

Fall 2012 TOPICS IN SUSTAINABILITY: BUILDING A JUST & REGENERATIVE LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM

ENVS 20200 CRN 20780 Tue & Thu 9:25 AM -12:05 PM 4 CR

Elan Shapiro, Community presenters & Project Guides 592-8402

ENROLLMENT: 20 Open to all students.

PREREQUISITES: One ENVS course (ideally with significant sustainability focus) or equivalent and one Social Science course (ideally with significant community focus) or equivalent or by permission of instructor.

LOCATION: Phillips Room, Muller Chapel and various community locations. In warm weather we may meet by the pond.

OFFICE HOURS: Admin Annex 106 Tue 12:15-1:30 Thu 12:30 -2:00 (arrange in advance), other times by arrangement.

PREREQUISITES: One ENVS course (ideally with significant sustainability focus) and one Social Science course (ideally with significant community focus.) Exceptions upon request & discussion.

OVERVIEW

In this course, we study and help create an ecologically regenerative local food system and economy in the Ithaca/Tompkins region that empowers and healthfully feeds all of its people. Working together with inspiring local pioneers in this venture, we focus through the lenses of social justice, ecological agriculture, regional nutrition, systems thinking and community economic development on how to be of most benefit to the movement

While this class has less reading than many other courses and no exams and long papers, it requires as much time, energy, and quality work as any challenging 4-credit course.

We'll study a small number of texts and other instructional materials in depth and create a classroom learning community that draws on the expertise, experiences, and interests of students, as well as local farmers, gardeners, permaculturists, cooks, food activists and educators, and justice and sustainability leaders. We will work with soil and plants and our taste buds as much as possible.

Students will be engaged in teams in hands-on community projects (50% of the course time and grade-6 hrs per week) and in field trips to farms, community gardens, schools, and other community settings linked to the local food justice movement, as well as the "Building Bridges" initiative for creating a just and sustainable local economy. Reflection, cultural competency skills and personal food sustainability practices are an integral part of the change work we explore in this course.

COURSE FORMAT/STYLE:

Tuesdays: Presentations by instructor, students, and community leaders; group discussions; skills trainings and practice; project team presentations and feedback; tastings; field trips.

Thursdays and other times: Community-based Team projects.

REQUIREMENTS: Regular, prompt attendance and attention to all course components; **two class leadership contributions**, such as co-facilitating a discussion, leading a learning game or skill practice, etc.; One **meeting with instructor** in first month; Short **weekly readings** and/or videos; **Written Weekly Assignments**, including a personal **food sustainability practice** journal. Community-based **Team Projects** (teams of 2 or 3) with community guides, including project presentations, tangible products, and final report.

Bring folder or binder to each class with readily accessible class resource sheets

EVALUATION/GRADING

What's most important to me here is your good-faith effort and contribution and the constructive feedback you get. The grade is a necessary byproduct.

- **Attendance, participation, contribution, leadership, skill development, including meeting with instructor - 20%* (see *below)**
- **Reflective writing linked to readings, activities, and food sustainability practice - 30% (see Reflection section)**
- **Project work - 50% (see **below)**

*A major part of your grade is based on your **presence and participation in class**. That includes:

- Attendance
- Preparedness a foundation for meaningful participation
- Participation How alert, connected, willing to contribute, respond, take risks, and lead are you?
- 2 Leadership contributions (extra presentation, facilitation, games, practices)

Presentations/Facilitation

- How well you met your own "Working Agreement" Goals

****Project work** includes working with the community service and organizational development needs of your agency or initiative, for 5 hours per week, not including transportation, plus team presentations and final report.

Project work will be evaluated by the project guide and instructor, before mid-semester and at end of semester, using the following criteria:

- 1) **Reliability** including accountability, consistency, and completeness
- 2) **Quality** including clarity, depth, creativity, and productivity
- 3) **Initiative** including leadership, self-motivation, and "taking charge"
- 4) **Teamwork** including collaboration and effective communication
- 5) **Cultural Competency** including inclusive perspective, cultural understanding, and openness to and valuing of differences

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1) Learn and become more empowered by collaborating with local community members to help build a positive future, specifically, a local food system that provides healthy food for all.

2) Align with a strong shared vision, such as Building Bridges, in our locality, a vision of a just and eco-restorative local economy that works for all residents, human and nonhuman

3) Deepen race and class awareness, on a personal and systems level, and develop multicultural habits and skills

4) Develop an emotional connection to this community's strengths and struggles and recognition of it as a rich source of learning.

5) Practice mindfulness, communication, facilitation and other self-care and community skills as a foundation for applying and integrating classroom knowledge and community contribution

6) Learn systems thinking and action strategies and apply them to food system redesign

7) Become a learning community with classmates and learn about community systems in the process

8) Experience key areas of positive local food system redesign:

- Innovative food production and distribution methods that increase productivity and reduce costs and negative impacts, such as permaculture, 4-season farming, aquaponics, solar/composting greenhouses, vertical farming, school farms, food hubs, food commons', CSA cooperatives, etc.

- Increasing access and demand for healthy local foods. Changing the branding and the cost of local, organic, seasonal foods to broader public appeal;
- Highlighting and undoing patterns of bias that play out in all parts of the food system and that perpetuate chronic poverty, exposure to toxics, malnourishment and hunger, limited nutritional education, and poor health among many rural residents and residents of color.
- Supporting new farmers and food entrepreneurs, including those from marginalized communities, - socially, educationally, logistically, and financially
- Increasing investment opportunities in key leverage points of our local food system so it can jump to another scale of education, production, coordination, and distribution
- Developing effective and attractive hubs, networks, and cooperatives, that foster more coordination, synergy, and systemic change;
- Creating food policy councils and other policy-focused initiatives with diverse grass roots leadership that advocate for policy changes that support local self-determination and food system health

COURSE ELEMENTS

LEARNING COMMUNITY:

We will use the “democracy skills” at the heart of the course to create a “learning community” together. You will have opportunities to:

- Build community based on shared “working agreements” and many opportunities to work closely in pairs and small groups
- Lead or co-lead sections of many classes
- Give feedback that adapts the curriculum to the emerging needs of the community;
- Practice shared leadership and facilitation and constructive feedback in your team projects and in small group discussions tasks;
- Use a justice (fairness, inclusion, equal opportunity) perspective and an ecological (systems, place-based, long-term) perspective to optimize our interactions and impact; and
- Connect informally as a group (e.g. making a local food dinner together at Ecovillage or view and discuss relevant films together).

Besides having more fun learning this way, you will probably find you are learning as much from each other as from the other course resources.

ONE-ON-ONE INTRODUCTORY MEETINGS:

I ask that you meet least once with me for about 30 minutes by Thursday October 4, for getting acquainted, reflecting on how the course is going for you, asking questions, giving feedback, etc. This is *your time* to use as you like to ensure that you’re making the most of the course. **A sign-up sheet will be passed around on the first day of class to schedule meeting times.** Other visits are encouraged, just arrange in advance.

Prior to our meeting here are some questions you might wish to consider. We will focus on the areas that are most important to you. Any other topics or concerns you wish to raise are certainly welcome.

1. What aspects and areas of the course am I most passionately interested in? What do I most want to accomplish in this course?
2. How does this course fit in with my current academic and life goals?
3. What, if anything, is not clear to me about the course requirements, structure or methods?
4. What is working well for me and not as well for me so far in the class? Suggestions for improvements are welcome
5. What is working well for me and not as well for me so far in my project? Suggestions for

improvements are welcome.

6. What would it be good for instructor to know about my learning style and preferences?
7. What would it be good for instructor to know about my strengths and talents (where I could possibly contribute most and support others) and my challenge areas (where I could possibly use more support or understanding)?

ASSIGNMENTS:

Study & Practice

Your weekly study assignments will include *a modest amount of readings, videos, training manuals, and websites*, available through links within the assignment itself, the Resources section of Sakai, or class handouts. We will not use required books at first, though we may get to 1 or 2 after the first few weeks.

Most assignments will include opportunities to practice food system skills related to the study materials – on your own, with friends, in your residence hall or apartment, in other classes, clubs, or your downtown settings, and then to reflect upon. These “experiments” may require building up your courage and self-confidence muscles, which is an integral part of the course objectives.

Reflections

Weekly reflections, roughly 1-2 pages long, due in Sakai by Monday 5PM

Reflection, as I'm referring to it in this course, involves more than recording random informal thoughts on your experience or assigned readings. It's a complex, life-enhancing skill, underdeveloped in most of us, that involves:

- remembering and making sense of our often fragmentary experiences
- observing patterns and changes in our ways of thinking, being and doing
- relaxed focusing that helps surface often-hidden assumptions, values, feelings, and needs; and
- going back and forth from personal experience to different cultural, historical, and disciplinary contexts (such as in the readings and videos) to learn lessons and *find meaning*

The ability to reflect requires *choices* that are not supported in our fast-paced, hyper-stimulating society, such as: slowing up; stopping multi-tasking and multiple electronic inputs at certain times of the day or of the week; and taking time to re-view and mull things over. It's an essential *feedback process* that can strengthen and improve both personal and community sustainability efforts.

The reflections I'm asking for are personal and informal, grounded in your direct experience, and they also address the questions and content in the assignment. They should show significant effort at integrating the material *and seeing yourself as part of the process*. They will generally cover 2 or 3 areas, varying with each assignment and with your own areas of excitement. The questions below are examples of reflections that will vary with different parts of the course

1. **Study Materials**, (readings, video, etc). What principles, strategies, or case examples were most meaningful and/or valuable to you in the assigned materials? Why?
2. **Skill Development**. What community skills are you trying out and practicing in different situations? What are your impacts and outcomes, challenges and successes, so far, as far as you can tell?
3. **Community Project** a) What are you learning through your project about this community and about relating respectfully and authentically with people from different backgrounds than

yours? b) What are you learning about teamwork, leadership, communication, and/or community building? c) What are you learning about sustainable and/or systems-based design and strategies? d) Which skills from class are you integrating in your team and community situations and how?

4. **Personal Changes** in perspective (or mindset) and behavior you are experiencing and experimenting with throughout the course. How are the way I see my world and myself and the way I act in the world changing?

Post your written reflections , roughly 1-2 pages long, every week, on Sakai by Monday at 5:00 PM, which leaves me a little time to review before Tuesday morning class.

FOOD JUSTICE SUMMIT

We will participate in The Food Justice Summit

www.greenstarcommunityprojects.org/FJS/WebHome.html on Saturday September 22 in a number of ways, as the major part of that week's assignment. This is a major convergence of many of the groups we will be closely connected to the whole semester, a great way to get the big picture. If you absolutely cannot participate because of a commitment you cannot change, please notify me in advance. I will have an alternate community-based assignment you can do on another day.

COMMUNITY PROJECTS: Also see separate Project Handbook

1) Developing multicultural leadership in the food justice movement –How others have done it.

Interviews, report, & presentations Jamila Simon jws62@cornell.edu

2) Effective White Ally Work in the Food Justice Movement – How others places have done it.

Interviews, report, & presentations Caleb Thomas calebrthomas@gmail.com

3) Assessment of the Cultural Competency efforts of the Groundswell Center for Local Food and Farming Interviews, report & presentations Joanna Green joanna@groundswellcenter.org

4) Nutrition Education Modules for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program – Field experience, training, leading, and evaluating Megan Begert msbegert@aol.com

5) Youth Farm Project - Assist with fall farm tasks and with organizational capacity-building projects
Ann Piombino annpiombino@yahoo.com

COURSE GUIDELINES & LOGISTICS:

ATTENDANCE We expect consistent and prompt class attendance. If you must miss a class, you are still responsible for any assignments announced and for all material presented during class. It will be *difficult* to get an A or B without attending class regularly. **If late or unable to attend class or project time, email instructor, project guide or teammates in advance and, when necessary, use cell phones (Elan 592-8402)**

OFFICE HOURS : (arrange in advance). Admin Annex 106 Tue 12:15-1:30 Thu 12:30 -2:00 (arrange in advance), other times by arrangement.

If these times do not accommodate your schedule, I would be happy to arrange another time to meet. Please note that most of the regular September times will be filled with the required one-on-one meetings, but other times can be arranged. I encourage you to consider another meeting later in the semester as a way of touching base on your progress as well as your concerns.

KEEPING UP

Please read the syllabus carefully, refer back to it, and ask if something is unclear. Please check Sakai regularly (specifically: Assignments, Announcements, and Resources). This is a rich and complex course, and I will **I will provide occasional reminders to check updates to the announcement and resource section of Sakai.** So keep alert, avoid making excuses, and we will have a great learning journey together.

TRANSPORTATION: Getting to projects in as reliable, timely, and low-impact a way as possible is an integral and fun part of the curriculum. Clear communication and accountability will be essential to the success of the various methods we employ. You must notify team and guides by email and/or cell phone, as needed, of any delay or absence. **We will establish early on who has use of a car and how to make cars available when they are appropriate for each team.**

ACCOMMODATIONS POLICY: In compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act, reasonable accommodation will be provided to students with documented disabilities on a case-by-case basis. Students must register with the Office of Academic Support Services and provide appropriate documentation to the College before any academic adjustment will be provided.

PLAGIARISM POLICY: Please review the College's definition of plagiarism as it appears in the Student Handbook. I routinely search the web for material I believe to be plagiarized, and report offenders to Judicial Affairs. In a collaborative project, all students in a group may be held responsible for academic misconduct if they engage in plagiarism or are aware of plagiarism by others in their group and fail to report it.

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES: Diminished mental health, including significant stress, mood changes, excessive worry, or problems with eating and/or sleeping can interfere with optimal academic performance. The source of symptoms might be directly related to your course work; if so, please speak with me. However, problems with relationships, family worries, loss, or a personal struggle or crisis can also contribute to decreased academic performance. Ithaca College provides a Counseling Center to support the academic success of students. It provides cost-free services to help you manage personal challenges that threaten your well-being.

In the event I suspect you need additional support, I will express my concerns and the reasons for them, and remind you of resources (e.g., Counseling Center, Health Center, chaplains, etc.) that might be helpful to you. It is not my intention to know the details of what might be bothering you, but simply to let you know I am concerned and that help, if needed, is available. Getting help is a smart and courageous thing to do -- for yourself and for your loved ones.

Schedule – Next Page

SCHEDULE

After the second week, most Tuesday classes will include community presenters

Thu Aug 29 Class 1 Intro to course themes, pedagogy, logistics, & learning community members

Tue Sept 4 Class 2 Systems Thinking, Ecological Design, and Food Systems

Thu Sept 6 Class 3 Project presentations by Project Guides

Tue Sept 11 Class 4 Racial Justice, Cultural Competency, and our Local Food System

Thu Sept 13 Project Session 1 Meet with guides in the community

Tue Sept 18 Field Trip 1 Food, Farming and Community: EcoVillage Farms & Gardens & Groundswell Incubator

Thu Sept 20 Project Session 2 in the community

Sat Sept 22 Food Justice Summit

Tue Sept 25 Class 5 – Food Justice Summit Review, Food Justice Principles & Programs

Thu Sept 27 Project Session 3

Tue Oct 2 Class 6 – Economic Justice, Poverty, and Food Sovereignty

Thu Oct 4 Project Session 4

Tue Oct 9 Field Trip II Urban Agriculture

Thu Oct 11 Project Session 5

Tue Oct 16 Class 7 Review, Follow-ups, & Short Project Presentations

Wed Oct 17 First Evaluation of students by guides due

Thu Oct 18 No project session Fall Break

Tue Oct 23 Class 8 Mindfulness, NonViolent Communication, & Facilitative Leadership

Wed Oct 24 Mid-Term Grades Due 10:00 p.m.

Thu Oct 25 Project Session 6

Tue Oct 30 Class 9 Community Economics and Food System Redesign

Thu Nov 1 Project Session 7

Tue Nov 6 Class 10 Food Policy and System Redesign

Thu Nov 8 Project Session 8

Tue Nov 13 Class 11 Food Networks and Coalition Building

Thu Nov 15 Project Session 9

Nov. 17-25 Thanksgiving Break

Tue Nov 27 Class 12 Review, Follow-ups, Learning Community

Thu Nov 29 Project session 10

Tue Dec 4 Class 13 Integrating our Learning

Thu Dec 6 Project Session 11

Fri Dec 7 Draft Team Project Report and Deliverables due by 12AM Sat

Tue Dec 11 Class 14: Project Presentations to classmates I

Tue Dec 11 Feedback from guide on draft final report & deliverables due

Thu Dec 13 Class 15: Project Presentations to classmates II

Fri Dec 14 Final Team Project Report and deliverables due by 12 am Sat

Mon Dec 17 Final “Exam”: closing reflection & celebration is *required*

Wed Dec 19 Final Evaluation of students by guides due