agriculture and food systems.

Student Learning Outcomes
At the end of the course students should be able to:

(1) Describe the major theories, concepts, and debates associated with the sociology of agriculture and food systems.
(2) Describe historical and contemporary trends in U.S. agriculture from a sociological perspective.
(3) Evaluate the ability of alternative agrifood movements (sustainable agriculture, organic agriculture, local food movement) to challenge major trends in U.S. agriculture.
(4) Identify and evaluate the social impacts of different types of agrifood practices.
(5) Effectively communicate and critically evaluate the major ideas and approaches of agricultural/food sociologists.
(6) Write a book review worthy of submission to a peer-reviewed social science journal.
(7) Develop more informed opinions about different types of U.S. agrifood practices.
Required and Recommended Readings

Required readings: All required readings are compiled in an AFS 590 Course Packet, which is available for purchase at Cougar Copies (CUB, Room 80). The required readings are also available on the course’s Blackboard Learn course space (https://learn.wsu.edu).

Optional textbooks: Students are encouraged to buy one or both of these optional textbooks:

Michael Carolan. 2012. The Sociology of Food and Agriculture. NY: Routledge. (~$39 new and ~$17 used on Amazon.com)


Recommended readings: Recommended readings are listed on pages 7–23 of the syllabus. Students should consult the recommended reading lists when selecting a book for the book review assignment, conducting literature searches for the final paper, and seeking additional information about topics of particular interest.

Assignments and Evaluation

Students will be evaluated on the basis of class attendance, class participation, presentations on assigned readings, a book review, a book review lightning talk, and a final paper.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Attendance</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentations on Assigned Readings</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Book Review</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Book Review Lightning Talk</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
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Final grades will be computed according to the following:

- A = 94–100%
- B = 83–86%
- C = 73–76%
- D = 60–66%
- A- = 90–93%
- B- = 80–82%
- C- = 70–72%
- F = 0–59%
- B+ = 87–89%
- C+ = 77–79%
- D+ = 67–69%

Class Attendance and Participation – The success of this course depends on active participation by everyone. Students should come to class prepared to discuss all of the assigned readings. Each student will be allowed one absence from class without the need for an official note. Additional absences will require official notes or a student will lose attendance points.

Presentations on Assigned Readings – Students will give informal presentations (10-15 minutes) on the assigned readings. The presentations will also serve as a means of stimulating class discussion. Each presentation should include the following components:
(a) **Authorship** – Provide details about the author of the reading. Is he/she a professor or graduate student? What are the author’s disciplinary and institutional affiliations? If details are not provided in the reading, search online for information about the author.

(b) **Brief Summary and Analysis** – What are the main research questions, hypotheses, or arguments presented in the reading? What assumptions does the author make? What research methods were used? What are the primary conclusions?

(c) **Key Concepts** – Define and discuss the key terms, concepts, and/or theories included in the reading.

(d) **Your Reaction** – What was your overall reaction to the reading? What did you like best/least about the reading? How persuasive was the evidence provided by the author? Did the author overlook anything? How could the reading/study be improved?

(e) **Discussion Questions** – Provide two or three questions or topics for class discussion.

**Book Review** – Each student will write a book review (approximately 6–8 pages, double spaced, 12 point font) on an authored (not edited) book related to the topics covered in class or other sociology of agriculture and food systems topics. Students should look at published book reviews (in, for example, *Rural Sociology* or *Agriculture and Human Values*) for ideas on how to write a book review. More detailed instructions will be provided in class. The instructor will be available to advise students interested in submitting book reviews to peer-reviewed journals. **Book reviews are due in class on Wednesday, March 4.**

**Book Review Lightning Talk** – Each student will present a 5-minute “lightning talk” related to the book review assignment. In no more than five minutes (practice ahead of time!), each student will tell the class (without the use of PowerPoint): (a) descriptive information about his/her selected book (e.g., title, author name/affiliation, year); (b) brief content summary (e.g., key arguments, methods, conclusions); and (c) personal reaction and recommended readership.

**Final Paper** – Each student will write a final paper (approximately 15–20 pages, double spaced, 12 point font) related to the sociology of agriculture and food systems. More detailed instructions will be provided in class. **Final papers are due by 5 pm on Tuesday, May 5.**

Students will have the choice of preparing one of the following:

(A) A *comprehensive literature review* with explicit analysis of key concepts, theories, and/or debates. A literature review can take many forms: interpreting old material in a new light, tracing the intellectual history of a particular topic (including major debates), or evaluating the literature on a particular topic and offering advice to readers. Regardless of the type of literature review, I want to hear *your* voice in this paper! This option if appropriate for students wanting to explore particular agriculture or food systems topics via extensive reading in the social sciences.

(B) A *research proposal* with the following sections: introduction, literature review, research questions/hypotheses, proposed methods, and project significance. This option is
appropriate for students starting to plan out a Masters or Dissertation project. The instructor will be available to help students develop research questions/hypotheses and select appropriate research methods.

(C) An original empirical research paper with the following sections: introduction, literature review, research questions/hypotheses, methods, results/discussion, and project significance. This option is appropriate for students who have completed Masters or Dissertation research or students seeking to submit a manuscript (based on original research) for publication. The instructor will be available to advise students on preparing manuscripts for publication, selecting an appropriate journal, and other aspects of the manuscript submission/review process.

Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes (Course Objectives)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Learning Outcomes (Course Objectives)</th>
<th>Assessment Methods</th>
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<tr>
<td>At the end of the course, students should be able to ...</td>
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<tr>
<td>(1) Describe the major theories, concepts, and debates associated with the sociology of agriculture and food systems.</td>
<td>Participation in class discussion, presentations on assigned readings, book review and lightning talk (depending on selected book), and final paper (depending on selected topic)</td>
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<td>(2) Describe historical and contemporary trends in U.S. agriculture from a sociological perspective.</td>
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<td>(3) Evaluate the ability of alternative agrifood movements (sustainable agriculture, organic agriculture, local food movement) to challenge major trends in U.S. agriculture.</td>
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<td>(4) Identify and evaluate the social impacts of different types of agrifood practices.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(5) Effectively communicate and critically evaluate the major ideas and approaches of agricultural/food sociologists.</td>
<td>Verbal communication: participation in class discussion, presentations on assigned readings, lightning talk Written communication: book review, final paper</td>
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<td>(6) Write a book review worthy of submission to a peer-reviewed social science journal.</td>
<td>Book review</td>
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<tr>
<td>(7) Develop more informed opinions about different types of U.S. agrifood practices.</td>
<td>Participation in class discussion, presentations on assigned readings, book review, lightning talk, and final paper</td>
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**Disability Statement**

Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If you have a disability and may need accommodations to fully participate in this class, please visit the Access Center (Washington Building 217) to schedule an appointment with an Access Advisor. All accommodations MUST be approved through the Access Center.

**Academic Integrity Statement**

As an institution of higher education, Washington State University is committed to principles of truth and academic honesty. All members of the University community share the responsibility for maintaining and supporting these principles. When a student enrolls in Washington State University, the student assumes an obligation to pursue academic endeavors in a manner consistent with the standards of academic integrity adopted by the University. To maintain the academic integrity of the community, the University cannot tolerate acts of academic dishonesty including any forms of cheating, plagiarism, or fabrication. Washington State University reserves the right and the power to discipline or to exclude students who engage in academic dishonesty.

Students found responsible for academic integrity violations may receive an F on the particular assignment or exam, as well as an F for the course. Repeated and/or serious offenses may result in referral to the conduct board and expulsion from WSU. For graduate students, academic integrity violations may also result in the loss of teaching and/or research assistantships.

Academic Integrity Statement and link to WSU’s policy:  
http://www.wsulibs.wsu.edu/plagiarism/main.html  
http://conduct.wsu.edu/academic-integrity-policies-and-resources/

**Safety Statement**

The Campus Safety Plan, which can be found at http://safetyplan.wsu.edu, contains a comprehensive listing of University policies, procedures, statistics, and information relating to campus safety, emergency management, and the health and welfare of the campus community. All faculty, staff, and students are encouraged to visit this web site as well as the University emergency management web site at http://oem.wsu.edu/Emergencies.html to become familiar with the campus safety and emergency information provided.
## COURSE SCHEDULE IN BRIEF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Due in class:</th>
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<tr>
<td>1/14</td>
<td>COURSE INTRODUCTION / GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER</td>
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<td>1/21</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION TO RURAL SOCIOLOGY / SOCIOLOGY OF AGRICULTURE</td>
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<td>1/28</td>
<td>PUBLIC AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND THE LAND GRANT SYSTEM</td>
<td>Name of book</td>
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<td>for book review assignment</td>
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<td>2/4</td>
<td>DIFFUSION AND ADOPTION OF AGRICULTURAL INNOVATIONS</td>
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<td>2/11</td>
<td>AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIALIZATION, CONSOLIDATION, AND POWER</td>
<td>Short statement</td>
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<td>(2–3 sentences) about final</td>
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<td>paper type (A, B, or C) and</td>
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<td>tentative topic</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/18</td>
<td>AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIALIZATION, FARM SIZE, COMMUNITIES, AND WORKERS</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/25</td>
<td><strong>No Class</strong> (INSTRUCTOR OUT OF TOWN)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/4</td>
<td>BOOK REVIEW LIGHTNING TALKS</td>
<td>Book review</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/11</td>
<td>COMMODITIES, CONSUMPTION, AND CULTURE</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/18</td>
<td><strong>No Class</strong> (SPRING BREAK)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3/25</td>
<td><strong>No Class</strong> (INSTRUCTOR OUT OF TOWN)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/1</td>
<td>SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE</td>
<td>Longer statement (1–2</td>
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<td>paragraphs) about final</td>
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<td>paper topic and list of</td>
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<td>10 references</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/8</td>
<td>POTLUCK! MOVIE!</td>
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<tr>
<td>4/15</td>
<td>CRITIQUES OF ALTERNATIVE AGRIFOOD MOVEMENTS</td>
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<td>4/22</td>
<td>RACE, CLASS, AND FOOD JUSTICE</td>
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<td>4/29</td>
<td>STUDENTS’ CHOICE DAY</td>
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<tr>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>Final papers are due by 5 pm on Tuesday, May 5. Pullman students should bring hard copies to 263 Johnson Hall. Non-Pullman students should email papers in MS Word or PDF format to <a href="mailto:jgoldberger@wsu.edu">jgoldberger@wsu.edu</a>.</td>
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COURSE SCHEDULE IN DETAIL

JANUARY 14 – COURSE INTRODUCTION / GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

[No required readings]

JANUARY 21 – INTRODUCTION TO RURAL SOCIOLOGY / SOCIOLOGY OF AGRICULTURE

Required Readings:


Recommended Readings:


**JANUARY 28 — PUBLIC AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND THE LAND GRANT SYSTEM**

**Required Readings:**

**Recommended Readings:**


**FEBRUARY 4 — DIFFUSION AND ADOPTION OF AGRICULTURAL INNOVATIONS**

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


FEBRUARY 11 – AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIALIZATION, CONSOLIDATION, AND POWER

Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:


24. *Agriculture and Human Values.* (2013). 30(2). Includes eight articles focused on the Changing Role of Supermarkets in Global Supply Chains.

**FEBRUARY 18 – AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRIALIZATION, FARM SIZE, COMMUNITIES, AND WORKERS**

**Required Readings:**

**Recommended Readings:**

**February 25 – No Class**

The instructor will be in Salt Lake City at a Western SARE Administrative Council meeting. Students are expected to work on their book reviews and prepare their lightning talks.

**March 4 – Book Review Lightning Talks**

[No required readings]

**March 11 – Commodities, Consumption, and Culture**

**Required Readings:**


14
Recommended Readings:


**MARCH 18 – NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK)**

**MARCH 25 – NO CLASS**

The instructor will be in Knoxville, TN, at a USDA Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI) project meeting. Students are expected to work on their final papers.


**APRIL 1 – SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE**

**Required Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


Each student will prepare a dish (or beverage) to share with the students at his/her location. Each dish will be presented to the class with a brief story. That is, dishes must have personal, family, cultural, ethnic, or other significance. Alternatively, a student could prepare a dish in a specific manner—for example, a student could source all the ingredients within 50 miles or use ingredients personally grown/raised. Or a student could provide two identical dishes (for a taste test!) with the only difference being organic vs. nonorganic ingredients or GMO vs. non-GMO ingredients. Or a student could prepare a dish in some way related to his/her research program. Be creative! Have fun!

In advance of the class meeting, the students and instructor will select an agriculture or food-related documentary to watch in class. The film screening will be followed by in-class discussion. Dr. Philip Howard (Rural Sociologist at Michigan State University) has compiled an excellent list of documentary films—please go to http://www.msu.edu/~howardp/booksfilms.html. To best view the list of films, (a) click on the down arrow next to “Media” and select “Sort” and then “Desc” and (b) click on the down arrow next to “Date” and select “Sort” and then “Desc.”
APRIL 15 – CRITIQUES OF ALTERNATIVE AGRIFOOD MOVEMENTS

Required Readings:

Recommended Readings about Organic Agriculture:

**Recommended Readings about Food System Localization:**


April 22 – Race, Class, and Food Justice

Required Readings:

Recommended Readings:


**April 29 – Students’ Choice Day**

The students will choose the content and structure of our final class meeting. Possibilities include: (a) further discussion of a topic already covered in class, (b) selection and discussion of readings related to a topic not covered in the course, (c) lightning presentations based on students’ final paper topics, (d) discussion of how the course has impacted students’ perspectives on agriculture and food system topics, (e) students’ plans to incorporate sociology of agriculture and food systems literature and/or social science methods into their research programs, or (f) something else entirely.