

Fairhaven College Of Interdisciplinary Studies Course Evaluations and Assessments

Evaluations for: Kelli Marie Finet
Quarter/Year: Winter 2013
Instructor: Niall F. O Murchu
Course number and title: FAIR 275B Political Vegetables

Course Description

"To say that starvation depends 'not merely' on food supply but also on its 'distribution' would be correct enough, though not remarkably helpful. The important question then would be: what determines distribution of food between different sections of the community?" -Amartya Sen, Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation

In this course, we will address the above question by exploring the political, economic, and social power implications of the food system.

Have you ever wondered, "Why do subsidies in the U.S. raise domestic sugar prices but depress global cotton prices by 10%" or "How and why do food deserts exist in the U.S.?" or even, "When does 'voting with my fork' turn into movement building?" - perhaps you have never contemplated the exciting world of subsidies but are intrigued? Read on:

In our global food system;

- 80% of food in the world is consumed by 17% of the world's population.
- One billion people are estimated to be undernourished.
- 17% more calories per person are produced today than 30 years ago- with a 70% population increase.

So why the huge disparity?

A food system is defined by the infrastructure necessary to feed a population and is influenced by social, political, economic, agricultural and environmental contexts. We will start by looking at how the interaction of class, state, and market are influenced by divergent economic interests within U.S. regional food production (and vice versa). This includes supply management policy, evolving social structures, food aid, and the development of global trade. The second half of the course will examine global food trade more closely. We will explore the contemporary agri-food system through concepts such as food sovereignty, food justice, international food regime, and food politics. This class is for anyone who eats, who is excited about food as a social movement, or who would enjoy regular potlucks. Although not required, a course in economics would be helpful.

Required Texts: The Politics of Food Supply: U.S. Agricultural Policy in the World Economy by Bill Winders, Stuffed and Starved: The Hidden Battle for the World Food System by Raj Patel, Food Politics: What Everyone Needs to Know by Robert Paarlberg

Credit/Evaluation-In addition to regular attendance and full participation in class discussions, there will be weekly written reflections on readings, regular discussion leadership, a class project, a mid-term paper on one food commodity, and a final project focusing on your experience in the food system.

Student Self-evaluation

This class ended up being quite different than I expected. With the title "Political Vegetables" and the description posted, I expected it to be more heavily focused on food aid, culture, and racism within the food system. These concepts were definitely included, but our main focus was on policy. Policy is a very important thing to understand, but it's something that I'm not overly intrigued by and that made it difficult for me to understand.

Honestly, I started this class off pretty rough. I missed three classes at the beginning of the quarter for health reasons, which gave me a bit of a bumpy start. I definitely feel as though I got back into the swing of things pretty quickly. I do feel accomplished with my presence in class and my participation. I was very willing to discuss readings and I enjoyed leading seminar when I had the opportunity. This class was definitely not easy, but I feel like I did the best I could at this time in my life.

For my final project in this class I chose to explore why we eat what we eat. I composed and conducted two surveys, one for meat eaters and one for vegetarians. I asked many questions, a lot of them involving culture, religion, and spirituality. I wanted to see why people eat the way they do and what specifically in their lives has influenced their eating choices. I also asked questions pertaining to Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) and

Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) because this survey was combined with other information from another food class.

In Political Vegetables we have explored the food regime and how that heavily influences our choices. We also have talked about how different communities and cultures enjoy a variety of foods, which may be left out of the food movement. Overall this class has really opened my eyes to our food system and how complicated it truly is. There are so many things that could be changed for the better, but how do we make those changes? It's not as easy as it sounds. I think one thing that I will truly take away from this class, is that things aren't always as they seem. There are two sides to every story and there is always something to be explored and questioned.

Faculty Evaluation of Student

Student Teacher Evaluation

Kelli, thank you for your thoughtful and detailed evaluation. You completed all assignments, which included three sets of comprehensive reading questions, six reflections, a food myth argument paper and an agri-food autobiography. You also turned in a research paper on wheat commodity, a final project on local foods, a movie reflection based on L.A.'s South Central farming community, contributed a news article to class, and led a small-group discussion based on a question on yours from our readings. This is an impressive list of accomplishments and I commend you for your work. The question you posed in our first assignment, the agri-food autobiography, is something you strove to address during the rest of the course. You asked "Why not be more creative and innovative about farming rather than just leaving it to one massive farm?" and your interest in urban farming for your small-group discussion, as well as the subject for your food movie project proved that this topic is something you care about. I encourage you to continue exploring ideas of racism within the food system, although we didn't touch on the topic as much as you (or I) would have liked, much of the work you did was about racism in the food system; your food movie about L.A South Central gardens, readings by Ahmadi and Guthman, as well as in-class discussions.

Your work was sufficient to good, and you contributed to class discussions. Although you did miss three classes, we worked out an agreement and you completed the missing assignments. I'm glad you continued to work through the Winders readings and complement them with the Paarlberg readings on policy, something you did frequently in class. You also showed great enthusiasm for the Patel readings as evidenced by your complete and specific answers. I enjoyed your final project, there was clearly much effort and thought that went into the questions you asked and how you presented your information.

If you continue to study food systems (which I suspect is very likely) I encourage you to ask more questions about assumptions of "best practices" in the food system particularly if you're going to do more research regarding food habits. Although this line of inquiry might complicate food systems even more, your inquisitive nature and enthusiasm for food will serve you well.

Overall you had a solid performance in class. I look forward to seeing where future food studies and ventures take you!

--Chelsea Enwall

Fairhaven College Of Interdisciplinary Studies Course Evaluations and Assessments

Evaluations for: Kelli Marie Finet
Quarter/Year: Winter 2013
Instructor: Jennifer Lisa Hahn
Course number and title: FAIR 336N Topics/Science:Plate&Planet

Course Description

What is the imprint of your appetite? What are the hidden environmental and social costs of our 21st Century dinner table? How can we be informed food citizens and ambassadors of eco-gastronomy - ,the pleasures of good food raised or harvested sustainably? How can we envision a food system that is healing for person and planet? In this class you will develop a foundation for understanding the connections among food production, ecology, ethics, cuisine, nutrition and health within the framework of sustainability. We'll examine both local and global food systems.

"Global warming" and "ocean deserts" may not cross your mind when you sit down to dinner. Yet, livestock creates more emissions than all combined transportation on the globe. More than a third of both the world's grain and fish catch now go to feed livestock. In return we get only a fraction of those nutrients. Eating tofu from China-grown soybeans is a step up, but how can we do better? If we're serious about the climate crisis, says Anna Lappe' in "Diet for a Hot Planet," we have to talk about food. We'll also address the special interests resisting a public conversation for sustainable food systems and the spin tactics companies use to deflect the heat. For instance, we'll examine the story of Monsanto, an agribusiness giant and the world's leading producer of GMOs (genetically modified organisms). We'll also revisit organic farming's promises and pitfalls. We'll discover principles for a climate-friendly diet and success stories from sustainable food advocates around the globe. Guest speakers and films will illuminate readings and spark class discussions. We'll also dig into local dirt and regional cuisine via two field trips to farms and artisan food makers plus an evening 100-mile-dinner. Through weekly cooking projects, we'll celebrate the pleasures of sustainably grown and harvested foods.

Texts: Anna Lappe's "Diet for a Hot Planet"; Paul Greenberg "Four Fish: The Future of the Last Wild Food"; Marie-Monique Robin's "The World According to Monsanto: Pollution, Corruption, and the Control of the World's Food Supply"; Maria Rodale's "Organic Manifesto: How Organic Farming Can Heal Our Planet, Feed the World, and Keep Us Safe"; plus handouts and on-line readings.

Credit/Evaluation: 1) Class attendance and informed, thoughtful participation; 2) Sustainable and local food cooking project; 3) Critical Reading Journal; 4) 7-10 page research paper or Service Learning project/journal (pending instructor approval).

Student Self-evaluation

Coming into this class I expected to learn about food and how our eating habits impact the earth. We most definitely covered the environmental impacts of agriculture, and at the same time we also learned about our own health and the health of animals. We critically thought about and discussed what is on our plates and how that is affecting so much more than just ourselves.

We started out by reading "The World According to Monsanto" by Marie-Monique Robins. I read this book cover to cover and even went back to read some more. The book itself is filled with so much information and extremely disturbing information at that, but somehow Robins has managed to write in a way that really speaks to me. I specifically focused on chapter 13 "In Argentina: The Soybeans of Hunger". This chapter caused me to feel very deeply for Argentina. It really bothers me to think that the Pampas region of Argentina, once the breadbasket of the world, is now being taken over by Roundup Ready soybeans. It bothers me think that there are families and children who are living right next to where Roundup is being sprayed daily and that these people are consuming soybeans that are so heavily contaminated with pesticides.

In this class we have jumped head first into the environmental impacts and health risks of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs). I honestly didn't know all that much about GMOs before starting this class and now that I am informed and aware of GMOs I plan to share that, all the time, as much as I can. I'm shocked and appalled by the lack of regulations on GMOs and I am very grateful for projects like the Non-GMO Project that are working their hardest to protect people, animals, and the environment.

My final project for this class was to explore why we eat what we eat. I composed two surveys, one for meat-eaters and one for vegetarians. I asked questions regarding GMOs, Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs), and recombinant bovine somatotropin (rBST). I wanted to see if people were informed about these things and if they cared. I really wanted to create an unbiased survey, which overall I believe I succeeded at. I also wanted to educate people or at least ask questions that made them curious enough to look into things such as CAFOs or GMOs. In the end I feel very accomplished about my final project and am completely content with my results.

This class has truly opened my eyes to food and what food is. Food is a tool, food is nourishment, food is community, food can be dangerous and food can be safe, food is something to be grateful for. My curiosity has been sparked and I can see myself moving forward with the ideas of this class

as my guide. I have not only grown academically, I have grown personally and am much more aware of the consequences of my choices. I feel very inspired and plan to share my knowledge with others as I move through life.

Faculty Evaluation of Student

Kelli you were an upbeat, thoughtful and engaging student. I appreciate how you grappled head-on and creatively with often-difficult issues relating to Climate Change, Industrial Food Systems and Wild Food Resources. I could count on you to comment thoughtfully on the readings and movies and ask probing questions to our guest speakers, such as Dr. Ruth Sofield, Toxicologist. You have a great combination of scholar, activist and educator.

RESPONSE PAPERS: Your papers were exceptionally well written. They improved in depth over time. They also demonstrated you have a very good to excellent awareness of key issues we covered. For instance, in your article for "Gastronomica" magazine, where you compared and contrasted three diets, you hit the mark: "For those of you on a "omnivore or paleo diet we need to discuss Concentrated Animal Feeding Lots (CAFOs) and their impact on climate change. 'The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines CAFOS as facilities that confine animals for at least forty-five days of the year and do not raise their own feed. 'Large' cattle CAFOS house 1000 or more animals, and 'large' hog CAFOS house 2,500 or more. Poultry operations aren't technically deemed large until 125,000 or more birds are in confinement.' About 99 percent of meat slaughtered and sold in the United State comes from CAFOs. ...Knowing where our meat comes from and trying to buy from small local farmers will really reduce the carbon footprint of our food." You have a creative non-fiction writer's spark. Keep it shining!

CHAPTER PRESENTATION: "Argentina: The Soy Beans of Hunger" from the book "The World According to Monsanto" was excellent. You clearly knew your materials. The PPT was informative and visually appealing with great maps of Argentina (to place us), informative graphs, enticing photos and hard-hitting facts. Adding a movie with a farmer speaking of the problems was especially eye opening. It would be helpful to have more Resources listed on your handout. That said, your handout covered key points that were distressingly true: "The use of Roundup in the pampas (of Argentina) has caused the weeds to become resistant and even tolerant of Roundup and other herbicides. This means more weeds and more herbicides and being used. "Before the advent of Roundup Ready (RR) soybeans, Argentina used an average of 1 million liters of glyphosate annually. In 2005, we reached 150 million liters." Monsanto's solution is to create a more powerful herbicide. ...But as we know, this just continues the problem and makes it great....including killing important bacteria in the soil that help decomposition and repel insects."

FINAL PRESENTATION: You accomplished a professional-quality survey: WHY WE EAT WHAT WE EAT (for Vegetarians and Meat Consumers). You thought a lot about how to frame your questions and not skew the results. I was impressed you surveyed 100 people for the meat-eater survey and 60 people for the vegetarian. More impressive is how you doggedly pursued a survey audience by posting it on FACEBOOK, as well as the on-line source READ IT. Plus you surveyed people on the street downtown, as well as at the Western Registration office. Your statistics were clearly presented in graphic form with each question. Stellar work, overall!

HANDS-ON FOOD PROJECTS: The whole class greatly appreciated your Seasonal Pizza with local-flour and local-grown mushrooms, shallots, homemade pesto and pizza sauce plus homegrown pork sausage from your family's farm! I appreciate the local meats you brought to our 100-Mile Dinner from your family farm, too.

Overall, you were a pleasure to have in class and on field trips to local farms and agricultural research stations. You seemed right at home.