The Canadian Food System: A Community Development Approach

ERST/CAST 334H
Fall 2004

Course Director:
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Times and Locations: Wednesday 9-10:50 (lecture) and Tuesday 11-11:50 (seminar) (3 hours/week)

Calendar description:
This interdisciplinary course examines agriculture and the food system in Canada, emphasizing community development initiatives undertaken to enhance social, environmental, and economic sustainability. This course addresses production, distribution, processing, consumption and regulatory issues. It also prepares students to undertake community-based education projects with food and agricultural organizations in subsequent terms. Prerequisite: 10 University Credits. Canadian Studies 204 and/or International Development Studies/Anthropology 221 are highly recommended.

Purpose and Objectives:
This course presents an historical overview of the Canadian agricultural and food system, while also addressing current issues and debates such as agricultural subsidies, supply management, food security, BSE, and the regulation of genetically-modified foods and pesticides. Course readings will draw on a variety of disciplines and interdisciplinary fields including sociology, anthropology, political economy, women’s studies, health studies and environmental studies. The focus of this course is not only on challenges to the social, economic, and environmental sustainability of food and agriculture, but also on how Canadian communities, both rural and urban, have responded to these challenges through grassroots organizing and community development initiatives. Examples which will be critically analysed include the co-operative movement, community gardens, food banks, kitchen incubators and eco-labelling strategies (such as organic crop certification, animal welfare standards, and regional self-sufficiency initiatives). Guest speakers will include farmers, food processors and others working in the food system, as well as representatives from various food and agricultural organizations.

Course Structure:
In addition to lectures and tutorials, the course structure will include a series of participatory workshops. The main goal of these workshops is to familiarize students with theories and methods of community development and community-based research. A secondary goal is to prepare students for community-based education placements with food and agricultural organizations arranged through the Trent Centre for Community Based Education. For those students interested in undertaking a TCCBE project, these research placements will normally occur in the winter term or in a subsequent year of study as a special topics course or thesis arranged between the student and a suitable instructor from Trent’s Special Emphasis Program in Food and Agriculture. Students planning to undertake a community-based research project will develop a research proposal (in consultation with the TCCBE, the relevant community organization, and the appropriate faculty supervisor) as their final project for this course. Students who do not intend to undertake a community placement can write a research paper, present a radio show on Trent Radio, or write a news article coupled with a reflection paper, instead of the project proposal.

Possible community partners for research projects include: the Canadian Organic Growers, the Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario, the Christian Farmers Association of Ontario, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the Community Opportunities and Innovation Network, the Peterborough Social Planning Council, Native Friendship Centres, the YWCA of Peterborough, Kawartha FoodShare, the Toronto Food Policy Council, the Seasoned Spoon Café, the Ontario Public Interest Research Group, etc.

Prerequisites:

Note regarding Community-Based Education Projects: Students wishing to undertake a TCCBE project upon completion of this course must have completed ten full university credits with a minimum of 75% average by the end of the Fall term.

Assignments:
1) participation (including reading responses) 20%
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<th>Course Requirement</th>
<th>Grade (%)</th>
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<tr>
<td>2) theory/methods paper</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>3) mid-term exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>4) project proposal/ research paper (or pre-arranged alternative)</td>
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**Participation:**

Your participation grade will be based on your attendance, on the quality of your contributions to discussions, and on the submission of "reading responses." At the beginning of each class (starting Week Two), you should submit a one paragraph response (around 100 words) to one or more of that week's readings. This short piece could: a) respond to one of the questions set for that week in the syllabus; b) respond to an issue raised by the authors; or c) relate the readings to the topic you are researching for your essay or group project. These reading response papers will not be graded, and will not be returned to you. Their primary purpose will be to kick-start class discussions. Students are responsible for submitting responses to eight of the ten weeks of assigned readings. Failure to submit eight reading responses will result in 1 mark taken off of your participation grade for each missing response. Frequent failure to submit these papers can affect your participation grade more substantially, as it will affect the overall quality of your participation.

**Required Texts:**

- Course pack that will include excerpts from:
  - Peter Park, Mary Brydon-Miller, Budd Hall, and Ted Jackson (eds.). *Voices of Change: Participatory Research in the United States and Canada.* Westport: Bergin & Garvey. 1993

**Plagiarism:**

Plagiarism is an extremely serious academic offence and carries penalties varying from failure of an assignment to debarment from the university. Definitions, procedures, and penalties for dealing with plagiarism are set out in Trent University's *Policy on Plagiarism* which is described in the University calendar.

**Lecture Topics:**

Lectures and tutorials will address the following topics:

**Overview**

1) An introduction to the food system in Canada (including spatial organization of farming, the biological basis of agriculture and non-agricultural food sources).
2) An introduction to community development (overview of theories of community development and change)

**Production**

3) the farmer, capital and the state before WWII (regional self-sufficiency vs. export agriculture, the early cooperative movements, the United Farmers of Ontario, etc.)
4) the farmer, capital and the state after WWII (the industrialization of agriculture, the emergence of supply management systems, the Canadian Wheat Board, agricultural subsidies, gender issues in agriculture, etc.)
5) alternative agricultural movements in historical perspective (bio-dynamic farming, organic farming, permaculture, etc.)

**Processing/Distribution**

6) oligopolies in the Canadian food processing and distribution system and regional implications
7) sustainable community economic development initiatives in food processing and distribution (micro-processing, incubator kitchens, etc.)

**Consumption**

8) the political economy of post-WWII changes in the North American diet
9) relationships between environmental health and consumer health: case studies include BSE, farmed salmon, etc.
10) community development initiatives focused on food security in Canada: a critical examination of food banks, field gleaning, food box programs, community gardens, food cooperatives.

**Policy and Regulation in the Food System**
11) the Canadian regulatory system for agriculture: pesticides and “novel” (genetically-modified) crops
12) the Canadian regulatory system for food safety and health (bacterial contamination, food additives, genetically-modified foods, etc.)

**Research Methods**
14) students will be introduced to the theory and practice of participatory/action research in food and agriculture in a series of participatory workshops that take place during lecture/tutorial time.