

Geography 232 (ENVI 232)^{1,2}
Food, Agriculture and the Environment
Fall Semester 2024

Class Time and Location: 3-4:30pm, T-R, Carnegie 06A

Instructor: Bill Moseley (he/him/his)

Office: Rm 104d, Carnegie Hall

Office Hours: 1:30-2:30pm MTWR, or by appointment. Sign-up by cutting/pasting this link into your browser (<https://calendar.app.google/yxd1gEqdW8iZEnNYA>)

Office Phone: 651-696-6126

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Class email: fa24-geog-232-01@groups.macalester.edu (for sharing information w/ entire class)

Teaching Assistants:

1) Reece McKee, Email: rmckee@macalester.edu; Office hrs: Mondays from 8pm-9:30pm and Wednesdays from 12pm-1:30pm. Carnegie 104

2) Meira Smit, Email: msmit@macalester.edu; Office hrs: Mondays between 3:30-6:30pm. Carnegie 104.

Course Description

The investigation of nature-society relationships lies at the heart of geography and has been one of the pillars of the discipline since the late 19th century. This realm of inquiry also has been an important bridge between geography and other fields. This course introduces you to the study of human-environment interactions from a geographic perspective, with a special emphasis on food and agriculture. We will examine agro-environmental issues in a variety of geographic contexts (Global South and Global North) and the connections between agro-environmental problems in different locations. Beyond food and agriculture, we will also examine other sectoral issues in relation to agriculture or as stand-alone environmental concerns. These themes include: human population dynamics, consumption, biodiversity, climate change, and environmental health. We will be trying on a number of theoretical lenses from geography's broad human-environment tradition (such as physical geography, cultural and political ecology, commodity chain analysis, resource geography, the human dimensions of global change, hazards geography and environmental justice). In other words, I not only want us to explore a range of agro-environmental issues, but also to grapple with theory and how this informs our understanding of the human-environment interface.

Format

The class will meet twice a week. The class will be conducted with both lectures and in-class discussions. You are expected to have done all assigned reading before coming to class, and be

¹ This course counts toward the geography major & minor, the food systems emphasis in ES, the Food, Agriculture & Society concentration, the international development concentration, the African Studies concentration, the int'l requirement & the social science distribution requirement.

² We acknowledge that Macalester College is located on the traditional, ancestral and contemporary lands of the Waḥpékhute band of Dakhóta Oyáte, the Dakota nation. We recognize that this acknowledgment is but a first step in recognizing and dismantling aggressive and persistent policies of settler colonialism that continue to oppress to this day. The work of acknowledgement must be paired with active practices like the amplification of Indigenous voices and land repatriation in order to be substantive and meaningful.

prepared to discuss it. In addition to normal classroom banter, we will have several designated discussion days during the term (see schedule).

This is your class, and I want to know how it's going. Please let me know if you would like to see changes, from lecture topics to grading. You are welcome to speak with me after class or to visit me in my office. The surest way to contact me is to send me e-mail (moseley@macalester.edu), which normally will be responded to promptly during normal business hours.

Texts

Moseley, W.G., E. Perramond and H. Hapke and P. Laris. 2013. An Introduction to Human-Environment Geography: Local Dynamics and Global Processes. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley/Blackwell. (6 copies of the main textbook are available on library reserves)

Pollan, Michael. 2006. The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals. New York: Penguin Press.

A large number of readings are also available on the course Moodle site. Handouts will be distributed from time to time in class. The instructor is not responsible for providing handouts for students who are absent from class.

Assignments/Exams

I deliberately use a mix of assessment tools in this class in order to provide a variety of opportunities for you to express your competence (writing, discussion participation, exams, etc.). Many students find that they tend to do better with some formats (e.g., exams) than others (e.g., writing). I believe it is not only fairest to provide you with a variety of assessment exercises, but more reflective of the mix of challenges you will encounter in life.

Reading: Reading assignments for this course are listed on the outline of lecture topics. Information from the textbook supplements lecture and forms the basis of class discussions.

Participation and Discussion days: Class will be oriented towards discussion roughly one third of the time. The purpose of the discussion classes is to facilitate critical analysis and lively dialog on controversial issues related to human-environment interactions. The majority of class participation points will be derived from your comments in discussion. Participation points are relatively easy to obtain if you keep up with the reading and speak up during discussion. Please see me if you have difficulty speaking in class. Furthermore, some of the participation points will also be derived from: 1) your role as a co-leader for two discussions; and 2) my assessment of your participation in the lecture sessions (based on cogency of comments, questions, and answers to questions).

In my opinion, the best discussions are those in which: 1) students listen (and learn) from one another and build on what each other is saying; 2) the discussion is focused on understanding the main argument of each reading and breaking down and analyzing this argument to see if it makes sense; 3) making connections between readings by identifying where authors agree and disagree; and 4) relating insight gained from reading and discussion to other texts or real life events. In sum, I want you to approach discussion as an on-going scholarly debate in which we (as a

community of scholars and learners) are attempting to advance our collective knowledge. Student discussion leaders will be assigned to facilitate our scholarly debates.

Reaction essays: Reaction essays are brief essays (1 page or 300-400 words) in which you respond to two or more assigned readings for a given discussion. Your essays should include a succinct but detailed summary of the argument(s) to which you are responding and develop your reaction, which may be one of skepticism, all out agreement or disagreement, epiphany, or whole-hearted endorsement. Regardless, your essay should exhibit a line of reflective thought in which you explain the logic and rationale that supports your reaction to the reading(s). Your essays must include at least one question, relevant to the readings, which you would like to ask of your classmates. Thus, the reaction essays should help you prepare for participation in class discussion of the readings. Reaction essays must be submitted via Moodle. The essays are due by 11:45 pm the day before a discussion. You are required to complete seven essays and have 10 opportunities to write them. Each essay is worth .5% of your grade. Discussion leaders do not submit a reaction essay. Proof read your essays so that they are free of grammatical and spelling errors. The essays are marked in a credit/no credit fashion and essays submitted late will receive no credit.

Writing Assignments: You will be required to undertake three assignments that involve writing and analysis. Some of these assignments will initially be submitted as drafts, and then revised and resubmitted following feedback from the teaching assistants or myself.

Alternative Agriculture in context (assign #1): Fieldwork is a mainstay of human-environment geography. This shorter, field-based research paper asks you to explore the possibilities and constraints related to alternative agriculture in the upper Midwest of the United States. We will be visiting two CSA farms (Common Harvest and Whetstone farms in NW Wis) on Sat, Sept 28 to better understand local farm operations and learn from them about the advantages and challenges of organic farming in the region. The final paper is due on Oct 16. Examples of past papers (compiled in a report) may be found [here](#) and [here](#). The class will be divided into 5-6 groups to each ponder one of four research questions collaboratively developed with the CSA farmer.

Commodity Chain Analysis Paper (assign #2). Geographers increasingly seek to understand human-environment interactions within the context of a global economy. The problem is that the global nature of our economy often obscures the social and environmental impacts of our consumption decisions. For this paper, you will select a food or other natural resource related product that is available in two (or more) forms. The two forms will differ from each other on at least one important dimension (e.g., locally produced/globally produced, conventional/organic, produced by a big company/produced by a small company, etc.) You will then trace the two versions of the food/product back through the various social and physical transformations they have undergone on the way to you, the consumer. The point of the paper is to explore the range of ways in which the two versions of the product differ, and to understand the origins, transformations, and the environmental impacts that before the product reaches the consumer. This paper should be 10-15 pages in length. Guidelines will be passed out in class. A draft is due on Nov 26, and the final paper on Dec 11. See past examples [here](#).

Class Presentation: The findings from your commodity chain analysis paper will be shared with the class in a group presentation on Dec 5 or 10. The instructor will create presentation groups of 4-5 people based on themes.

Midterm and Final: A midterm exam will be given as well as a quasi-cumulative final at the end of the term. The exam format will include a combination of question types such as essay, short answer and multiple choice. Make-up exams will only be given in the event of illness or other verifiable emergency. In the event of an absence during an exam, it is the student's responsibility to contact me no later than one (1) class period after the test date.

Grading and Exams

Grade Components

Midterm exam (10/15):	20%	Comm Chain Peer Review Exercise (12/3):	1%
Final exam (12/16):	22%	Comm Chain Group Presentation (12/5&10):	5%
Alternative Ag Paper (10/16):	15%	Reaction essays:	3.5%
Commodity Chain Paper Draft (11/26):	2%	Discussion (partici & leadership):	9.5%
Commodity Chain Paper (12/11):	22%	Total:	100%

Final grades are based on a weighted average for the term. Grade cutoff points are as follows: A = 93-100%; A- = 90-92%; B+ = 87-89%; B = 83-86%; B- = 80-82%; C+ = 77-79%; C = 73-76%; C- = 70-72%; D+ = 67-69%; D = 63-66%; D- = 60-62%, NC = < 60%.

Disabilities

I am committed to providing assistance to help you be successful in this course. Reasonable accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. If this is your situation, please meet with the Coordinator of Disability Services if you have not already done so. It is important to meet with this person at the beginning of the semester to ensure that your accommodations are approved and in place to begin the semester successfully. The director may be reached in the Kagin Commons, Rm 004, by phone at 651-696-6974, or email disabilityservices@macalester.edu.

Health and Wellness

You are encouraged to make your health and well-being a priority throughout this semester and during your career at Macalester. Taking care of yourself will help you engage more fully in your academic experience. Remember that beyond being a student, you are a human being carrying your own experiences, thoughts, emotions, and identities with you. It is important to acknowledge any stressors you may be facing, which can be mental, emotional, physical, cultural, financial, etc., and how they can have an impact on your academic experience. I encourage you to remember that you have a body with needs. In the classroom, eat when you are hungry, drink water, use the restroom, and step out if you are upset and need some air. Please do what is necessary so long as it does not impede your or others' ability to be mentally and emotionally present in the course. Outside of the classroom, sleeping, moving your body, and connecting with others can be strategies to help you be resilient at Macalester. If you are having difficulties maintaining your well-being, please don't hesitate to contact me and/or find support from Health & Wellness Center. I have included contact information for health and wellness resources on the course moodle page.

Academic Misconduct

Plagiarism and cheating are both academic crimes. Never (1) turn in an assignment that you did not write yourself (including essays that have been partially or wholly written by AI), (2) turn in an assignment for this class that you previously turned in for another class, or (3) cheat on exam. If you do so, it may result in a failing grade for the class, and possibly even suspension from the college. Please see me if you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism. Anyone caught cheating on an exam will be reported to the provost in line with recognized university procedures.

Lecture and Discussion Schedule

PART I: LAYING THE FOUNDATION: INTRODUCTION TO HUMAN-ENVIRONMENT GEOGRAPHY, FOOD SYSTEMS, FOOD POLICY, PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY, CULTURAL/POLITICAL ECOLOGY & COMMODITY CHAINS			
Wk	Dates	Topic	Readings and Assignments (all chapter assignment are from Moseley et al. 2013)
1	Tues, 3 Sept	Course Business; introductions; 6 Dimensions of Food Security & Nutrition lecture	
	Thurs, 5 Sept	Geography and its Human-Environment Tradition lecture	Chap 1, 13
2	Tues, 10 Sept	The basics of Env & Agri Policy lecture	Chap 2, 5; introduce alt ag paper
	Thurs, 12 Sept	Dis 1: Geographic Perspective, Food Politics, Policy & Power.	Discussion readings
3	Tues, 17 Sept	Food justice tour of campus w/ Megan Butler	Alt agriculture paper group assignments, Chap 3
		Listen to recorded moodle lecture on physical geography	
	Thurs 19 Sept	Farmer Dan Guenther guest lecture & small group work on farm trip projects	
4	Tues, 24 Sept	Agricultural Systems around the world	Chap 10
	Thurs, 26 Sept	Agricultural Change in the Global South	Discussion readings
		Discussion 2: Agriculture Revolutions & Progress	
Sat, 28 Sept	Field trip to Common harvest farm	8:30am-5pm	
5	Tues, 1 Oct	Cultural and Political Ecology	Chap 4, Discussion readings
		Discussion 3: Debating GMOs & the Future of Agriculture	
	Thurs, 3 Oct	Agricultural problems / challenges	
6	Tues, 8 Oct	Agricultural solutions & alternatives	Discussion readings
		Dis 4: Omnivore's Dilemma, Part I	
	Thurs, 10 Oct	Commodity chains and fair trade	Discussion readings
Discussion 5: Omnivore's Dilemma, Part II & critiques			
7	Tues, 15 Oct	Midterm exam	Evening review session prior to exam; <u>First paper due Wed, 10/16 at 11:45pm via moodle</u>
	Thurs, 17 Oct	Fall break (No class)	

PART II: MAKING CONNECTIONS: BIODIVERSITY, POPULATION, ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS, CLIMATE & ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE			
wk	Dates	Topic	Readings and Assignments
8	Tues, 22 Oct	Global Food Crises Library session	<u>Brief paragraph proposal for commodity chain paper due by Mon, 10/21 at noon via moodle</u>
	Thurs, 24 Oct	Biodiversity	
9	Tues, 29 Oct	Biodiversity Discussion 6: Nature	Discussion readings
	Thurs, 31 Oct	Biodiversity	
10	Tues, 5 Nov	Disc 7: Biodiversity & Agriculture	Discussion readings
	Thurs, 7 Nov	Population and Consumption	Chap 9
11	Tues, 12 Nov	Population and Consumption Discussion 8: Food-Population Debates	Discussion readings
	Thurs, 14 Nov	Population and Consumption Hazards	
			Chap 6, 8
12	Tues, 19 Nov	Hazards & Drought Discuss 9: Hazards, Climate & Ag	Discussion readings
	Thurs, 21 Nov	Environmental Health & Justice	
13	Tues, 26 Nov	Environmental Health & Justice	<u>Commodity chain paper draft due Tues (11/26) at 11:45pm via moodle</u>
	Thurs, 28 Nov	Thanksgiving Holiday (No class)	
14	Tues, 3 Dec	Peer review Discussion 10: Environmental & Food Justice	Discussion readings
	Thurs, 5 Dec	Presentations	
15	Tuesday, 10 Dec	Presentations	<u>Commodity Chain Paper due on Wed, Dec 11 @ 11:45pm on moodle</u>
	Mon, 16 Dec	Final exam (1:30-3:30pm)	

Discussion Reading Schedule (subject to change)

1. Thursday, September 12: The Geographic Perspective, Food Politics, Policy and Power

Moseley, W.G. 2021. "Political Agronomy 101: An Introduction to the Political Ecology of Industrial Cropping Systems." In: Alexandros Gasparatos and Abubakari Ahmed (eds). The Political Ecology of Industrial Crops. London: Earthscan/Routledge. Pgs 25-44.

Paarlberg, R. L. (2023). "Chapter 1: An Overview of Food Politics." In: Food politics: What everyone needs to know. Oxford University Press. Pgs 1-9.

Moseley, W.G. 2022. "Climate crisis in Africa exposes real cause of hunger – colonial food systems that leave people more vulnerable." The Conversation Africa. December 10.

2. Thursday, September 26: Agricultural Revolutions and ‘Progress’

Diamond, Jared. 1987. “The worst mistake in the history of the human race.” Discover. May.

Moseley, W.G. and J. Morgan. 2018. “Why it’s important to recognise multiple food systems in Africa.” The Conversation Africa. June 18.

Jayne, T. 2016. “At last, evidence that African agriculture is powering economic transformation.” The Conversation. September 25.

Stone, G. 2023. “The Green Revolution is a warning, not a blueprint for feeding a hungry planet.” The Conversation. October 4.

3. Tuesday, October 1: Debating the Role of GMOs in the Future of Agriculture

Ronald, P.C. 2017. “Plant Genetics, Ecologically Based Farming and the Future of Food.” Geographical Review. DOI: 10.1111/gere.12256

Winklerprins, A. 2017. “Genetically Engineered Crops as Necessary Invention.” Geographical Review. DOI: 10.1111/gere.12257

Moseley, W.G. 2017. “A Risky Solution for the Wrong Problem: Why GMOs won't Feed the Hungry of the World.” Geographical Review. DOI: 10.1111/gere.12259

Naylor, L. 2017. “A Place for GMOs in Food Sovereignty?” Geographical Review. DOI: 10.1111/gere.12258

4. Tuesday, October 8: Omnivore’s Dilemma Part I

Pollan, Michael. 2006. The Omnivore’s Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals. New York: Penguin Press. Parts I and II (Pp 1-273). Note: Page numbers vary by edition.

5. Thursday, October 10: Omnivore’s Dilemma Part II and Critique

Pollan, Michael. 2006. The Omnivore’s Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals. New York: Penguin Press. Part III (Pp 277-415). Note: Page numbers vary by edition.

Guthman, J. 2007. “Can’t Stomach It: How Michael Pollan et al. Made Me Want to Eat Cheetos.” The Journal of Food and Culture. 7(3): 75-79.

Tree, I. 2018. “If you want to save the world, veganism isn’t the answer.” The Guardian. Aug 25.

6. Thursday, October 29: Wilderness & Humanized Landscapes

Mann, C. 2011. “A View From Above.” In 1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus, 2nd ed. New York: Vintage Books. Pgs 1-31.

Cronon, W. 1996. “The Trouble with Nature or, Getting Back to the Wrong Wilderness.” Environmental History. 1(1)7-28.

Davison, A. 2008. “The trouble with nature: Ambivalence in the lives of urban Australian environmentalists.” Geoforum. 39 (3): 1284–1295.

7. Thursday, November 5: Biodiversity Conservation & Agriculture

Terborgh, J. and C. Van Schaik. 2002. "Why the World Needs Parks." In Making Parks Work: Strategies for Preserving Nature. Washington D.C.: Island Press. pgs 3-14.

Sunderland, T. 2024. "'Fortress' conservation policies threaten the food security of rural populations." The Conversation. February 13.

Vandermeer, J. and I. Perfecto. 2007. "The Agricultural Matrix and a Future Paradigm for Conservation." Conservation Biology. 21(1): 274-277.

8. Tuesday, November 12: A Very Old Debate: Over-Population, Over-Consumption or Maladapted Technology?

Ehrlich, Paul. 1968. The Population Bomb. New York: Ballantine Books. Pgs 15-45 (Too many people, too little food).

Hoff, D. 2018. "A long fuse: 'The Population Bomb' is still ticking 50 years after its publication." The Conversation. July 10.

Lohmann, Larry. 2003. "Re-imagining the population debate." The Corner House.

Simon, J.L. 1981. "World population growth: an anti-doomsday view." Atlantic Monthly. 248(2):70-6.

9. Tuesday, November 19: Hazards, Climate & Agriculture

Rusca, M., Savelli, E., Di Baldassarre, G., Biza, A., & Messori, G. (2022). Unprecedented droughts are expected to exacerbate urban inequalities in Southern Africa. *Nature Climate Change*, 1-8.

Moseley, W.G. 2022. "The trouble with drought as an explanation for famine in the Horn and Sahel of Africa." The Conversation Africa. February 15.

Taylor, M. 2018. What's Smart about Climate Smart Agriculture? Food First Policy Brief #22.

10. Tuesday, December 3: Geographies of Environmental & Food (In)Justice and Racism

Pulido, Laura. 2000. "Rethinking Environmental Racism: White Privilege and Urban Development in Southern California." Annals of the Association of American Geographers. 90(1): 12-40.

Heynen, N., Kurtz, H. E., & Trauger, A. (2012). Food justice, hunger and the city. Geography compass, 6(5), 304-311.

Garth, H., & Reese, A. M. (Eds.). (2020). "Introduction." Black food matters: Racial justice in the wake of food justice. U of Minnesota Press

Welcome to the course! I look forward to working with you this semester.