Food issues are among the most contested issues and policy debates today. These include how food is grown; how it is processed and manufactured into food products; how it is accessed and where it is sold; what type of food is available at schools and other institutions; how food is prepared, what, where and how it is eaten; and the global dimension of food production. The role of policy and politics can further determine who experiences the costs and benefits of industrialized food systems and whether and what types of alternatives are available. The nature of the food system – the activities and relationships that constitute various food pathways from seed to table and that influence the how and why and what we eat – resides at the center of the debates over food.

This course critically examines the contemporary food system by looking at food production, distribution, and consumption through the lens of food justice; that is, by an understanding of who does and does not benefit from our globalized food system and the effects on our health, communities and our environment. We will also learn about an emerging food movement that challenges the dominant system, including groups for whom justice and equity are central concerns, and who promote the idea that an alternative food system is possible. This course will thus use the concepts of a “food system” and “food justice” as its organizing principles. We’ll look at different policies, programs, and the social and economic and cultural forces that influence and shape the food system and that generate food justice activism.

The course will be organized around a set of readings focused on food system issues and alternative food justice strategies (including, as a primary text, my co-authored book on Food Justice); a series of speakers from the front lines of the food justice and food system battlegrounds; events and activities taking place at Oxy and in L.A., and a community-based research component where students can select a topic for their research paper that has direct or indirect relevance to a policy debate, an organizing strategy, a program, or food justice organizational goal.

We will establish five topic groups that will correspond to the readings, class discussions, and the community-based research aspect of the course. These areas include:

1. The Food System
2. Eating Food
3. School Food
4. Food Politics
5. Global Food
Seminar discussions will be based on reading memos and commentator prompts that students will prepare and share with the class on a weekly basis. We will have topic groups to do a presentation and lead a class discussion on the issues associated with the topic. We will also have periodic discussions of food issues in the news (with students identifying issues discussed through conventional news sources and/or through social media sources such as blogs), as well as feedback and assessment of the talks, events, and activities taking place during the semester. And we will also have short papers based on the reading material and a final research paper, with an option to do an action research project and paper.

**REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING**

Grades will be based on the following:

1. **PARTICIPATION – 50% of grade**

Participation is a central component of the class, including the various requirements such as the reading memos, topic group presentations, food in the news comments, and participation in and feedback about events taking place during the semester. Students are expected to attend all class discussions, come to class having read the material, participate in class discussions, and complete all assignments and class exercises. Class discussions will evolve around your insights from the readings and other aspects of the class.

A. **Reading memos and commentators (20% of grade) (TWO GROUPS – A and B)**

Completing the assigned reading prior to class is essential to class participation. Short (half-page to no longer than full-page) reading memos (which will be posted on Moodle) will help identify what questions and issues should be addressed for the seminar discussions. Memos will be due two days prior to class, as noted in the schedule and readings. While each reading memo will not be given a letter grade, completion of the memos and their use in stimulating class discussions will be factored in for this part of the grade. Reading memos should reflect a response to the issues raised in one or more of the readings, rather than a summary of the readings.

There will be two Reading memo groups (A and B, assigned randomly). Readings will be developed for each topic, divided into two segments. Group A will be responsible for completing a memo, most often the first class session of the first week of the Topic section, based on the readings for that segment of the class. Group B will be responsible for the second set of readings for the second half of that segment of the class. Readings will include a mix of book chapters, journal articles, and newspaper stories. Memos should not simply draw on a single newspaper article and should focus on at least two of the readings (and hopefully more) and should be between a half page to a page in length.

In addition, for each seminar session where the Readings will be discussed, there will be a small Commentator group of about 3 students selected among those students not
providing a Reading memo for that session (e.g., commentators selected from Group B to
comment on the Reading memos from Group A). Commentators will review all the
reading memos that have been posted and add a prompt or set of prompts to help guide
the seminar discussion for that session. We will identify who will be part of the
commentator groups after students select their topic group (so there won’t be overlap –
see below for discussion of the topic groups).

B. “Food in the News” (5% of grade)

Each student is responsible for posting, on moodle, at least three “Food in the News”
items during the semester, providing the link to the item and a paragraph comment about
it. The Food in the News item could be a journal or newspaper article, an interesting blog,
a video, an op ed, etc. The first Food in the News item needs to be posted no later than
October 17, the second no later than November 5, and the third no later than November
17. Everyone should be checking moodle to see what was posted prior to class and be
prepared to discuss and analyze the issues discussed in the Food in the News item.

C. Event Participation and Feedback (10% of Grade)

Students will be required to attend/participate in at least two food-related events, actions,
talks, and/or activities taking place during the semester. Students should post a short
summary and analysis of the events they attend on Moodle and be prepared to discuss
their observations in class. A google doc of events and actions will be made available
during the semester.

D. Topic Group Presentations (15% of grade)

Students will initially form into topic groups of approximately four-five students each,
based on the five topic areas. Groups will be formed by the second class session,
Tuesday, September 3rd. Each Topic Group will be responsible for a presentation and to
elicit class engagement through their presentation. Topic Groups are encouraged to
develop interactive, imaginative sessions that capture the issues and themes and debates
identified in the readings, the reading memos and the food in the news subjects, while
maximizing class involvement.

2. SHORT PAPERS – 15% of grade

Students will write two separate essays (up to 3 pages in length) during the course of the
semester on the subject matter of a particular topic area, based on the readings and class
discussions related to that topic. Due dates for these short papers are also identified in the
syllabus.

3. FINAL PAPER: RESEARCH PAPER or ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT – 35% of grade
There are two options for the final paper.

The first option is the more traditional research paper which should cover a specific food justice issue or set of issues. Research papers should be between 10-12 pages. The papers should elaborate on how the issue or issues selected relate to our current food system, provide some historical perspective, and describe their relevance. Papers may also recommend policy or programmatic changes. The purpose of the research paper is to conduct deeper research on a topic that addresses and expands on one or more of the broad topic areas and themes discussed in the readings and class. The paper can also explore a current food justice issue/debate that has not been discussed directly in the course.

The second option is an Action Research project/paper tied to a specific food justice organization or policy group that would include research on an issue in which the group is engaged. Such targeted research could be based on a campaign or report or some other need of the group. For this option, the earlier you can identify a group and their particular need, the better you’ll be able to undertake this option. The action research paper would then include background about the organization and the research or action area involved, a summary of what work was completed for the group, and an overall assessment of the group and the issues involved.

With both of these options, make sure to include a bibliography that lists all of your sources/resources.

Research paper topic proposals will be due by Tuesday, October 22 and will be posted on Moodle. Action Research Proposals, with the organization identified, will also be due on Tuesday, October 22, but will be encouraged to do so earlier in the semester.

Both the final research paper and the action research paper will be due by Friday, December 6.

I’ll have formal office hours between 11-1 on Tuesday and Thursday but you can make appointments on other days. Even if you’d like to see me on Tuesday/Thursday, please let me know beforehand. Email is usually the best way to do that.

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**SYLLABUS**

*Introduction to the Food System and Food Justice – August 29-September 5*

This first segment will serve as background to the course and establish the different groups. It will also include an exercise where students would identify the most important food issues (and food justice activities) in their home communities and prepare a short (half page) memo to be posted on moodle, describing those issues and/or activities. We
will also prepare a Food Justice/Food System Glossary of key concepts and terms used by researchers, industry players, and activists.

Aug. 29: Course Background and Groups A and B selected; Food Issue and Food Glossary Assignments

September 3rd: Hometown Food Issues Identified and Discussed; Food Glossary developed; Selection of Topic Groups and Commentators

September 5th: Food System and Food Justice Issues: Guest Speaker Goetz Wolff

Readings
(Complete by September 5)

Food Justice: Transforming the Food System, Robert Gottlieb and Anupama Joshi, Preface (pp. ix-xv) and Introduction (pp. 1-10)


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Topic 1: The Food System (How Food is Grown, Processed, Accessed and Sold) – September 10-September 24

Readings (Segment #1 – complete by September 10)

Food Justice (Chapter 1 “Growing and Producing Food” (pp. 13-38) and Chapter 2 “Accessing Food”, pp. 39-58)


Readings (Segment #2 – Complete by September 17)

Food Justice (Chapter 6 – “Growing Justice” (pp. 123-149) and Chapter 7 – “Forging New Food Routes” pp. 151-176)

Andy Fisher, “Coalition of Immokalee Workers: Transforming an Industry,” Chapter 9, Forthcoming; and
Coalition of Immokalee Workers – check out the web site: [http://www.ciw-online.org/](http://www.ciw-online.org/)


*Reading Memos (Group A, due September 8; Group B, due September 15); Commentator Prompts Due Sep 9 and Sep 16)*

*Topic Group Presentation - September 24*  
*Short paper due – September 24*

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**Session 2: Eating Food – September 26-October 8**

*Readings (Segment 1 – Complete by September 26)*

*Food Justice* (Chapter 3 “Consuming Food”, pp. 59-73)

POINT-COUNTERPOINT:


Marion Nestle, “Today’s ‘Eat More’ Environment: The Role of the Food Industry,” Chapter 7, in *A Place at the Table*, Peter Pringle (Editor), 2013, pp. 95-106

Readings (Segment 2, Complete by October 3)

*Food Justice* (Chapter 8: “Transforming the Food Experience” pp. 177-196)

Saru Jayaraman, *Behind the Kitchen Door*, pp. 22-42 (Discussion of Mario Batali’s Del Posto restaurant in New York and Good Girl Dinette in Highland Park) and Chapter 6 – “Women Waiting on Equality” pp. 130-156”; and pp. 172-175 (conclusion)


Reading Memos (Group A, due September 24; Group B, due October 1); Commentator Prompts Due Sep. 25 and Sep. 30

Topic Group Presentation – October 8

Short paper due – October 8

Session 3: School Food – October 10- October 24

Readings (Segment 1 – Complete by October 10)

Janet Poppendieck, “Food Fights: A Brief History” (Chapter 2) in *Free for All: Fixing School Food in America*. 2010, pp. 46-83


**Readings (Segment 2 – Complete by October 22)**


**Reading Memos (Group A, due October 8; Group B, due October 20); Commentator Prompts due Oct 9**

**Research Paper Topic/Action Research Paper Client Selection, due Oct.22**

**Topic Group Presentation - October 24**

**Short paper due – October 24**

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**Session 4: Food Politics – October 29-November 12**

**Readings (Segment 1 – Complete by October 29)**

*Food Justice* (Chapter 4: “Food Politics” pp. 75-97)


L.A. Food Policy Council: Check the FPC website at [www.goodfoodla.org](http://www.goodfoodla.org) and take a look at their “overview of the food system”: http://goodfoodla.org/good-food/overview-of-food-issues/.

Readings (Segment 2 – Complete by November 7)

Food Justice (Chapter 9: “A New Food Politics”, pp. 197-219)


POINT-COUNTERPOINT -- PROP 37 and GMO Labeling:


**Reading Memos** (Group A, due October 31; Group B, due November 5; Commentator Prompts due Nov. 1)

**Topic Group Presentation** – November 12

**Short paper due** – November 12

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**Session 5: Global Food – November 14-21**

**Readings (Segment 1 – Complete by November 14)**

*Food Justice* (Chapter 5 “The Food System Goes Global”, pp. 99-119)


**CHINA**:

A. Nicola Davison, “China’s Taste for Pork serves up a Pollution Problem,” *The Guardian*, January 1, 2013, available at [http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/jan/01/china-taste-pork-pollution-problem](http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/jan/01/china-taste-pork-pollution-problem);


**Readings (Segment 2 – Complete by November 19)**

“Resistance and the Road to the Future,” (Chapter 7) in *The Food Wars*, Walden Bello, 2009, pp. 125-149


**CHINA**:


C. Shi, Y. et al, “Chinese Sustainable Agriculture and the Rising Middle Class: Analysis from Participatory Research in Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) at Little Donkey Farm,” 2012 (from the School of Agricultural Economics and Rural Development, Renmin-Beijing).

Reading Memos (Group A, due November 12; Group B, due November 17; Commentator prompts due Nov 13 and 18)
Topic Group Presentation – November 21
Short paper due – November 21

Session 6: Research Presentations and Summary Discussions – December 3, December 5 and Exam Period (Dec. 9)

Final Research/Action Research Project Papers – Due December 6