

Spring 2008
3 credits

World Food Issues

Agronomy 342 - Environmental Studies 342
Food Science and Human Nutrition 342 - Technology and Social Change 342

Section 1: Tuesday/Thursday 11:00-12:20, Curtiss Hall, Room 15

Section 3: Tuesday/Thursday 2:10-3:30, Curtiss Hall, Room 15

Instructor:

Gretchen Zdorkowski (please call me Gretchen)

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Office Hours:

Tuesday 3:30-5:00 pm

You can always make an appointment by e-mailing me or talking to me after class. I also welcome your coming to my office during the day, but don't be offended if I am busy and we need to make an appointment for another time.

Course Text:

Lappé, Frances Moore, J. Collins and P. Rosset. 1998. **World Hunger, Twelve Myths**. Second Edition. NY: Grove Press.

(available at the University Bookstore, both new and used—*check the edition*—and through such sources as Amazon or ABE)

Additional readings will be assigned during the semester

Course Objectives: Students will have the opportunity to:

- Study and discuss contemporary global, national, regional and local issues relating to food, food systems, food distribution, hunger and food security, and their root causes
- Critically evaluate their own arguments and the arguments of others
- Identify the ethical perspectives of others and have a clearer understanding of their own values and ethical perspective
- Practice a variety of communication options to support active learning and the respectful exchange of ideas

Course Introduction:

Hunger. Obesity. Famines. Food security. NAFTA and CAFTA. World Trade Organization. The future of farming. Food prices. Subsidized agriculture. Food-borne diseases. Animal ethics. Global/regional/local food systems....

These topics, and many more, increasingly confront us. What is happening? In what ways do these things affect us individually and as a nation? What is going on globally and how are we connected to the problems that exist in other countries?

What sort of future are we facing and creating—here and around the world?

When you look deeply at issues concerning food, you find that they are often also at the root of many of the other great problems the world currently faces, and are frequently a catalyst for crises of war, disease and underdevelopment.

There is a formidable body of information available on these issues and this information reflects thoughts, analyses and conclusions that are oftentimes conflicting. Our class therefore has *two* tasks ahead of it—to explore the issues themselves, and to find a way to work systematically through diverging information, analyses and proposed solutions.

This is not easy work—it will require you to do the readings ahead of time, to come to class willing and ready to participate in the information and the activities, and to take the effort to acquire and practice the skills we will use in the class. It will also require all of us to listen to differing viewpoints respectfully and, in the best of all possible outcomes, to learn from those viewpoints.

Class Organization:

The class will be organized around the following activities:

- Class Lectures
- Guest and outside lectures
- In-class discussions and exercises
- Readings (the text and others as assigned)
- Core assignments:
 - Inquiries
 - Analyses
 - Team project (poster)

Student Assignments and Grading:

Attendance and class participation	30% of total grade
Inquiries	30% of total grade
Article analyses	10% of total grade
Team poster project	30% of total grade

Assignments	Approximate Due Dates
1 st Analysis (in class, not graded)	Tuesday, February 5
1 st Inquiry	Thursday, February 7
2 nd Analysis	Thursday, March 6
2 nd Inquiry	Thursday, March 27
3 rd Analysis	Tuesday, April 22
3 rd (final) Inquiry	Tuesday, May 6
Poster Presentations (3 teams/class)	April 1, 3, 8 (and 10 if necessary)

1. Attendance and Class Participation:

- Students will be asked to submit occasional written assignments such as question sheets for outside speakers. These will be graded (excellent/acceptable/needs work; +/√/-) and will be factored into the grade for participation.
- Students will be asked to submit short written pieces for each major reading (such as chapters of the text). These will be graded (excellent/acceptable/needs work; +/√/-) and will also be factored into the grade for participation.
- Students will be expected and encouraged to contribute to in-class discussion and to ask questions or offer ideas. The class will be a much better and stronger one if we understand each another’s perspectives, and if we make use of everyone in the class as a resource to help improve our knowledge and our arguments.
- Participation is an important part of learning the material and the analytical skills we will practice in class, and attendance is a prerequisite for participation. I will take attendance regularly, but my real priority is to encourage your engagement in the subject matter of the class—whether you agree or disagree. When I allocate participation points at the end of the semester, they increase with the amount that you contribute constructively to the class.

- Given the above, talking or texting on cell phones, reading the newspaper, a book or other materials, carrying on extended private conversations, doing puzzles, or sleeping (etc. etc. etc.) constitute **non**-participation.
- If you must miss class, please contact me by email—and good reasons for missing a class are things like: broken bones or debilitating, life-threatening or highly communicable diseases; official university or career activities; Or unavoidable serious family or personal crises.

Bottom line: the more absences you have, and the less you are engaged in the class, the more your class participation grade will be affected.

2. Inquiries and Analyses:

Objectives:

- To explore ideas, opinions and issues brought forth in the subject matter of the class and from the different perspectives brought by class participants.
- To learn to weigh and evaluate information for the purpose of analyzing complex problems.
- To employ and expand skills developed in class (critical thinking, argument analysis, written exploration and argument of complex and cross-disciplinary issues)
- To develop skills in comparing information with your own beliefs and ideas, and generating a more complete and well-rounded understanding of an issue.

Specifics:

- Inquiries:
 1. There will be three inquiries spaced across the semester; the last will serve as the class final examination
 2. Each inquiry will consist of your choice of two or three essay questions
 3. You will hand in a 4-5 page response (as long as it takes to do a good job!). It should be:
 - Typed
 - Double spaced
 - Formatted with a 12-pt font, such as Times, or Arial and normal margins (1.25"/side, 1"/top and bottom)
 4. Though this will, in part, be an opinion piece, you will be expected to give sound reasons for your statements and your work will be evaluated on:
 - The thought and reflection you show on the topic chosen
 - How well you have incorporated the information from class discussions, readings and lectures
 - How convincingly you have used an argument and evidence to make your points
 5. Corroborating information can (and should!) be drawn from your class notes, the readings, the speakers, and any outside reading (newspapers, magazines, journals, books, etc.) that help you make your points. **Remember to include references to any material you quote or to which you refer.**
 6. Each inquiry will be worth 10 points toward your class grade
- Analyses:
 1. There will be three article analyses spaced across the semester
 2. Each analysis will consist of examining and evaluating the contents of an article that I will hand out to the class.
 - We'll go over the analysis of the first article in class to clarify the assignment and the skill necessary to do it
 3. You will hand in a 3-5 page response. It should:
 - Be typed and double spaced
 - Use a 12-pt font, such as Times, or Arial

- Use normal margins (1.25"/side, 1"/top and bottom)
 - Contain clear answers to all the questions
 - Be organized in outline form
4. As the semester progresses, I will expect you to incorporate the comments I make on improving your analyses—so the expectations for the quality of your work will increase over the semester.
 5. Each analysis will be worth 5 points toward your class grade.

3. Team Poster Project

The class will be organized into teams of 4-5 people each, and each team will select a current and contentious issue relating to the information raised in the course. As a group, you will prepare a poster that you will use to communicate the different positions on the issue and their most relevant points and perspectives to the class.

The challenge in this assignment is to make the visual presentation of the poster help you deliver the information.

Sample Topics: Food aid, obesity in children, nutrition and school lunches, biotechnology and hunger, food safety, malnutrition in particular areas of the world, food security in Ames, foodways of particular cultures, food advertising, local food systems, organic food and agriculture...

- Objectives:
 - To work in a team setting that will be similar to one you may face in your personal or professional life after university.
 - To have the opportunity to explore one issue deeply that addresses problems within our food system
 - To have the opportunity to learn about other issues as presented by your peers
 - To develop skills in creating poster presentations that may serve you well for other venues (such as conferences, professional presentations, etc.)
 - To think seriously about real world solutions for various problems in this realm
- Specifics:
 - *Poster*
 1. Create a poster, **at least 3'x4'**, that can be hung on the classroom wall (using masking tape)
 - Submit your poster to the Baker Lab in 2216 Agronomy. Materials need to be submitted to them **AT LEAST four working days in advance.**
 - Create your posters in PowerPoint—the Baker Lab has had difficulties printing posters from other programs
 - **Make sure the format of the poster is sized to 36" x 48".**
 2. Each poster should include the following components, arranged in an attractive, readable and logical manner:
 - The background and central elements of the issue
 - A fair representation of the breadth of positions on the issue
 - Potential solutions and how they relate to different positions
 - Does your group feel there an optimal solution? Why it is optimal? Is there a fair distribution of benefits and costs?
 - List of references used
 - List of students in the group
 3. Incorporating photos, graphs, charts or other forms of visual information is both useful and effective in a poster. However, *every word and every picture must count*—you are working to balance readability and information. Too much

information, and the font size is so small, people can't read it. Too little information, and your poster does not communicate very much about the issue.

4. Each project should draw from **at least 8 references** (journal articles, books, credible magazine articles, news articles, published research and the like).
 - *Only one reference may be a website!*

▪ *Presentation:*

1. Prepare an outline of the presentation for the class and instructor to refer to during the presentation. This will allow the members of your audience to track your information and make use of your resources in the future, if they wish. Include:

- Title of the presentation
- The main points and sub-points of the presentation
- A list of the references used
- Names of the members of the group

This is due the class before your presentation so that I can make copies for everyone.

2. Plan for your presentation to take 18-20 minutes, incorporating all group members
 - Practice ahead of time and stay within the time limits
 - All of the group members should take some responsibilities in the presentation.
 - The only aid you will use for the presentation will be the poster. No other PowerPoint or other visual/auditory aids, please.
3. Each presentation will be followed by 5 minutes of questions from the class.

▪ *Assessment:*

1. Each group will be evaluated by the rest of the class and by myself. Criteria for the evaluation will include:

- Demonstrating thought and analysis of the issue—showing the different 'sides' of the issue whenever appropriate
- Depth of research
- Providing a convincing presentation and evidence for your arguments
- Quality and effectiveness of presentation
 - Organization of the information
 - Attractiveness and readability of poster
 - Delivery style
 - Breadth of information covered
 - How well the group responded to questions

2. Each poster group will also do evaluations of the effort and contributions of individuals within the group, which will also be factored into the grade for the assignment.

• *Individual reflection:*

1. Write a 2-3 page reflection (double-spaced, 12pt font, 1.25" margins) about your role in the group project. Please include:
 - What did you learn from this project?
 - From the research on the topic?
 - From working with your group?
 - What did you learn from the other posters?
 - What was successful, in your opinion, about the assignment?; what improvements could be made?

4. Bonus Points:

- This is an issues class and therefore we are interested in and concerned with topics that are in the news. You may acquire 5 bonus points toward your total grade in three ways:

- Submit an article analysis, similar to the ones you have as class assignments, using a relevant current news article of your choice.
 - *Please clear the choice of the article with me*
- Attend a lecture whose content is relevant to the class and submit an analysis of the lecture, similar to the ones we will use for the lectures the class is asked to attend.
 - *Please clear the choice of the lecture with me*
- Present a short (5-8 minute) analysis of a relevant news article to the class, including:
 - its major focus (or foci)
 - the evidence it has provided
 - your assessment of its overall strengths and weaknesses.
 - *Please clear the choice of article with me before you proceed (and so I might schedule a time for your presentation).*
- For the sake of our collective sanity, if you choose to do a bonus assignment, it must be done **before** the last two weeks of the semester.

Class Protocols:

1. *Courtesy:* We will be dealing with many issues that have ‘hot buttons’—especially since we will be looking at the ethical bases of the writings and other ideas the class will consider. One of our ground rules therefore will be to handle the discussion of these issues respectfully and analytically.
2. *Participation in Group Activities:* There will be one important group activity during the semester for which you will need to schedule time to meet with your group. Your attendance, interest and work habits will be a part of this grade, as each group will rate all its members for participation and amount of work contributed.
3. *Late assignments:* If you cannot turn in your assignments at the scheduled time, contact me with your valid (see attendance) reasons before the due date, or you will be eligible only for a reduced number of the total points.
4. *Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty:* Plagiarism and academic dishonesty are considered grounds for failing an assignment. The work you turn in, except in the case of group activities, is expected to be yours and yours alone. You know all this stuff already, but it is important enough to deserve a reminder.

One is responsible for plagiarism when:

- The exact words of another writer are used without using quotation marks and indicating the source of the words
- The words or ideas of another are summarized or paraphrased without giving the credit that is due
- The ideas from another writer are borrowed without properly documenting their source.

Acknowledging the sources of borrowed material is a simple, straightforward procedure that will strengthen your paper and assure its integrity. Any manual of style (such as the English 104-105 Student Manual) will give guidelines in documenting borrowed material.

Important note: I am now required to report incidences of plagiarism to the Dean of Students’ Office where it is forwarded to Judicial Affairs.

5. *Students with Disabilities:* Please address any special needs or special accommodations with me at the beginning of the semester or as soon as you become aware of your needs. Those seeking accommodations based on disabilities should obtain a Student Academic

Accommodation Request (SAAR) from the Disability Resources (DR) office (515-294-6624), located on the main floor of the Student Services Building, Room 1076.