With gratitude, we acknowledge that we are on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron (Neutral), Anishnaabeg, and Haudenosaunee peoples. The University of Waterloo is situated on the Haldimand Tract, land promised to Six Nations, which includes six miles on each side of the Grand River.

The Waterloo Indigenous Student Centre facilitates the sharing of Indigenous knowledge and provides culturally relevant information and support services for all members of the University of Waterloo community, including Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, staff, and faculty.

Course description

Industrial agriculture has destabilized the Earth’s ecosystems at the planetary scale. Ecological as well as socio-cultural, economic, and political factors shape the sustainability and resilience of our food system. This seminar course takes a regional focus to ground our discussions of pertinent concepts, challenges, and opportunities. The course examines regional issues and initiatives linked to food security, food sovereignty, resilient agriculture and agro-ecology, the energy-water-food nexus, food policy, food supply chains, urban food systems, alternative food initiatives, sustainable diets, and food waste reduction—all within the context of the case study region.

Detailed description

In this course, we draw on environmental, economic, socio-cultural, health, and political perspectives to examine the challenges and successes of the food system in the world’s most populous country: China. We cover the history and geography of food security in China; debates over feeding the most populous nation on earth; and threats to soil fertility, clean water, and farmland loss. The bulk of the course then focuses on alternatives: what initiatives are underway to strengthen sustainable agriculture, agroecology, and ‘alternative food networks,’ such as community supported agriculture and ecological farmers’ markets? Who are the key players? What role is technology and the internet playing in all this, for consumers, and for farmers? We review ‘grassroots’, private sector, and state policy initiatives to promote a ‘sustainable’ food system in urban and rural areas of China, and assess their relative successes and their domestic and global implications. We explore food security, meat consumption,
food waste, China’s rapidly expanding organic sector (certified and uncertified), and the associated revolution that is happening in ecological, healthy, safe food and ethical eating in China’s cities.

**Course Objectives**

By the end of the course, student should have acquired the following:

- Current knowledge of the case study region’s food and agriculture system, its resources, demographic and economic shifts, governance approaches, and key challenges and opportunities
- Understanding of contemporary principles and approaches to sustainable food systems, and how they apply to the case study region
- Skills and knowledge needed to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of current and emerging approaches to dealing with food system challenges in the case study region
- Improved research, oral and written communication, teamwork, and critical thinking skills

Teamwork is crucial to achieving change. Thus, this course offers you the opportunity to work in groups to research an issue and present your research output.

The format for the 80-minute classes will be a combination of seminar discussions, lectures, guest speakers, videos, and student presentations.

**Intended learning outcomes**

Upon completion of this course, you should be able critically analyze and explain...

1. the historical development of China’s contemporary food system, and associated key concepts
2. some key environmental, economic, social, and political challenges to food system sustainability in China
3. some significant policy (state-led), market-oriented, and civil society initiatives to improve food system sustainability

**Course content**

| Week 1 (Sept 10 & 12). Overview and food systems introduction |

[in class on Sept 10] Country Food Sustainability Index.


| Week 2 (Sept 17 & 19). ‘Who will feed China?’ History and geography of food security and agrarian change in the world’s most populous country |


**Week 3 (Sept 24 & 26). Food, climate change, soils, water, and oceans**


**Week 4 (Oct 1 & 3). Market reforms, urbanization and the countryside in China**


**Week 5 Changing diets, dairy & meatification: environmental and health outcomes**

*For this week, the deadline for Perusall comments is Thursday at 11:59pm (instead of Tuesday).*


**Week 6 (Oct 15 & 17) Food safety, organic food, and state support for ecological agriculture**


**Week 7 (Oct 22 & 24) Alternative Food Networks (AFNs)**


**Week 8 (Oct 29 & 31). Farmers’ roles in producing sustainable food**


**Week 9 (Nov 5 & 7). Technology & the internet in sustainable food debates in China**


**Week 10 (Nov 12 & 14). Urban planning and urban agriculture**


**Week 11 (Nov 19 & 21). Review and Conclusions**


**Week 12 (Nov 26 & 28). Student Presentations, The future, and What can Canada learn from China, and what can China learn from Canada, about sustainable food?**


**Assessment of learning & due dates**

Unless otherwise specified, due dates are 11:59pm on the date indicated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Weight (%)</th>
<th>Due dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online discussion of readings (using Perusall)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Weekly, by Tues 11:59pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In class participation</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midterm test</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Oct 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take-home test</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Dec 7</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Term project – in groups: (40% + 5%)</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Project proposal</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sept 27</td>
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<td>Group contract</td>
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<td>Sept 28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral presentation of project</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Nov 26 &amp; Dec 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project - draft version (required in order for final version to be marked)</td>
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<td>Nov 16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peer review of one project (on PEAR website)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Nov 23</td>
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<td>Project – final version</td>
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<td>Nov 30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group self-assessment (required for your proposal grade) – in PEAR website</td>
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<td>Dec 3</td>
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Use of Perusall for online discussion of course readings

This is a seminar course. As such, a key focus of the course is discussion (online and in class) of a set of assigned readings. We are experimenting this term with the Perusall platform to facilitate this. *Be sure to allocate sufficient prep time out of class each week for this activity.*

See “How Perusall Works” posted on Learn. Also see “How Scoring Works” and this set of sample annotations with associated quality scores and an explanation for each score.

You are expected to provide comments or questions on all of the assigned readings, but *you can be excused without penalty from not providing comments on any 3 readings over the term.* For each reading, typically you should provide about 6-7 short comments. Focus on providing comments/questions about the following elements (although you can certainly go beyond this):

1. the key conclusions and arguments of the reading (feel free to skip this if many classmates have already covered this!);
2. the element of the reading that you found most interesting, persuasive, well-argued, or thought-provoking, and explain why;
3. the element of the reading that you found most problematic, least persuasive, or most in need of further elaboration, and explain why;
4. connections between the content of the readings and your own experiences, knowledge, or assumptions;
5. connections between the current reading and past readings in the course (do they concur or differ? How so?).

Note that misuse of Perusall--for example, posting comments as your own that are copied from external web sites or other sources--will be treated as every other type of academic misconduct and will, at a minimum, result in an overall Perusall score of zero for the semester.

Term project

You can chose the specific audience and type of output that you are most interested in developing for this task:

- the general public (e.g., in the form of a magazine article)
- government (e.g., a policy brief)
- a funding agency (e.g., a funding proposal, written from the perspective of an NGO)
- students (e.g., an online case study such as the ones here)
- academic readers (e.g., a term paper)

Speak to the instructor if you would prefer to prepare your project in the form of a video.

You are encouraged to work in groups to complete the project. The length of the final output should be 1600-2000 words per person times the number of people in your group. However, the project should be jointly written by all group members. If you prefer to complete the project on your own, the length should be 2500-3000 words.
Additional readings and resources (for your term projects) on China’s food system

Websites

chinafoodwatch.com

Feeding China reading list: https://feedingchina.wordpress.com/bibliography/

LinkedIn group, China's Changing Food System (feel free to post resources or questions here)

Food systems in general (not China-specific)

See Food Climate Research Network (FCRN)


Food security and overview of China’s food systems


Environmental governance of food, agrochemicals, biodiversity, soils, climate change, and water


Seeds and sustainability


Fisheries and aquaculture


Environmental issues in China (beyond food)

Sternfeld, Eva (ed.). Routledge handbook of environmental policy in China. (selected chapters)


Chinese Ideas of Nature


Changing diets, dairy & meatification: environmental and health outcomes


The Economist. 2014. Empire of the Pig. Dec 17.


IATP. 2014. Global Meat Complex: The China Series:

China’s Meat Revolution: Agribusiness, Growth and Its Limits

China’s Meat Revolution and Its Need for Feed


China Dialogue. China needs to assess the true costs of factory farming.

Market reforms and the countryside in China


**Small-scale farmers’ livelihoods, farmers’ cooperatives, and agrarian change in China**


**Farmers’ roles in sustainable/ecological/organic agriculture**


**Agricultural subsidies that impede sustainable agriculture**

China Daily. 2015. Agricultural subsidies 'should be reconsidered'.


**Food safety and the crisis of trust**


Sustainability transitions and innovation in sustainable food production and consumption


Urban food systems, food self-sufficiency and food flows in Chinese cities


Sustainable diets and food carbon consumption


Alternative Food Networks (AFNs) and social movements


Shi et al. 2011. Safe food, green food, good food: Chinese Community Supported Agriculture and the rising middle class. International Journal of Agricultural Sustainability, 9(4)


Si, Zhenzhong. 2017. Local, Organic Szechuan: China’s Urbanites are Finding Safer Food with Community Supported Agriculture. Alternatives Journal. 43(2).

Partnerships for Community Development (PCD). 2015. Touching the Heart, Taking Root: CSAs in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Mainland China. Hong Kong: PCD.

Food choices, consumption, and culture


Street food vending and the informal sector in China


Food waste


**US-China food trade tensions**


Terazono, E. 2018. Trump’s trade war triggers global food fight. Financial Times, July 4, [https://www.ft.com/content/90721170-7b89-11e8-8e67-1e1a0846c475](https://www.ft.com/content/90721170-7b89-11e8-8e67-1e1a0846c475) accessed 1 August 2018.

**Videos**


Steffanie Scott, Danshu Qi, and Zhenzhong Si, Ning Dai. 2018. “*China’s Changing Food System*” (on Youtube) 11 mins

**Multiple sustainability criteria to be considered across the food supply chain**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Health</th>
<th>Social well-being</th>
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<td>Consumption</td>
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<td>Management of food waste</td>
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