A number of vibrant, complex, sometimes scattered, but increasingly influential alternative food advocacy groups have emerged in recent years in L.A., in the U.S., and globally. Alternately identified as part of a food justice, food sovereignty, community food security, or food democracy movement, the groups, policies, and program initiatives that constitute their approaches have generated debates about how and where food is grown, how it is processed and manufactured into food products, how it is accessed and where it is sold, how food is prepared, and what and where and how it is eaten. The nature of this food system – that is, the sum of 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 this debate. The dominant food system that shapes those activities and relationships is also global in its scope and influence. It involves some of the largest corporations in the world and has a powerful effect on the economy, on our health, on jobs, and on our environment.

For this course, we will be exploring both the dominant food system and the alternative food groups contesting it and seeking to construct alternative pathways. Also, for purposes of the course, the term food justice will be used to identify the range of these alternative food groups. Part of the course then is designed to see, experience, and evaluate what is happening with these groups and in relation to food system issues through the research projects, seminar discussions, and participation in the events and talks, as well as in the media coverage around the food issues that we’ll discuss. Food (and food justice) has also become a higher profile issue at Oxy and there will be a number of opportunities for students to engage at Oxy and in L.A..

The course will be organized around a set of readings focused on the 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 topical groups that will correspond to the readings, class discussions, and the community-based research aspect of the course. These areas include:

1. How Food is Grown and Manufactured
2. How Food is Accessed
3. What and How We Eat
4. How Food Has Become Global
5. The Political Debates Around Food

We will have seminar discussions based on reading memos that all students will prepare and share with the class on a weekly basis. We will also have periodic discussions, led by the topical groups, of food issues in the news (with students identifying issues that are being discussed through conventional news sources and/or through social media sources such as blogs, comfood list serve, etc), as well as feedback and assessment of the talks, events, and activities taking place during the semester. Those talks, events, and activities, which provide an important dimension for the class, include a talk (and honorary degree presentation) by Fast Food Nation author Eric Schlosser on November 17th, a major set of events celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Santa Monica farmers’ markets between September 14 and 18, a Panel discussion on School Food issues on October 19th in UEP 212 (LAUSD board member Steve Zimmer’s class), a series of events and activities during Good Food Day L.A (part of the national Food Day) on October 24th, several events in October as part of Food Month at Oxy, and more.

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Grades will be based on the following:

1. PARTICIPATION – 50% of grade

A. Reading memos (15% of grade)

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.

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 (via e-mail and on Moodle) at least two days prior to class as noted in the schedule and readings.

B. “Food in the News” (10% of grade)

Once a week, the class will begin with a review of “Food in the News.” Students should be able to identify food issues that have been discussed during the week from various news sources and/or blogs or other social media or in the events and activities taking place. Each student will then post/create a link to the article or event identified and be prepared to discuss and analyze the issues involved.

C. Event Participation and Feedback (10% of Grade)
Students will be required to attend/participate in at least three of the events, talks, and/or activities taking place during the semester. Two of the three events will be required (the Eric Schlosser talk on November 17 and the Good Food Day L.A. events on October 24. Students should post a short summary and analysis of the events they attend on Moodle and be prepared to discuss their observations in class.

D. Topical Group Presentations (15% of grade)

Students will initially form into groups of approximately three to four students each around the five topic areas. Groups will be formed on the second day of class, Thursday, September 6th. Each group will be responsible to lead the seminar and food in the news discussions and elicit full class participation in those discussions in their area, as noted in the schedule and readings.

Groups are encouraged to think outside the box and develop interactive, imaginative sessions that capture the issues and themes 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 essays (up to 3 pages in length) on one or more of the different topic areas covered in the readings and class discussions. Due dates for these short papers are also identified in the syllabus.

3. RESEARCH PAPER/ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT – 35% of grade

The research paper/action research project will cover a specific food justice issue or set of issues and/or be based on work with a specific food group involving research they need on an issue in which the group is engaged. The purpose of the final 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 is not discussed in the course.

Papers should be between 10-12 pages. Papers should identify the problem and its relationship to our current food system, provide some historical perspective, and describe its relevance. Papers may also recommend policy or programmatic changes or recommend new strategies for improving or expanding food justice campaigns. Another option would be to take an action research approach, based on an arrangement with a food justice advocacy group, by pursuing targeted research based on a campaign or report or some other need of the group. With any of these options, make sure to include a bibliography that lists all of your sources/resources.

Paper topic proposals will be due by Tuesday, November 1 and will be posted on Moodle. The paper itself will be due by Friday, December 9.
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.

READINGS

Course Introduction – September 1-September 8

*Food Justice: Transforming the Food System*, Robert Gottlieb and Anupama Joshi, Introduction


Topic 1: How Food is Grown and Manufactured – September 13-September 22

*Food System Issues*

*Food Justice* (Chapter 1 “Growing and Producing Food”)

Farmworkers

Dori Stone, “Borderlands,” Chapter 1 in *Beyond the Fence: A Journey to the Roots of the Migration Crisis*, pp. 1-28


Farmers


*Food Justice Approaches*

*Food Justice* (Chapter 6 – “New Growing and Production Strategies”)


Coalition of Immokalee Workers – check out the web site: http://www.ciw-online.org/
Farm to School
National Farm to School Network – check out the web site: http://www.farmtoschool.org

Going Local: Paths to Success for Farm to School Programs, Urban & Environmental Policy Institute, available at departments.oxy.edu/uepi/cfj/publications/goinglocal.pdf

SEPTEMBER 14-18, Santa Monica Farmers’ Market 30th Anniversary Events, including panels, film screening evening of September 14

Seminar Reading Memo and Food in the News – Sep. 13 and 20
Topical Group-led overview discussion - September 22
Short paper due – September 27, 2011

Session 2: How Food is Accessed – September 27- October 6

Food System Issues
Food Justice (Chapter 2 “Access to Food”)


Food Justice Approaches
Food Justice (Chapter 7: “New Points of Access”)


OCTOBER – Food Month at Oxy; National Farm to School Month – Events during the month

Reading Memo and Food in the News: September 27-October 4
Topical Group-led Overview discussion: October 6
Short Paper due: October 11

Session 3: What and How We Eat – October 11-25

Food System Issues
Food Justice (Chapter 3 “Consuming Food”)


Food Justice Approaches
Food Justice (Chapter 8: “Transforming the Food Experience”)


School Food Panel, Wednesday October 19, part of LAUSD board member Steve Zimmer’s class, 7-8:30

Good Food Day L.A. (part of National Food Day), L.A./Food Policy Council-linked events, October 24
Reading Memos and Food in the News: October 11 and 20
Topical Group-led Overview Discussion – October 25
Third Short Essay: October 27

Session 4: How Food Has Become Global – October 27- November 8

Food System Issues
Food Justice (Chapter 5 “The Food System Goes Global”)


**Food Justice Approaches**

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


Reading Memos and Food in the News: October 27 and November 3rd
Research Paper Topic Memo: November 1
Topical Group-led Overview Discussion: November 8
Short Paper Due: November 10

**Session 5: The Politics of Food** – November 10 – November 21

**Food System Issues**

*Food Justice* (Chapter 4: “Food Politics”)


**Food Justice Approaches**

*Food Justice* (Chapter 9: “A New Food Politics”)

Farm Bill 2012. Check the Community Food Security Coalition’s ongoing discussion on the 2012 Farm Bill at http://www.foodsecurity.org/2012FarmBill.html

L.A. Food Policy Council: Check the FPC website at www.goodfoodla.org and will provide the schedule of meetings for the fall.

**ERIC SCHLOSSER TALK AND HONORARY DEGREE EVENT** – November 17

Reading Memos and Food in the News: November 10 and 17
Topical Group-led Overview Discussion – November 21
5th short essay: November 21

Session 6: Research Presentations and Summary Discussions – November 29-December 6

Final Research/Organizational Paper – Due December 9