

GEOG*3320 FOOD SYSTEMS: SECURITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Department of Geography, Environment and Geomatics
University of Guelph

Fall 2023 Course Outline

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LECTURES:

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Location:

OFFICE HOURS: by appointment

TA:

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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Many argue that current food systems are unsustainable and will be unable to provide adequate and appropriate nutrition for the global society in the 21st century. This course will explore this issue by taking a global and historic perspective to understand the structure and functioning of agriculture and food systems. We will pay particular attention to the interaction of farms with social, economic, institutional and environmental forces that combine to shape patterns of agricultural activity. In particular, we will explore ways of assessing the extent to which different kinds of food systems are "sustainable" as well as assess how resilient and robust these food systems are to environmental problems (such as climate change) and economic upheaval. Many argue that current food systems are unsustainable and will be unable to provide adequate and appropriate nutrition for the global society in the 21st century. This course will explore this issue by taking a global and historic perspective to understand the structure and functioning of agriculture and food systems. We will pay particular attention to the interaction of farms with social, economic, institutional and environmental forces that combine to shape patterns of agricultural activity. In particular, we will explore ways of assessing the extent to which different kinds of food systems are "sustainable" as well as assess how resilient and robust these food systems are to environmental problems (such as climate change) and economic upheaval.

From urban slums in the Global South to suburban food deserts in the Global North, experiences of food insecurity and hunger are complex and varied. The juxtapositions are stark: malnutrition and nutrient deficiencies coexist sometimes in the same communities with rampant over-nutrition and obesity. Today, many argue that the dominant approach to producing and supplying food is unsustainable and will be unable to provide adequate and appropriate food and nutrition in the context of global environmental change. The course

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will be organized around the three themes of systems, security and sustainability to help students to understand the structure and functioning of the global food system. We will pay particular attention to the social, political, economic, and environmental forces that impact food systems at different scales. In particular, we will explore ways of assessing the extent to which different parts of the food system adhere to principles of sustainability. It will also aim to enable students to learn how to assess how resilient or robust different aspects of the global food system are to environmental, political and economic change.

Learning objectives:

- 1) Working familiarity with key concepts including food systems, food security, food rights, and sustainability, etc.
- 2) Knowledge of historical and contemporary food systems and to provide a thorough and critical evaluation of the challenge of maintaining global food security over the next generation.
- 3) Ability to identify and discuss the root causes of food insecurity, hunger, and population growth. To critically explore possible solutions and alternatives to major food security challenges.
- 3) To enhance students' ability to critically evaluate popular media on food related issues.
- 4) To provide training in writing short policy brief documents

TEXT AND READINGS

It is strongly recommended that students purchase the required text from the University Bookstore or the Campus Co-op. The text is also available as an e-book and from other online sellers.

Required (for class readings and assessment):
Clapp, Jennifer. (2020). *Food*. 3rd Edition Cambridge: Polity Press.

Additional weekly readings from various journal articles, book chapters and technical reports will supplement the text and will be available on Courselink. See the weekly schedule below for the list of readings.

REQUIREMENTS AND ASSESSMENTS
