

Food and Sustainability

SOCI/ANTH 384

Department of Sociology/Anthropology
Concordia University
WINTER 2022

Professor: Erik Chevrier

Day/Time: Thursday 2:45 – 5:30 PM

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Office Hours: By Request (Zoom meetings)

Classroom: Zoom and FG B030 SGW

Course Materials and Text:

Is your diet sustainable?

Let's redress the question, instead ask, what types of consequences (positive/negative, intended/unintended, that we are aware/unaware of) does your diet sustain?

Digging deeper, we can ask: What were the labour conditions of the farmers that produced your food? What are the ingredients in your food item and how does that contribute to your health? What is the carbon footprint of your food item? What social inequalities are expressed via your food consumption?

Food is more than just a biological need, it is also a way people interact with the biosphere, express culture and communicate about class/gender/race relations. Food is at the center of many serious social, political and economic issues. These issues include: starvation, obesity, eating disorders, malnutrition, climate change, pollution, biodiversity loss, inequality, colonization, and imperialism, among other topics.

In this course, students will read and discuss recent publications about food and sustainability and participate in improving the food system in and around Concordia University.

Students will focus on the political economy of food by examining how food is produced, transformed, distributed, consumed, and how food waste is managed in different areas of the world. They will take a critical perspective to analyze multinational food corporations, like Bayer, by looking at the consequences of large-scale industrialized farming, monoculture, and the privatization of genetics. These consequences include, the use of GMOs and the loss of biodiversity; reliance on fossil fuels and its contribution to climate change; use of glyphosate and the accompanying health effects; seed patents and loss of food sovereignty; use of natural resources and the depletion of water and food supplies; among others. Students will explore what people are doing to prevent these negative consequences. They will examine the food sovereignty movements, like the work done by La Via Campesina. Students will also look at sustainable production, like seed saving, indigenous practices, permaculture, rooftop gardening, and organic farming. Students will learn about alternative food networks that are developing socially responsible, environmentally sustainable, just, and secure food practices.

This course employs the theories and methodologies of sociology and anthropology. Political economy is a paradigm in the tradition of Karl Marx. It draws our attention to the power structure (political, economic, and social) that governs the society and the counter-movements that challenge the existing power structure. The social economy perspective in the tradition of Karl Polanyi will be used to imagine post-capitalist alternatives. The capitalist system has experienced many crises, and the current crisis, both ecological and economic, provides a great opportunity for the transition to global futures that are egalitarian, inclusive, democratic, and sustainable. This course also employs the tradition of critical self-knowledge and auto-ethnography. Students are asked to examine their personal involvement in industrial food systems and alternative food systems as individuals and a collective.

An important focus of this course is enhancing local food systems through community engagement projects (community service learning). Students will participate with local food projects in and around Concordia University, in the Community of Lachine and/or in their local communities. They will perform an action-research project designed to improve local foodscapes, reduce food insecurity advocate for food justice and develop food sovereign communities.

Course Materials and Text:

Students are expected to complete **ALL** the designated readings and watch **ALL** of the assigned videos **BEFORE EACH CLASS**. Students are also expected to attend **ALL** classes and participate in class discussions.

The **required readings** are available at the Concordia Coop Bookstore (www.co-opbookstore.ca)

Koc, M., Sumner, J., & Winson, A. (2017) Critical Perspectives in Food Studies, Second Edition, Oxford University Press.

Barilla Center for Food and Nutrition, & Nierenberg, D., (2018) Nourished Planet: Sustainability in the Global Food System 3rd ed., Island Press.

Holt-Gimenez, E. (2017) A Foodie's Guide to Capitalism: Understanding the Political Economy of What We Eat, Monthly Review Press, New York.

The power-point **lecture notes** will be posted on the course website before each class.

Recommended readings:

Oppenlander, R. (2013) Food Choices and Sustainability: Why Buying Local, Eating Less Meat, and Taking Baby Steps Won't Work, Langdon Street Press.

Sumner, J. (2016) Learning, Food, and Sustainability: Sites for Resistance and Change, Palgrave MacMillan.

URLs and other electronic sources may be posted on the course website from time to time. Please visit the course website to get this material.

Course Format

This course will be given remotely via Zoom and in-person once the Quebec Government reopens universities and Concordia mandates us to go back in person. Students are expected to attend the lectures and participate in the online and in-person activities during the times allotted for the course. Online lectures will be filmed and made available to students. Online discussions and activities will not be recorded or made available to other students (or the general public). I am not recording the discussion/activity part of online classes so students can feel comfortable sharing ideas and thoughts without fear of being filmed and broadcast. In-person classes will not be recorded or broadcast. It is up to the student to attend in-person classes.

In the course, I will use a variety of pedagogical styles including lectures, discussions, guest speakers (possibly), field trips (maybe), community service learning and/or experiential learning. Sometimes I may upload a prerecorded lecture or podcast to watch for the first portion of the course, then I will sign in and lead a discussion. At other times, I will give a live lecture and film it for others to view. Nonetheless, students are expected to attend the course online and in-person.

Students are expected to read the required text before coming to class. In class and online, students will engage with each other through interactive activities, discussions and by talking with people who work with food – production, transformation, distribution, and waste management. Depending on how everything is going with the pandemic, the class may participate in a field-trip. Students will be given sufficient notice if we will go on a field-trip.

Extraordinary Circumstances

In the event of extraordinary circumstances and pursuant to the [Academic Regulations](#) the University may modify the delivery, content, structure, forum, location and/or evaluation scheme. In the event of such extraordinary circumstances, students will be informed of the changes.

Course Evaluation

Assignments	Due Date	Grade Weight
Participation	Ongoing	10

Recipe for A Sustainable Food System Blog	February 10	30
Political Economy of Sustainable Food Systems Blog	March 31	30
Community Service Learning Project Proposal	February 24	10
Community Service Learning Project Final Report	April 7	20
		Total 100%

Participation: The participation grade is based on attendance, involvement in in discussions, participation in classroom activities and supplemental tasks (i.e. you will grow a plant from seed and will inform classmates about your experience with the plant).

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Blog Posts: Students will write two blogs of about 600 – 1000 words about a recipe for sustainable food systems and political economy of sustainable food systems. Although this is a blog, the information conveyed must come from research, not conjecture. In addition, the blog must contain at least eight reliable, valid, credible sources and reference the course readings. Students with production skills can produce a video or a podcast instead of a blog; however, this must also be approved by me (Erik Chevrier).

Community Service-Learning Project: This assignment aims to give students hands-on experience by participating with sustainable food initiatives. Students will perform one of the following critical-participatory-action-research projects.

1 - Students can contribute to updating the Concordia Food Groups Research Project maps www.concordiafoodgroups.ca

2 - Students can participate in developing Coop CultivAction - a new urban farming cooperative.

3 - Students can volunteer with a campus-community organization in or around Concordia.

4 - Students can create a new community food initiative at Concordia University or in the community at large.

5 - Students can find another food organization to work with in their local area.

Students must form a group; however, they may choose to work on something in a group that already exists and/or create something with like-minded people outside the classroom. Students will form clusters and contribute to the project based on their area of expertise. For example, someone with great research skills could get involved with the research portion of the project, someone with media skills can build media infrastructure, someone with great interpersonal communication skills can be the mobilizer, among other tasks. Students will be evaluated based on the depth of their involvement with the project, their deliverables, clearly reporting their contribution to the project, an oral presentation summarizing their role in the project, and linking the project to the course material.

Letter Grade Equivalency

Your numerical grades will be converted to letter grades as follows:

A+	(95 – 100%)	B+	(80 – 84.9%)	C+	(67 – 69.9%)	D+	(57 – 59.9%)
A	(90 – 94.9%)	B	(75 – 79.9%)	C	(63 – 66.9%)	D	(53 – 56.9%)
A-	(85 – 89.9%)	B-	(70 – 74.9%)	C-	(60 – 62.9%)	D-	(50 – 52.9%)
F	< 50%						

Lecture Schedule: Themes and Required Readings

This is a **TENTATIVE** schedule and is subject to change. Be sure to consult the course website regularly to be aware of any changes.

January 6 - Introduction to Food and Sustainability

Activity Theme: Food Production – Growing Food (Seedlings)

January 13 - Deconstructing Food Sustainability

Activity Theme: Food Production – Growing Food (Plant Care)

Koc, M., Sumner, J., & Winson, A. (2017) Critical Perspectives in Food Studies, Second Edition, Oxford University Press.

Chapter 21 – Conceptualizing Sustainable Food Systems, pp. 320 – 331.

Chapter 22 – Actualizing Sustainable Food Systems, pp. 332 – 347.

January 20 - Building Food Sovereignty

Activity Theme: Starting a Sourdough

Koc, M., Sumner, J., & Winson, A. (2017) *Critical Perspectives in Food Studies*, Second Edition, Oxford University Press.

Chapter 23 – Alternative Food Initiatives, Food Movements, and Collaborative Food Networks: A Pan-Canadian Perspective, pp. 348 – 362. .

Chapter 24 – Building Food Sovereignty: A Radical Framework for Socially Just and Ecologically Sustainable Food Systems, pp. 363 – 379.

January 27 - Recipe for Sustainable Foods

Activity Theme: Making Bread

Barilla Center for Food and Nutrition, & Nierenberg, D., (2018) *Nourished Planet: Sustainability in the Global Food System* 3rd ed., Island Press.

Chapter 1 – Food for All (pp. 1 – 35)

February 3 - Food for Sustainable Growth

Activity Theme: Food Transformation (Preservation - Fermentation)

Barilla Center for Food and Nutrition, & Nierenberg, D., (2018) *Nourished Planet: Sustainability in the Global Food System* 3rd ed., Island Press.

Chapter 2 – Food for Sustainable Growth (pp. 55 – 95)

February 10 - Food, Sustainability and Capitalism

Activity Theme: Food Transformation (Preservation - Canning)

Holt-Gimenez, E. (2017) *A Foodie's Guide to Capitalism: Understanding the Political Economy of What We Eat*, Monthly Review Press, New York.

Introduction – Do Foodies Need to Understand Capitalism? (pp. 13 – 22)

February 17 - History of Food and Sustainability

Holt-Gimenez, E. (2017) *A Foodie's Guide to Capitalism: Understanding the Political Economy of What We Eat*, Monthly Review Press, New York.

Chapter 1 – How our Capitalist Food System Came to Be (pp. 23 – 56)

February 24 - Food Commodities

Activity Theme: Food distribution (Farmers Markets)

Reading Response Due Date Pushed to August 3rd

Holt-Gimenez, E. (2017) *A Foodie's Guide to Capitalism: Understanding the Political Economy of What We Eat*, Monthly Review Press, New York.

Chapter 2 – Food, A Special Commodity (pp. 57 – 82)

March 10 - Food, Land and Property

Holt-Gimenez, E. (2017) *A Foodie's Guide to Capitalism: Understanding the Political Economy of What We Eat*, Monthly Review Press, New York.

Chapter 3 – Land and Property (pp. 83 – 114)

March 17 - Food and Agriculture

Holt-Gimenez, E. (2017) *A Foodie's Guide to Capitalism: Understanding the Political Economy of What We Eat*, Monthly Review Press, New York.

Chapter 4 – Capitalism, Food and Agriculture (pp. 115 – 142)

March 24 - Food, Race, Gender and Class

Holt-Gimenez, E. (2017) *A Foodie's Guide to Capitalism: Understanding the Political Economy of What We Eat*, Monthly Review Press, New York.

Chapter 5 – Power and Privilege in the Food System: Gender, Race, Class (pp. 143 – 174)

March 31 - Alternative Food Networks

Holt-Gimenez, E. (2017) *A Foodie's Guide to Capitalism: Understanding the Political Economy of What We Eat*, Monthly Review Press, New York.

Chapter 6 – Food, Capitalism, Crises and Solutions (pp. 175 – 212)

April 7 - Transformative Food Systems

Holt-Gimenez, E. (2017) *A Foodie's Guide to Capitalism: Understanding the Political Economy of What We Eat*, Monthly Review Press, New York.

Conclusion – Changing Everything: Food, Capitalism, and the Challenges of Our Time (pp. 213 – 240)

Late assignment policy:

Unless you are given permission in advance, late assignments will not be accepted without adequate documentation of medical or personal emergencies.

A list of Student Services and Useful Resources

Counselling and Psychological Services: <http://concordia.ca/students/counselling-life-skills>

Concordia Library Citation and Style Guides: <http://library.concordia.ca/help/howto/citations>

Student Success Centre: <http://concordia.ca/students/success>

Health Services: <http://concordia.ca/students/health>

Financial Aid and Awards: <http://concordia.ca/offices/faao>

HOJO (Off Campus Housing and Job Bank): <http://csu.qc.ca/hojo>

Academic Integrity: <http://concordia.ca/students/academic-integrity>

Access Centre for Students with Disabilities: <http://concordia.ca/offices/acsd>

CSU Advocacy Centre: <http://csu.qc.ca/advocacy>

Dean of Students Office: <http://concordia.ca/offices/dean-students>

International Students Office: <http://concordia.ca/students/international>

Student Hub: <http://concordia.ca/students>

Sexual Assault Resource Centre: <http://concordia.ca/students/sexual-assault.html>

Indigenous Directions: <http://concordia.ca/about/indigenous.html>

University Rights and Responsibilities

Academic Integrity: “The Academic Code of Conduct sets out for students, instructors and administrators both the process and the expectations involved when a charge of academic misconduct occurs. The regulations are presented within the context of an academic community which seeks to support student learning at Concordia University.” (From Article 1 of the Academic Code of Conduct). Full text:

<http://www.concordia.ca/students/academic-integrity/offences.html>

Plagiarism: The most common offense under the Academic Code of Conduct is plagiarism, which the Code defines as “the presentation of the work of another person as one’s own or without proper acknowledgement.” This includes material copied word for word from books, journals, Internet sites, professor’s course notes, etc. It refers to material that is paraphrased but closely resembles the original source. It also includes for example the work of a fellow student, an answer on a quiz, data for a lab report, a paper or assignment completed by another student. It might be a paper purchased from any source. Plagiarism does not refer to words alone –it can refer to copying images, graphs, tables and ideas. “Presentation” is not limited to written work. It includes oral presentations, computer assignment and artistic works. Finally, if you translate the work of another person into any other language and do not cite the source, this is also plagiarism. **In Simple Words: Do not copy, paraphrase or translate anything from anywhere without saying where you obtained it!** Source: Academic Integrity Website:
<http://concordia.ca/students/academic-integrity>

Disabilities: The University’s commitment to providing equal educational opportunities to all students includes students with disabilities. To demonstrate full respect for the academic capacities and potential of students with disabilities, the University seeks to remove attitudinal and physical barriers that may hinder or prevent qualified students with disabilities from participating fully in University life. Please see the instructor during the first class if you feel you require assistance. For more information please visit <http://concordia.ca/offices/acsd>

Safe Space Virtual Classroom: Virtual classrooms are considered ‘safe space virtual classrooms’. In order to create a climate for open and honest dialogue and to encourage the broadest range of viewpoints, it is important for class participants to treat each other with respect. Name-calling, accusations, verbal attacks, sarcasm, and other negative exchanges are counter-productive to successful teaching and learning. The purpose of class discussions is to generate greater understanding about different topics. The expression of the broadest range of ideas, including dissenting views, helps to accomplish this goal. However, in expressing viewpoints, students should try to raise questions and comments in ways that will promote learning, rather than defensiveness and feelings of conflict in other students. Thus, questions and comments should be asked or stated in such a way that will promote greater insight into the awareness of topics as opposed to anger and conflict. The purpose of dialogue and discussion is not to reach a consensus, nor to convince each other of different viewpoints. Rather, the purpose of dialogue in the classroom is to reach higher levels of learning by examining different viewpoints and opinions with respect and civility.

I acknowledge that Concordia University is located on unceded Indigenous lands. The Kanien’kehá:ka Nation is recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters on which we gather today. Tiohtiá:ke/Montreal is historically known as a gathering place for many First Nations. Today, it is home to a diverse population of Indigenous and other peoples. We respect the continued connections with the past, present and future in our ongoing relationships with Indigenous and other peoples within the Montreal community. (Indigenous Directions Leadership Group, Feb. 16, 2017)