

## **GEOG/ERS 461**

### **Food Systems and Sustainability**

Department of Geography & Environmental Management, Faculty of Environment  
Winter 2016

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Class time: Mon & Wed 8:30-9:50 in HH 1102

TA: **TBD**

E-mail:

Note: *The guidelines in this syllabus are subject to change. Refer to the course website on Learn for updates.*

Office:

Office hours: TBD

### **Course description**

This course examines dimensions of food systems sustainability and food security, from production to consumption, from local to global scales, in the global north and south. Specific themes covered in the course include resource depletion and wider environmental impacts of the industrial food system, technological and genetic change in food production, and policy, market-oriented, and civil society initiatives to bring about change in the food system, including organic production and localizing food systems.

This course is recognized as a PACS Content Course that fulfills requirements in the interdisciplinary Peace and Conflict Studies plan. For information about doing a PACS concentration (Major, Minor or Option) visit: <http://grebel.uwaterloo.ca/academic/undergrad/pacs/plans.shtml>.

### **Intended learning outcomes**

Food system change is a topic fraught with debate, particularly in relation to balancing economic with environmental considerations. Understanding both many sides of an issue places you in a stronger position to defend your ideas. Moreover, many policies or initiatives will have significant impact on 'marginalized' groups. The course develops your familiarity with key debates in academic literature on food studies and geographies of food.

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

1. some key political, economic, social, and environmental challenges to food system sustainability at global and local scales
2. the historical development of the contemporary food system, and associated main concepts and models (e.g., community-based/regional vs. globalized food systems)
3. some significant policy (state-led), market-oriented, and civil society initiatives to improve food system sustainability

Teamwork is crucial to achieving change. Thus, this course offers you the opportunity (but does not require you) to work in teams to research an issue and present your research output in oral and written form.

### **Required readings**

Required readings (outlined in the course schedule below) are available via the internet or e-Reserve.

## Creating a positive learning environment: Mutual expectations

**What you can expect of me, and the course format:** Your learning is my priority, and I recognize that teaching does not necessarily imply learning. To cater to diverse learning styles, my course exposes you to ideas in different formats (readings, seminar discussions, lectures, videos, real world experience from guest speakers) and encourages you to engage with the material through reflective writing, class presentations, interaction with peers and the instructor, and a research project.

I welcome your participation, comments, and questions, since I believe that your participation contributes to a much more interesting class and valuable learning experience for all. My teaching style is interactive. At some points I will present a lecture, in order to provide background information and concepts that I think are important for developing effective knowledge of development processes. Complementing this, however, the classes will engage you in large or small group discussions.

**What I expect of you:** You are expected to arrive on time, attend all classes, and invest on average 8-10 hours per week in this course, in and outside of class. Since class discussions and assignments will require you to apply information obtained from the readings, you are expected to complete the assigned readings, and to participate actively and consistently in class. (I recognize that not everyone will feel comfortable speaking out in a large seminar class, but you can make up for this by participating actively in small group discussions when appropriate.)

Use of laptops/devices: Checking email, browsing web sites, internet chatting, texting, etc. during class time is disruptive and will not be permitted. Please also mute your mobile phone before class.

## Course schedule, content, and readings

To be confirmed.

## Assignments and deadlines

Unless otherwise noted, assignments are due by **11:59pm** on the date indicated. They are due on Learn only (no hard copy required).

Weekly reading response: 10 x 2% - due by 11:59pm on <b>Mondays</b> , Jan 12 to Mar 17	(weekly)	20%
Attendance		5 %
Mid-term test	Feb 28	10%
Meeting with instructor re. proposal for research project	Jan 23	--
Proposal for research project	Jan 28	5%
Research ethics review application (list of potential respondents & tentative list of interview or survey questions)	Feb 13	--
Start data collection for research project	Week of Feb 24	--
Meeting with instructor re. research project progress	Mar 13	--
Presentation of research project	Weeks 11-12	10%
Research project report	Apr 4	30%
Group self-assessment for research project group	Apr 7	--
Take-home exam (2000-2500 words, based on a selection of essay questions)	Apr 15	20%

## The research project

For the term project, you are asked to define, describe, and analyze a problem relevant to issues raised in the course, and an initiative to address the problem. The research project encourages you to pursue in-depth knowledge and understanding of that topic, but it is also an exercise of documentary and original research, analysis, synthesis, argumentation, and communication. You are encouraged to work in groups of three or four to complete the research project. A selection of research topics is provided for you to choose from, but if you feel strongly about pursuing a topic not covered in the list, see me to discuss this.

The length of the final report should be about 2500-3500 words per group member, but the report should be compiled as a collective report by the group (like the format for a journal article). The marking rubric (on Learn) lists specific points considered in the assessment. Include copies of your introduction letters and consent forms (for research ethics) in an appendix with your final research reports. Submit your work in Word (not PDF) format, to enable comments using track-changes.

Your final project should include a literature review section (give it a thematic name, such as ‘indigenous food security and sovereignty’), which reviews at least five sources times the number of group members. This section should be written in an integrated and coherent fashion, not as separate annotations. The report structure is flexible, but typically includes an introduction, lit review, and methods section, followed the findings and discussion (sometimes these two are combined), and conclusion.

## Proposal for research project

Each project team will meet with the instructor and/or TA at least twice during the term for about 10 minutes to discuss their proposal and research progress. A few days after the first meeting, your team will submit in writing a proposal of your research project. This should include the following:

- A tentative title
- A couple of paragraphs situating the topic in terms of global food system concerns. In writing this, use standard citations, as you would for a term paper. A good way to do this could be to link the topic to issues raised within the 21 articles that comprise “Food Security: Feeding the world in 2050,” a special issue from 2010 of *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B* available at <http://rstb.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/365/1554.toc>.
- A clear statement of the research question to be explored
- An explanation of the sources of original data to be used and/or methods used to gather the data. For example, interviews or a survey (with what kind of respondents?); existing databases of statistics (from where; what kind of statistical data will you use?)
- A tentative structure of the research report, with clear titles for headings and sub-headings, and a short paragraph describing the purpose and content of each heading
- A preliminary list of at least eight references. Include at least four peer-reviewed publications; this can be combined with NGO/government/business reports. Include at least two sources from the ‘additional readings’ list provided on Learn.

## Research ethics review application

The University of Waterloo requires all research conducted by its students, staff, and faculty that involves humans as participants (e.g., through interviews or surveys) to undergo prior ethics review and clearance through the Office of Research Ethics. The ethics review and clearance processes are intended to ensure that projects comply with the Office’s Guidelines for Research with Human Participants as well as those of provincial and federal agencies, and that the safety, rights and welfare of participants are adequately protected. The Guidelines inform researchers about ethical issues and procedures that are of concern when

conducting research with humans (e.g. confidentiality, risks and benefits, informed consent process, etc.). See <http://www.research.uwaterloo.ca/ethics/human/> for more information.

Each group must submit a list of potential research participants and tentative interview or survey questions for your proposed study. I will provide you with templates of letters of introduction and written consent forms. If recruitment and the interview are conducted via phone, verbal consent can be obtained. You should record the date and time of consent in your notes. Making audio recordings of phone conversations must be done with the participants' knowledge and consent. Digital audio recorders can be borrowed from the Dept of Geography.

### **Presentation of term project**

Each team will make a 10- to 12-minute presentation of their research project during the final two weeks of class. Feedback from the class will be encouraged to enable the group to improve their analysis before submitting the final written version.

There is an open dropbox on Learn where you should upload your PPT files before giving your presentation in class. Provide your names or project title as the file name so it is easy to identify.

It would be appropriate for all of the team members to participate in the presentation. When you complete your group process self-evaluations, you can include members' contributions to the presentation preparation and delivery as well as the final report. If you have concerns about uneven contributions by group members, this will hopefully be addressed through the group self-evaluations.

### **Group self-evaluations**

All members of the group are expected to contribute to all aspects of the project. Therefore, each member of the team has to make a *substantive* intellectual contribution to *all* of the following aspects of the project:

- Conducting research into the project topic
- Reviewing and synthesizing literature
- Organizing the proposal
- Writing and editing the proposal
- Planning and organizing the work

Note that *substantive* does not mean *equal*. It is permissible for some team members to play somewhat larger roles than others on one or more of these aspects as long as everyone on the team is satisfied that individuals contributed fairly. It isn't appropriate to divide the work in such a way that certain aspects of the project are mostly or entirely the responsibility of one person.

Group projects can be extremely rewarding when individuals pull together and contribute fairly to the collective effort. At the same time, they can be extremely frustrating when some people don't pull their own weight. A **group self-evaluation** process will be used to ensure that individual contributions to the group project are evaluated fairly. *People who do not pull their own weight will not receive the full mark assigned to the project.* Every group member is required to submit a score with written justification for themselves and each member of their group (see guidelines on Learn). We may exclude or make adjustments for evaluations that have very weak written justification or if the written justification does not support the numeric score given (especially if the numeric grade given is low) or if one student's evaluation is way out of line with others' evaluations of the same student.

**Group contract:** In order to ensure that your group functions effectively, each group is asked to prepare a group contract. *Although this contract will not be marked, it is required. If your group contract is not submitted, your research proposal outline will not be marked.* Guidelines on preparing a group contract are provided on the course website.

Problems sometimes do arise in group work. Therefore, all members of the team are individually and collectively responsible for keeping the TA aware of how the team is functioning. If there are problems, inform your TA early enough to enable her/him to help find solutions.

## Strongly recommended sources on writing skills

For this and other undergraduate geography courses, you are expected to have a high level of writing competency. To further hone your skills, I strongly recommend the two sources below to all students.

*Writing Effective Essays and Reports*, by Rob de Loe (free online resource):

[http://www.environment.uwaterloo.ca/u/rdeloe/writing\\_booklet/](http://www.environment.uwaterloo.ca/u/rdeloe/writing_booklet/)

Improve your grammar (free online resource): [www.grammarbook.com](http://www.grammarbook.com)

Two of my pet peeves are the use of term ‘the locals’ (in place of ‘local people’) and the incorrect use of ‘however’, as in the following sentence: “You have found good sources to draw on, however, they were not referenced properly.” (It should be broken into two sentences.)

I suggest you review the sources above for tips on addressing grammar issues such as this one, as well as many other helpful hints to improve your writing—and your grades.

## Submission of assignments

By submitting an assignment for this course, you are agreeing to the following:

- You have properly referenced and footnoted all ideas, words or other intellectual property from other sources used in the completion of this assignment.
- You have included a proper bibliography, which includes acknowledgement of all sources used to complete this assignment.
- The assignment was completed by your own efforts. You did not collaborate with any other person for ideas or answers (with the exception of group projects)
- This is the first time you have submitted this assignment or essay (either partially or entirely) for academic evaluation.

**Turnitin:** Plagiarism detection software (Turnitin) will be used to screen assignments in this course for proper citation, referencing and instances of plagiarism. This is being done both as an educational activity for you and to verify that use of all material and sources in assignments is documented. You will be able to submit your assignments to Turnitin multiple times so that you can see how the software has analyzed your writing, and so that you can make adjustments if portions of your text are flagged as being problematic. If you have objections to having your work submitted to Turnitin, please inform me by **Jan 17** to discuss alternative arrangements.

**Academic Integrity & Plagiarism:** In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. [www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/](http://www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/)

Please familiarize yourself with the University of Waterloo’s policy dealing with plagiarism. Be especially careful when using materials obtained from the internet, and be aware that software available to instructors can be used to check student submissions for plagiarism (e.g. [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com)). Plagiarism offences are treated seriously by the University and can result in significant penalties being assessed (e.g. failing grade on an assignment, repeating a course, suspension or expulsion).

Definition of Plagiarism: “The act of presenting the ideas, words or other intellectual property of another as one’s own.” Source: University of Waterloo, Policy 71.

**To Avoid Plagiarism:** The use of other people’s work *must* be properly acknowledged and referenced in all written material such as take-home examinations, essays, laboratory reports, work-term reports, design projects, statistical data, computer programs and research results. The properly acknowledged use of sources is an accepted and important part of scholarship. Use of such material without complete and unambiguous acknowledgement, however, is an offence under policy 71.

Please visit the on-line tutorial at <http://www.lib.uwaterloo.ca/ait/>. See ‘Check your understanding’ to learn more about what constitutes an academic offence.

**Late policy:** You are expected to take account of the possibility of computer or printer failure in planning your time. Emailed or faxed assignments will not be accepted. The penalty for late assignments is **5 %** of the total possible mark per day, including weekends and holidays. I will not accept assignments more than 5 days after the due date unless we have a prior arrangement.

**When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement Due to Illness or Other Reasons:** There will be no unpenalized extensions on assignments except for illness, severe personal extenuating circumstances, or weather emergencies. When you find yourself unable to meet a course requirement because of medical, compassionate or other reasons, please advise me in writing by LEARN email; make sure to include your full name in your message. Where possible, you must contact the instructor in advance of the assignment due date, but otherwise as soon as possible after the due date. As a rule, you must provide appropriate documentation, for example, a note from your doctor indicating the dates during which you were ill, and describing the severity of your illness. *Manage your time carefully. Pressure of work alone is not an acceptable reason for seeking an extension without penalty.*

**Information for Students Using Waterloo Learn (course website for Geog 203):** Waterloo Learn is a web

-based course man

lecture notes etc.), interact with their students (drop boxes for student submissions, on-line quizzes, discussion boards, course e-mail etc.), and provide feedback (grades, assignment comments etc.).

**Logging Into Waterloo Learn:** Users can login to Learn via: <http://learn.uwaterloo.ca/>. Use your WatIAM/Quest username and password. If you still cannot get on after checking your password, please confirm with your instructor that you are on the class roster. **Getting Help:** A D2L student guide can be found at: [http://av.uwaterloo.ca/uwace/training\\_documentation/student\\_index.html](http://av.uwaterloo.ca/uwace/training_documentation/student_index.html)

## Email policy

If you'd like to contact me outside of my scheduled office hours, please direct all course-related questions to me by email, **putting Geog 461 in the subject line**. I will respond to your emails as promptly as possible. If you do not receive a response within 3 day (excluding weekends), feel free to re-send it in case it got overlooked. When sending an email, it is courteous to include your name at the bottom of the email, and to address me as Steffanie or Dr Scott, rather than "Hey prof".

Note that email is the official channel of communication between the University and its students. You are required to check your *uwaterloo.ca* email account regularly; I recommend that you check for course-related emails at least twice a week. If you use another email service (e.g., gmail), it is your responsibility to ensure that mail sent to your *uwaterloo.ca* account is forwarded to your other account.

## University policies

**Unclaimed assignments** will be retained until one month after term grades become official in Quest. After that time, they will be destroyed in compliance with UW's [confidential shredding procedures](#).

**Note for students with disabilities:** The Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD), located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the OPD at the beginning of each academic term.

**Religious Observances:** Student needs to inform the instructor at the beginning of term if special accommodation needs to be made for religious observances that are not otherwise accounted for in the scheduling of classes and assignments.

**Grievance:** A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4, [www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm). When in doubt please contact your Undergraduate Advisor for details.

**Discipline:** A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offenses, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offense, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offenses (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. When misconduct has been found to have occurred, disciplinary penalties will be imposed under Policy 71 – Student Discipline. For information on categories of offenses and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71 - Student Discipline, <http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm>. Within ENV, those committing academic offences (e.g. cheating, plagiarism) will be placed on disciplinary probation and will be subject to penalties that may include a grade of 0 on affected course elements, 0 on the course, suspension, and expulsion.

Students who believe that they have been wrongfully or unjustly penalized have the right to grieve; refer to Policy #70, Student Grievance, <http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm>

**Appeals:** A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or Policy 71 – (Student Discipline) may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to Policy 72 (Student Appeals) [www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm)