

X24 Sustainable Food Systems (ENVS 14)

Please submit pre-course survey and ranked discussion preferences by specified date and time in email correspondence.

Class schedule: 6B: Wed 6:30-9:30p

Instructor: Professor Theresa Ong
Email: Theresa.W.Ong@dartmouth.edu
Office hours: Tuesdays 9-10a, Fairchild 123

TAs:
Anna Chabica
Email: Anna.k.chabica.25@dartmouth.edu
Mike Hanharan
Email: michael.t.hanrahan.24@dartmouth.edu
Office hours: 12pm-2pm, Tues/Thurs
Fairchild Atrium, or Zoom by appt

Course Description

Sustainable food systems demand an answer to the question, what is sustainable? This course will explore the many names and faces of food, asking students to critically evaluate sustainability from scientific, social and political perspectives. The course is organized into three modules: 1) food, 2) energy & ecology and 3) environmental justice. The first module provides an overview to food systems, taking a look at various management styles and their environmental consequences. We will pull examples from historical times to the present, from the precursors of the Dust Bowl to concentrated animal feed operations (CAFOs). The second module will provide a scientific understanding of the key energetic and ecological components that contribute to the sustainability of food systems including its contribution to climate change and global deforestation. In the third module we will examine the social injustices of food systems, from its twin roles in obesity and hunger to the development of key social movements striving for a new but old “peasant-way of life”.

Distribution: TAS

Pre-requisites: None

Course Learning Outcomes

In this course, students will:

- Understand the management and ideological principles that differentiate different food systems
- Critically assess sustainability in food from scientific, social and political perspectives
- Develop reading, writing and speaking skills for analyzing and critiquing contrasting perspectives on food

See tentative topics and schedule:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1j545nvydAeQsCaFdAAqalOpzI0JhKnbx5DGBZZaXihc/edit?usp=sharing>

* Each student **must lead 1 discussion**, there may be 4-5 leads per discussion. You will receive a Google Form before class and will be assigned a discussion week by the first class period based on preferences and needs of the class.

* Each discussion leader will lead in class discussion and develop a discussion thread on Canvas. Students who are not discussion leads will be required to read and contribute to class discussions as well as **post a comment on discussion threads** assigned to them on Canvas. In addition, all non-lead students are expected to **respond to at least one other comment** posted in the thread they are assigned to. Leads do not have to construct a new comment under their own post but **must respond to at least two comments** that they received on their post or the maximum they have on their posts by the comment posting deadline, whichever is lower.

Teaching Methods & Philosophy

This course will be part lecture and part student-led discussions based on contemporary readings and guest speakers/chefs over casual dining experiences. Lectures will provide appropriate background and case studies to place readings and guest visitor topics into context. Discussions with one another, with guests, instructors both in person and in online discussions serve to fully engage students in the material and help develop critical reading, speaking and collaboration skills.

Assignments and Assessments

Students will lead and participate in class discussions, develop online discussion threads, comment on the writing of other students and conduct a land-use legacies forest walk to critically examine their own food practices and beliefs within the context of current and past social/environmental conditions:

Discussion leads- Students who are assigned to “lead” a discussion should come to class prepared, having read all materials and with a list of questions to motivate a discussion around the topic, lecture, and assigned readings for that class. Your goal as a lead is to encourage active and equitable participation, making sure that diverse opinions are heard, and that everyone feels comfortable and respected. However, it is also important to allow people to maintain their own identities and opinions as they see fit; vigorous debate is encouraged. Leads will usually have a small group of students to discuss the topics with, and will be asked to facilitate a final discussion for the class at large at the end of the class. Your goal here is to contribute a unique perspective to the larger class discussion with your smaller group’s discussion in mind. As a lead you may encourage your classmates in your group to add their own thoughts.

Specific duties for lead students:

- Prepare for, run and lead small group and class discussion in person, engaging with guests as appropriate
- Write an engaging discussion post on the week’s topic, 1 pg minimum including any needed citations in APA format
- Respond to at least 2 comments posted by peers on your post

Readings- Readings are uploaded to Canvas.

Food forum- Each student in this course will contribute to a class wide food forum to be posted to weekly by discussion leads in the class on our Canvas site. Your forum/discussion posts will be a central place to deposit your insights from readings, questions from lectures, guest speakers and experiences in class dinners and/or general life associated with food. Please be creative! Give your discussion posts a fun title. Think about the material you've been presented during the week, consider what most excites/intrigues/confuses you, give your post a title and construct a narrative around it. Add any relevant photos, art, video or audio to make your blog an exciting and engaging place for your viewers. Other students will read your post and comment. You are expected to respond to at least 1 comment of your peers and engage with them in respectful and thoughtful discussion.

Food forum commentary- As part of this course you will be asked to read and engage with other students through comments on their discussion posts. When you are not a discussion lead, you will be expected to read and write comments on the posts of other students assigned to you. At any point in class, you will either be writing a discussion post or reading and writing comments on other students' posts. If others respond to your comment, please feel free to engage with them further. Minimally you will write one comment and one response to another comment for each week you are not a lead. Examples of good engagement could include questions for understanding, constructive criticisms, other resources or perspectives to consider, contrasting or affirming positions.

Specific duties for non-lead students:

- Prepare for and actively participate in small group and class discussion in person, engaging with guests as appropriate
- Write at least 1 comment on your assigned peer's discussion post
- Respond to at least 1 other comment posted by your peers

Land-use history walk- In between our History and Ecology modules, you will participate in an experiential forest walk at the Dartmouth Organic Farm where you will experience first-hand the legacies of past agricultural land-use on present day ecosystems. After your walk, which will be conducted in small groups using an app developed by DALI students, you will reflect on your experience in a discussion post. In addition, you will be assigned two other students to provide comments on their posts. We will follow up with a rubric for this assignment closer to the date.

Final dinner potluck- For the final, students will organize into appetizer, main course, and dessert groups to plan a menu and produce food for the class/visitors that integrates aspects of the three course modules (food history, energy/ecology, and environmental justice). At dinner, each student group will present their food to the class and discuss the motivation behind their menu, as well as lead a class discussion during the course of the meal. This final class project is meant to help synthesize information from the entirety of the course and can include outside sources to emphasize how the menu relates to what we have learned about sustainable food systems and hopes/goals of the team for moving forward. Student teams will submit a detailed menu proposal with budget and sources, prepare food, and present food to class with printed menus including details for where the food came from and discussion questions for each course. Rubric for final will be available closer to deadline.

Expectations & Norms

Vigorous and respectful debate in discussion is encouraged. Disrespect, or any negative comments directed towards persons because of race, gender, creed, religious affiliation, etc. will not be tolerated. If I or any of your peers find your comments unwarranted, you will receive an initial warning. Continued transgressions will be reported to the college for potential disciplinary action. Disciplinary action would be taken given a violation of the [Standards of Conduct](#). Students are encouraged to come speak to me, or other campus officials at the [Office of Institutional Diversity and Equity](#) about any issues or concerns.

Class participation

Participation is a major part of this course. This means attending, listening and contributing relevant thoughts to discussion, while striving to hear from many voices in the class when you are able. Please do not come to class if you have COVID 19 symptoms or other illness, you will not be punished for being sick. However, it is up to you to makeup missed classes by getting notes from peers and arranging office hours if necessary for your understanding of the missed materials. No part of this class is remote and none of it will be recorded.

If you are a shy person participating may mean taking steps to engage in discussion that may feel less comfortable at first. If you are a talkative person this may mean listening more than talking so as to encourage more voices to be heard.

The format of this class provides ample opportunity for students to engage with other students and myself in diverse formats: online and in person discussions, informal dinners, and smaller group breakout sessions. Those that speak up and contribute to discussions in person and through the discussion threads showcasing their ability to present their opinions while also respecting and giving space for other perspectives will receive the best participation points.

Email policy

I ask that you primarily email me only for individual level needs- for example, special circumstances requiring an excused absence, etc. Note that email responses will not be immediate; I and your TAs are not required to reply to messages outside of work hours, which are defined as M-F 9-5p, excluding holidays and class breaks, unless otherwise stated and we may not be able to get to email responses immediately, but a week period is likely the average. For immediate questions you should come to my or TA office hours. For class content questions, please feel free to post your questions publicly in our Canvas forum. Other students are welcome to also respond to questions here so that everyone has an opportunity to have clarification on materials and engage further with one another.

Mental Health and Wellness

The academic environment at Dartmouth are challenging, our terms are intensive, and classes are not the only demanding part of your life. There are a number of resources available to you on campus to support your wellness, including your undergraduate dean (<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~upperde/>), Counseling and Human Development (<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~chd/>), and the Student Wellness Center (<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~healthed/>) I encourage you to use these resources to take care of yourself throughout the term, and write to me or your TAs as you see fit if you experience any difficulties.

Diversity and Inclusivity at Dartmouth

Dartmouth's capacity to advance its dual mission of education and research depends upon the full diversity and inclusivity of this community. We must increase diversity, particularly among our faculty and staff. As we do so, we must also create a community in which every individual, regardless of gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, disability, nationality, political or religious views, or position within the institution, is respected. On this close-knit and intimate campus, we must ensure that every person knows that he, she, or they is a valued member of our community. Diversity and inclusivity are necessary partners. Without inclusivity, the benefits of diversity—an increase in understanding, improvement in performance, enhanced innovation, and heightened levels of satisfaction—will not be realized. - President Philip Hanlon '77 - Excerpt from May 2016 Letter to the Dartmouth community

Texts & Materials

We will be reading a series of book chapters, news and scientific articles, watching videos and listening to podcasts which will be provided to you on Canvas.

Assessment & Grading

Discussion posts are graded on an 0-2 scale: 0=not submitted, 1= adequate, 2=good-excellent. Partial credit, e.g. 1.8, 1.4 may be awarded. The discussion posts are meant to be a space for you to discuss the week's lectures, readings and content when you are leading discussions. Were you shocked about the number of potatoes the Irish ate? Were you unconvinced that agriculture is responsible for Covid-19? Did you have a family member that lived through the Dust bowl or knew someone affected by the Homestead Act? Let us know in your blog post! The format is up to you but it's important to see it as a public piece that others will read. Make it engaging and interesting for yourself and your readers.

Your post can be as short as a paragraph and as long as you see fit. Find some general guidelines on what makes a good post here: <https://journeys.dartmouth.edu/susfoods2020/2020/06/23/how-to-write-a-good-post/>

An adequate post simply summarizes materials from the week and does not lend significant insight or introspection on the materials. An adequate post may include typographical errors or be hard to understand or follow. Information may be scattered and not well thought out.

A good to excellent piece goes beyond expectations by, for example, pulling in outside materials or personal experience and creates a compelling narrative that is not only relevant to the materials for the week but also expands upon them and entices readers to comment and engage with the author in further discussion. A good to excellent piece has a clear topic, a narrative to support it and creative flair.

Note: every person has a different mode of expression and the discussion forum is not a competition. You are free to include humor, personal anecdotes or take a more traditional, academic approach. These stylistic choices do not impede you from producing good to excellent pieces and are encouraged. Try not to fall into the mode of comparing your pieces to others, this is your academic journey and you are free to explore what works best for you and best exemplifies your voice. I hope that rather than feeling competitive you are inspired by the excellent and diverse contributions you and your peers produce.

Post commentators will be graded similarly from 0-2, 0 = not submitted or disrespectful, 1 = partially completed (both 1 initial comment and 1 response to another comment are required), late or comments

that do not require deep reading to produce, 2= excellent commentary demonstrating interest and adding interpretations that lead to fruitful discussion beyond the scope of the post. Partial credit, e.g. 1.8, 1.4 may be awarded.

Grading will weigh individual assignments accordingly:

Discussion leading – 30% (15% each for the in person and online lead discussion post/engagement components)

Discussion commentary (non-leads) – 30%

Farm walk reflection– 15%

Final class dinner potluck project/presentation- 20%

Participation – 5%

Late policy

I accept late assignments only for course components that are not required to be in person (class discussions, group projects) and have pre-scheduled deadlines (lead discussion posts, dinner). For course assignments that are possible to submit late (discussion comments, reflection assignment), no email is necessary and I will grade with a 10% assumed reduction per day (each +24 hour time period late) up to 50% max penalty and no makeup late assignments accepted beyond the finals deadline. If you have extenuating circumstances, please let me know and we can discuss options further but exceptions to late penalties are only granted under extenuating circumstances.

Dartmouth Policies

Student Accessibility and Accommodations

Students with disabilities who may need disability-related academic adjustments and services for this course are encouraged to see me privately as early in the term as possible. Students requiring disability-related academic adjustments and services must consult the Student Accessibility Services office in Carson Hall 125 or by phone: 646-9900 or email: Student.Accessibility.Services@Dartmouth.edu. Once SAS has authorized services, students must show the originally signed SAS Services and Consent Form and/or a letter on SAS letterhead to me. As a first step, if you have questions about whether you qualify to receive academic adjustments and services, you should contact the SAS office. All inquiries and discussions will remain confidential.

Religious Observances

Some students may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during this academic term. If you have a religious observance that conflicts with your participation in the course, please meet with me before the end of the second week of the term to discuss appropriate accommodations.

Academic Honors Principle

The faculty, administration, and students of Dartmouth College recognize the Academic Honor Principle as fundamental to the education process. Any instance of academic dishonesty is considered a violation of the Academic Honor Principle. Fundamental to the principle of independent learning are the requirements of honesty and integrity in the performance of academic assignments, both in and out of the classroom. Dartmouth operates on the principle of academic honor, without proctoring of examinations. Any student who submits work which is not his or her own, or commits other acts of academic dishonesty, violates the purposes of the college and is subject to disciplinary actions, up to and including suspension or separation.

The Academic Honor Principle depends on the willingness of students, individually and collectively, to maintain and perpetuate standards of academic honesty. Each Dartmouth student accepts the responsibility to be honorable in the student's own academic affairs, as well as to support the Principle as it applies to others.

Any student who becomes aware of a violation of the Academic Honor Principle is bound by honor to take some action. The student may report the violation, speak personally to the student observed in violation of the Principle, exercise some form of social sanction, or do whatever the student feels is appropriate under the circumstances. If Dartmouth students stand by and do nothing, both the spirit and operation of the Academic Honor Principle are severely threatened.

A number of actions are specifically prohibited by the Academic Honor Principle. These focus on plagiarism and on academic dishonesty in the taking of examinations, the writing of papers, the use of the same work in more than one course, and unauthorized collaboration.

More information can be found at <https://students.dartmouth.edu/judicial-affairs/policy/academic-honor-principle>.