

SOCIOLOGY 341
A Sociology of Agriculture
ST. FRANCIS XAVIER UNIVERSITY, 2021
Dr. Riley Chisholm

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Class Location: Shwartz 290

Class Times:

Mondays 12:45 -2

Wednesdays 11:15-12:30

Office Hours: ** In order to undermine the spread of COVID variants, I will be only be holding online office hours. Anyone who wishes to contact me for a virtual meeting at times other than those listed below, are welcome to do so.

Mondays 2-3:30 PM

Wednesdays 1-2 PM



Food touches everything. Food is the foundation of every economy. It is a central pawn in political strategies of states and households. Food marks social differences, boundaries, bonds, and contradictions. Eating is an endlessly evolving enactment of gender, family, and community relationships. ...Food is life, and life can be studied and understood through food. Counihan and Van Esterik, 1997.

The course is originally titled Global Agriculture, but is presently being changed to a Sociology of Agriculture. Our focus in this course is on agriculture as a sociopolitical, economic and spiritual energy system. Our view is one that is broadly global inasmuch as our various topics will examine more local cases as instances of more general phenomenon.

As a sociology course, we will attend to the historic gendered, racial, and colonial conditions of agricultural systems, to come to understand the development of dominant extractive industrial processes, but also alternative 'regenerative', 'peasant' and indigenous food production systems. We will consider how questions of an ethical agricultural system literally exposes and 'unearths' linear-extractive relations--not only those pertaining to 'the environment' or so-called 'farming', but also the social, political and spiritual conditions of humans.

The course is conducted as an interactive engagement such that close readings of all texts is required by students prior to class.

Required Reading:

1. Rather than purchase a course kit, students access all readings (which are open-access, or otherwise publicly available online), using the links embedded in the course syllabus.
2. Qualman, Darrin 2019. *Civilization Critical: Energy, food, nature and the future*. Fernwood: Halifax.
3. Kimmerer, Robin Wall. (2015) *Braiding Sweetgrass. Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*. Milkweed Editors: Minneapolis, Minnesota.

University and Classroom Policies

Plagiarism: Familiarize yourself with the university plagiarism policies. You are responsible for understanding them and abiding by them. The StFX library has links, tutorials, and definitions at this site: <http://sites.stfx.ca/library/plagiarism>. The StFX calendar outlines the procedures concerning and penalties for committing plagiarism.

StFX Equity Policy: Everyone learns more effectively in a respectful, safe and equitable learning environment, free from discrimination and harassment. I invite you to work with me to create a classroom space—whether face-to-face or online—that fosters and promotes values of human dignity, equity, non-discrimination and respect for diversity. These values and practices are in accord with the StFX Discrimination and Harassment Policy which can be found at <http://www.mystfx.ca/campus/stu-serv/equity/>. Please feel free to talk to me about your questions or concerns about equity in our virtual classroom or in the StFX community in general. If I cannot answer your questions or help you address your concerns, I encourage you to talk to the Chair/Coordinator of the Department/Program or the Human Rights and Equity Advisor.

Electronics: While we will be making use of computers for this class, I ask that students be respectful in how they employ technologies throughout this course.

Lecture policy: My lectures/classes are often organic cooperative and engaged considerations of topics and issues. As such, I do not pre-script how information exchange will unfold. I do not therefore, have PowerPoint slides or pre-scripted notes to share with students.

Grading:

- A. Treaty Presentation 10% **DUE SEPTEMBER 29th**
- B. Treat Reflection 10% **DUE OCTOBER 6th in hard copy**
- C. Major Paper 40% **DUE NOVEMBER 29th in hard copy**
- D. Final Exam 40% **DATE TBA**

Long description of assignment requirements:

A. Treaty Presentation (10%) DUE SEPT. 29th

On Wednesday, Sept. 15th, we will be joined by Arlyne MacGrath from Service Learning, who will guide a conversation in preparation for our Treaty Presentation and Treaty Reflection assignments. The class will divide into groups--each being responsible for delivering an engaging, coherent and meaningful presentation of one of the Peace and Friendship Treaties, and related legislation.

The presentation will be made just days prior to October 1st which, is Treaty Day in so-called Canada. For this reason, our class plays a central educational role in preparing the campus for Treaty Day, by offering this public presentation of the legal agreements between the settler state, and Indigenous peoples. We are all aware that Canada has been found responsible for genocide of Indigenous peoples, and so this presentation must be offered with the utmost integrity and respect.

Students unable to participate in all of the portions of these assignments (the class preparation, assignment development and/or delivery of the presentation on Sept. 29th) will be given an alternative research paper assignment. Students are responsible for contacting me *immediately* in order to take advantage of this alternative arrangement. Otherwise, students will receive a 0 for both the Treaty Presentation and Treaty Reflection, which together amount to 20% of the course grade.

B. Treaty Reflection (10%) DUE OCT. 6th in hard copy

This assignment asks you to respond to the following questions, aiming for a response between 3-5 typed pages in length:

1. Which treaty did you work with and, in your own words, what did the treaty establish?
2. What did you know about treaties before this class?
3. From your political positionality (are you a settler?, are you Indigenous?), how did you experience this assignment?

4. Because we are all treaty people, what are our legal responsibilities? Do you think they are being met? How or how not?
5. Include any further questions, frustrations, thoughts or comments you have.

C. **Major Paper (40%) Due: DUE NOV. 29th in hard copy**

Length: 6-8 pages, double-spaced, 12 point font

This assignment requires that you use critical thinking to write a paper that considers the question, 'Is biotechnology the 'way out' of the food and farming crisis?' (Think: 'Clean meat' at: <https://www.peta.org/living/food/memphis-meats-debuts-lab-grown-chicken-clean-meat/>). You may wish to consider related questions such as, why is biotechnology given so much weight in considerations of how to address climate change? If we are so busy focussing on biotechnological solutions, what other possibilities are we being distracted from?

Please ensure you take a critical approach and **employ at least 4 directly relevant resources**, preferably from academic texts, reputable media sources or from Indigenous knowledge keepers. Use your resources well to build your paper. Grammar, spelling and especially, force of argument (integrity) will be evaluated.

C. **Take Home Final Exam (40%) Due: TBA**

ALL ASSIGNMENTS: Spelling, grammar, word choice and tone matter in the assessment of **all** assignments. Please be careful not to give assignments superficial treatment. I am seeking depth of analysis and contemplation of serious issues that are worth our time and consideration.

Schedule of Weekly Readings, Tests and Assignments

**Week 1: Introduction: Why a Sociology of Agriculture?
(Wednesday September 8th)**

- Review syllabus and explain format and goals of course
- Quiz: What do you know about farming?

**Week 2: God Made a Farmer
(Monday September 13th & Wednesday September 15th)**

- Exploring the gendered, racialized and colonial nature of industrial agriculture and its alternatives : '*And God Made a Farmer*' commercial.
- Guest visitor : Arlyne MacGrath-Wed. Sept. 15th

**** Establish Treaty Presentation groups and roles**

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TePIVr2bgCY> (Treaty Education: 13 minutes)

Week 3: Food Regimes & The Green Revolution (Monday September 20th & Wednesday September 22nd)

- McMichael, P. 2009. "A food regime analysis of the 'world food crisis'", *Agriculture and Human Values*, 26 (4): 281-295. Available at: <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/a00a/c3df508123145b5e16f9ef9d8fc6341b790e.pdf>
- Shiva, V. 2016. "Science and Politics in the Green Revolution", In *The Violence of the Green Revolution: Third World Agriculture, Ecology and Politics*. Available at: http://www.trabal.org/texts/pdf/shiva_gr_excerpts.pdf
- Perkins, J.H., (1990). The Rockefeller Foundation and the Green Revolution, 1941- 1956. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 7(3-4):6-18. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/248776767_The_Rockefeller_Foundation_and_the_green_revolution_1941-1956
- **Prepare for Treaty Day Presentation**

Week 4: How Agriculture can Teach us about Energy, and therefore Power (Monday September 27th & Wednesday September 29th)

- Qualman, D. *Introduction and Chapters 1-6*.
- **Treaty Day Presentation September 29th (10%)**

Week 5: Indigenous Epistemologies and Relations with Land and Life: Origin Stories (Monday October 4th & Wednesday October 6th)

- *Braiding Sweetgrass* Chapters, 'Skywoman Falling', 'Council of Pecans' and 'Allegiance to Gratitude'
- **Treaty Reflection Due October 6th (10%)**

Week 6: Indigenous Harvesting Systems (Wednesday October 13th)

- Film: Seeking Netukulimk Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jrk3ZI_2Dd0 (22 mins)
- Prosper, K. , McMillan, L. J. , Davis, A. A. , Moffitt, M. (2011). Returning to Netukulimk: Mi'kmaq cultural and spiritual connections with resource stewardship and self-governance. *The International Indigenous Policy Journal*,2(4). <https://ojs.lib.uwo.ca/index.php/iipj/article/view/7358/6002>

Week 7: Climate Change and Agriculture
(Monday October 18th & Wednesday October 20th)

- Via Campesina Film: 'Together we can cool the planet':
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eKLfTq7ljAs> (16 mins)
- *Braiding Sweetgrass* Chapter, 'The Gift of Strawberries'
- Read Introduction and Chapter 1: <https://newsgrist.typepad.com/files/hyde-the-gift-creativity-and-the-artist-in-the-modern-world-2007.pdf>

Week 8: Western Ecological Science & Traditional Indigenous Knowledge
(Monday October 25th & Wednesday October 27th)

- *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Chapters: 'Asters and Goldenrod', and "Learning the Grammar of Animals'
- Wendell Berry: The Body and the Earth:
<http://pages.stolaf.edu/sustainabilities/files/2014/08/Berry-BodyEarth-1.pdf>

Week 9: Soil, and why it's Sociological.
(Monday November 1st & Wednesday November 3rd)

- Film, *Dirt* (1.20 mins)

READING BREAK

Week 10: Nutrition Transition
(Monday November 15th & Wednesday November 17th)

- Finish *Dirt* discussion
- Martin, D. (2012), "Nutrition transition and the public-health crisis: Aboriginal perspectives on food and eating", *Critical perspectives in Food Studies*, 228-241.
- [../Nutrition Transition article.pdf](http://Nutrition Transition article.pdf)

Week 11: How Industry Shapes our Food Supply
(Monday November 22nd & Wednesday November 24th)

- OPIRG, 'The Supermarket Tour' Available at:
http://www.fairtradebarrie.ca/pdf/wpimg_supermarket_tour.pdf

Week 12: Food Sovereignty, Water Sovereignty
(Monday November 29th & December 1st)

- Bellamy Foster, J. *The Treadmill of Production* :
<https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=the+treadmill+of+production+bellamy+foster&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8>
- Holt-Gimenez:
https://international.uiowa.edu/sites/international.uiowa.edu/files/file_uploads/FoodMovementsWinter2010bckgrndr.pdf
- Uprooted and Rising: <https://www.uprootedandrising.org/values>
- **Major Paper Due November 29th (40%)**

**Week 13: Save our Seed
(Monday December 6th)**

- *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Chapter: “The Three Sisters”
- NFU Fact Sheet available at: <http://www.nfu.ca/issues/save-our-seed>

Date TBA: **Take Home Final Exam (40%)**