

UEP 306: FOOD AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Course Topic: Food Systems & Food Justice

Fall 2025

T/Th 1:30-2:55pm

INSTRUCTORS

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CANVAS

All readings and supplemental media will be available on the course Canvas site:

<https://oxy.instructure.com/courses/5956>

COURSE OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

This community based learning course explores a range of food systems issues from a food justice lens. The course examines how our food system has been restructured over the last century to benefit large-scale agriculture interests, creating a global food system that emphasizes convenience and fast-food solutions for consumers, often to the detriment of low-income people and communities of color. Through in-depth class discussions, on-site field trips, and in-class speakers, the class will delve into the environmental, economic, health, cultural, and social impacts of how food is grown, processed, manufactured, distributed, sold, and consumed in the U.S. The course will use the concepts of a “food system” and of “food justice” as its organizing principles, and will look at different policies, programs, political struggles, and the social and economic and cultural forces that influence and shape the food system and that generate food justice activism.

Through the course, students will:

- Gain knowledge of today’s food system, including how food is produced, distributed, consumed, and disposed of and the nature of food system problems and their possible solutions.

- Develop analytic skills to make connections between the food system and economic development, community health, the environment, neighborhood and regional planning, labor, organizing and advocacy, and local, state and federal public policy.
- Identify how and why low-income communities of color are disproportionately affected by market and policy failures to produce and distribute healthy, safe food.
- Gain understanding of the current food landscape and policy debates in Los Angeles by talking with food justice activists, planners and policy.
- Examine the role of planners/practitioners/policy makers in either hindering or promoting food justice and critically evaluate efforts – including grassroots, policy, and planning attempts – to address food issues.
- Develop new strategies and action plans toward food justice.

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

UEP 306 is a 4-unit course. It is expected that students in this class on average will devote at least twelve (12) hours a week to class activities (including in-class time). Letter grades for the course are assigned according to the following table.

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	F
93-100	90-93	87-90	83-87	80-83	77-80	73-77	70-73	67-70	63-67	0-63

Grades for the course will be determined according to the criteria described below.

1. PARTICIPATION – 35%

As a community based learning course, class participation is a primary focus of the class. The participation grade is based on the following categories.

Class Engagement & Attendance – (18%)

Students are responsible for attending and participating in class, being prepared to discuss readings and materials with the group, and having questions prepared for guest speakers. Students are also responsible for engaging in respectful, open, and thoughtful discussion with each other, the professors, and community partners.

We understand that circumstances this semester may present challenges beyond a student's control in terms of class attendance. Please let us know as soon as possible if you will need to miss a class. We may be able to provide a makeup assignment. Throughout the semester, we also offer several opportunities for extra credit assignments.

This Week in Food – (5%)

On Tuesdays, class will generally begin with a review of “This Week in Food.” Students will upload a food-related article to Moodle from a news source such as the LA Times, New York Times, or other reputable source. The article should relate to the topic indicated in the assignment, which will be covered in class that week.

Assignment: Post the title and link to your article on Moodle the night before class and come prepared with a brief summary and personal reflection to discuss with the group.

Journal Reflections – (12%)

A journal assignment will be due each week that will reflect on the week’s readings, classroom presentations and discussions, guest speakers, coursework etc. Note, late assignments will receive half credit.

Assignment: Post your journal reflections on Moodle responding to the listed prompt.

2. COMMUNITY BASED LEARNING PROJECT

This year’s community-based learning project will focus on the status of U.S. food policies that impact the greater Los Angeles community. Specifically, our class will be partnering with the Los Angeles Food Policy Council to explore food policies and programs that have been impacted by the Trump administration’s funding cuts and program terminations. Each student will pick a policy/program from our list to focus on over the course of the semester.

Midterm Assignment: Food Policy Research Paper — 30%

For the midterm assignment, students write a 7-10 page research paper exploring the history of the policy/program including when and why it was created, who it was intended to serve, and the impacts it has had over time. The paper will also describe the policy/program’s current status, the impacts of any upcoming or recent changes, and any recommendations, including calls to action.

Final Assignment: Policy to Action! — 35%

The final assignment will focus on the development of “popular education” materials that can be used to share information about the policy/program. These might include a 1-page info sheet or social media campaign that summarizes the policy along with any current calls to action. These may be used by the Los Angeles Food Policy Council. For the final assignment, students will also be required to 1) highlight a case study about the program that involves interviewing an organization/individual who is impacted by the program, and

2) a final presentation that summarizes both the research findings from the midterm paper and outreach materials.

Late Assignment Policy.

Missed “this week in food” and “journal reflections” may be submitted past the deadline for ½ credit. If you anticipate that other assignments may be late, please discuss with your professors as soon as possible and prior to the due date. As a community-based learning course with shared assignments that build on other students’ work, an extension may not always be possible, but we will do our best to accommodate when necessary.

CLASS SCHEDULE - 2025

Week #1	Tue 8/26	Introduction & Course Overview
	Thu 8/28	The History of Agriculture in Los Angeles County (Guest Speaker: Rachel Surls, <i>Urban Agriculture Researcher</i>)
Week #2	Tue 9/2	Food Insecurity and Food Justice in the U.S.
	Thu 9/4	LA Food Policy Council / Intro to Project + Signup
Week #3	Tue 9/9	Michael Flood, LA Regional Food Bank
	Thu 9/11	Agriculture in the U.S. from Big Ag to Local Food Systems
Week #4	Tue 9/16	Corporate Consolidation + GMOs
	Thu 9/18	Diet Trends
Week #5	Tue 9/23	BIPOC Farmers
	Thu 9/25	BIPOC Farmers
Week #6	Tue 9/30	Labor in the Food System (Dolores)
	Thu 10/2	Food & Climate
Week #7	Tue 10/7	Project check-in
	Thu 10/9	Farm to School & Institutional Purchasing

Week # 8	Tue 10/14	FALL BREAK — NO CLASS
	Thu 10/16	FALL BREAK — NO CLASS
Week # 9	Tue 10/21	NO CLASS
	Thu 10/23	Field Trip: El Sereno Grocery LONG CLASS (1pm – 2:55pm)
Week #10	Tue 10/28	NO CLASS
	Thu 10/30	Field Trip: Prosperity / CSU LONG CLASS (1pm – 2:55pm)
Week # 11	Tue 11/4	NO CLASS
	Thu 11/6	Field Trip: St Barnabus- Jubilee Consortium LONG CLASS (12:45pm – 2:55pm)
Week # 12	Tue 11/11	NO CLASS
	Thu 11/13	Field Trip: Urban Ag and Access to Land (Charter Bus!) LONG CLASS (11:45am – 2:55pm)
Week # 13	Tue 11/18	Class Feedback & Project Check-ins
	Thu 11/20	Final Presentations
Week # 14	Tue 11/25	Final Presentations
	Thu 11/27	THANKSGIVING — NO CLASS

** Note—this schedule is an overview. All course readings and assignment details are posted on Canvas.*

COURSE/CAMPUS POLICIES & SUPPORT SERVICES

Credit Hour Policy.

UEP 306 is a 4-unit course. On average, you should expect to spend at least twelve (12) hours a week (including in-class time) on this course.

Mid- Semester Progress Reports

For [Fall 2023](#) Mid-Semester Progress reports are available from October 9-22 and Advising Week is October 23-27.

GUIDANCE ON COVID

The most recent guidance on COVID-related policies can be found here:

<https://www.oxy.edu/back-oxy>

- **COVID-Specific Policy on Masks.**

Faculty still maintain the authority to require masks in their classroom, even at times when the College does not have an indoor mask mandate.

- **Importance of Not Coming to Class When Ill.**

Your health and well-being, and that of our community, are essential. If you are feeling any symptoms of illness, please refrain from attending class until you receive a negative COVID test or it has been 10 days since your symptoms began. Please work with Emmons and the COVID Operations team to confirm when and how you can end your isolation. Similarly, if you have been identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, please follow all applicable College policies, and wear a high-quality mask when around other individuals for 10 days.

- **Mental Health Implications of Missing Class.**

Your mental health and emotional well-being impacts learning and academic success. Symptoms like depression, anxiety, and trauma may cause loss of motivation, difficulty concentrating, and other issues that make learning difficult. Emmons Counseling staff are committed to supporting the mental health needs of our students. Emmons counseling services are available M-F from 9a-4p and include individual and group therapy, drop-in chats, case management, and referral consultations. Walk-ins are available M-F from 2-4p. All of these services are offered in person and via teletherapy. Students can also utilize the 24/7 confidential hotline at (323) 341-4141. To get connected to any of the free, confidential services at Emmons call (323) 259-2657.

Statement of the Shared Academic Integrity Commitment

Academic Integrity is a shared community value. It is built around trust and respect between members of the Occidental Community, and embodies a commitment to honesty and integrity in every aspect of one's academic life.

All members of the Occidental community are committed to uphold the highest degree of academic integrity. Unless stipulated otherwise, the academic work done for all assignments is expected to be the student's own; students are expected to give proper credit to the ideas and work of others.

Signing the Academic Integrity Commitment at the beginning of every semester represents a student's affirmation to uphold the shared values of honesty and integrity. When signing the Integrity Commitment associated with work in a course, students are affirming that they have not cheated, plagiarized, fabricated, or falsified information; nor assisted others in these actions.

[Link](#) to Student Handbook (which includes the framing of the commitment, definitions of Academic Ethics, and Process for alleged violations of the commitment).

Civil Rights & Title IX

In the event that you write or speak about having experienced discrimination or harassment on the basis of a protected characteristic or sexual misconduct (including sexual assault, dating/domestic violence, stalking, sexual exploitation or any other form of sexual and/or gender-based harassment), as a designated Responsible Employee, I must inform the Civil Rights & Title IX Office. They will contact you to let you know about resources and support services at Oxy, as well as reporting options both on and off-campus. You have no obligation to respond to the Civil Rights & Title IX Office or to meet with them to discuss support services and reporting options.

If you do not want the Civil Rights & Title IX Office contacted, instead of disclosing this information to your instructor, either through conversation or a class assignment, you can speak confidentially with:

- Oxy's Survivor Advocate, Project SAFE (survivoradvocate@oxy.edu)
- Emmons Counseling (For appointments, call: 323-259-2657)
- Rev. Dr. Susan Young, Office of Religious and Spiritual Life (young@oxy.edu)
- Oxy 24/7 Confidential Hotline (323-341-4141)

The College's civil rights policies, along with additional resources, can be found at: <https://www.oxy.edu/civil-rights-title-ix>. If you would like to contact the Civil Rights & Title IX Office directly, you may email Civil Rights & Title IX Coordinator Alexandra Fulcher at afulcher@oxy.edu or call 323-259-1338.

Special Accommodations/Learning Differences (

All academic and housing accommodation requests are managed by Disability Services & Student Support (DSSS). It is a student's responsibility to contact DSSS if they need accommodations or additional support. Any student who has, or thinks they may have, a physical, learning, or psychological disability may contact Disability Services at accessibility@oxy.edu to learn about available services and support. More information is available at <http://www.oxy.edu/disability-services>.

Accommodations for Reasons of Faith and Conscience

Consistent with Occidental College's commitment to creating an academic community that is respectful of and welcoming to persons of differing backgrounds, we believe that students should be excused from class for reasons of faith and conscience without academic consequence. While it is not feasible to schedule coursework around all days of conviction for a class as a whole, faculty will honor requests from individual students to reschedule coursework, to be absent from classes that conflict with the identified days. Information about this process is available on the ORSL website: <https://www.oxy.edu/student-life/resources-support/orsl/academic-accommodations> “

Equity & Justice in an Inclusive Learning Environment

Drawing from the [Shared Academic Integrity Commitment](#) and the [Office of Student Conduct](#), Oxy's commitment to academic integrity is fundamental to being an educational community. It represents our commitment to respectfully engage with each other and with ourselves. This is especially important when we discuss relevant topics and issues that are unfamiliar and/or at times, uncomfortable. In these situations, it is essential to guarantee the open and thoughtful intellectual exchanges that provide the foundation for teaching, learning, research, and knowledge production, and as such it reflects the high value we place in the processes and products of education at Oxy. With that in mind, classroom exchanges must be grounded in the values of trust, honesty, and respect. Ad hominem attacks are considered a violation of the Code of Student Conduct.

This classroom is a place where you will be treated with respect, and I welcome individuals of all ages, backgrounds, ethnicities, gender identities and expressions, national origins, political affiliations, religious affiliations, sexual orientations, abilities, and other visible and nonvisible identities. The wide array of perspectives that each of us contributes to this class is a resource that will strengthen and enhance our intellectual community. All members of this class are expected to co-create and engage in a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment for every other member of the class. In this context, we may speak as individuals or we may choose to represent ourselves as a member of a group. You need not represent any group, only yourself, though you may choose to represent a group, if you wish. Additionally, part of equity & justice work is to dismantle barriers to success for all people, particularly those who belong to groups that have been marginalized and minoritized. If there are aspects of the design, instruction, and/or experiences within this course that result in barriers to your success or accurate assessment of achievement, or if there are ways we can improve the effectiveness of this course for you personally or for other students or student groups, please let me know. Your suggestions about how to improve the value of justice, equity, inclusion, and diversity in this course are encouraged and appreciated.

Laptop Lending Program

Students may request a loaner laptop via this form:

<https://oxy.freshservice.com/support/catalog/items/108> and check it out via the Library Information Desk at the Academic Commons. The laptops are Dell PCs and set up with access to the virtual computer lab software (e.g., SPSS, STATA, Matlab etc.).

Student Academic Support Resources

Occidental has an array of available student support services found here:

<https://www.oxy.edu/academics/student-success>

- Students who need support with their time management/organizational skills, online learning strategies, and other study skills, can schedule a I:I meeting with our Academic Success Coach. If interested, please email to academiccoaching@oxy.edu to schedule an appointment. In your email, please share what you'd like to work on, and an academic success coach will schedule an appointment with you within a few days.
- The Library's Teaching, Learning, and Research Support (TLRS) offers [library research consultations](#). We also offer peer-to-peer support for learning technologies in the Critical Making Studio on the ground floor of the library (contact Samantha Hilton hiltons@oxy.edu for more information).
- Peer Tutors are available to assist students on discipline-specific peer tutoring for coursework, and content review and study skills support in a variety of academic departments. Information and schedules for drop-in tutoring in [languages](#) and in [all other subjects](#) can be found on their respective websites linked here.
- The Writing Center offers opportunities to work on all forms of writing for any class and other writing tasks such as personal statements, proposals, fellowships, senior comprehensives, and more. We offer peer-to-peer consultations with knowledgeable Writing Advisers and sessions with Faculty Writing Specialists. We are located on the ground floor of the Academic Commons. See the [Writing Center website](#) for more information about our hours and how to drop-in or sign up for appointments. Please contact the Writing Center Director Prof. Prebel (jprebel@oxy.edu) for more information on Writing Center resources.

Intercultural Community Center (ICC)

The ICC aims to reduce institutional barriers for marginalized communities through intentional and meaningful programming, identity-specific services and accessible resources. At the ICC, we practice collective care as an act of rebellion as those of us on the margins fight against attempts to weaponize our oppression and silence our activism. To

learn more, contact icc@oxy.edu, or reach out directly to Vanessa Gonzalez-Wright, vgonzalez2@oxy.edu.

Emmons/ Student Health

Your health and well-being has always impacted learning and academic success, and this reality is only heightened as we enter a new season of the pandemic and transition back to campus. Symptoms such as anxiety, depression, loss of motivation, difficulty concentrating, strained relationships, and feelings of not belonging can occur. Emmons Counseling staff are committed to supporting the mental health needs of our students. Due to the nature of our work and the safety for all, Emmons counseling services will continue via teletherapy. Emmons will provide ongoing individual therapy, walk-ins, support groups and consultations through a virtual platform. Emmons staff will also support students with finding local therapy referrals. In case of an emergency or a crisis, there will be counselors onsite to assist the Oxy community. All students continue to have access to the 24/7 confidential hotline at (323) 341-4141. To get connected to any of the free, confidential services at Emmons call (323) 259-2657 or schedule an appointment online at <https://myhealth.oxy.edu> using your Oxy login credentials.

Lived Name Policy

Occidental College seeks to provide an inclusive and non-discriminatory environment by making it possible for students to use [a lived first name](#) and pronouns on college records when a legal name is not required. Students are encouraged to use Zoom to display their lived name and pronouns.

Land Acknowledgement.

Occidental College sits on the traditional territory and homelands of the Tongva people. Please click through to read more about the [Gabrielino-Tongva tribe](#) and about the practice of [land acknowledgement](#).