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## **“Envisioning a Just Food System” A Students Teaching Students Course**

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“Envisioning a Just Food System”  
A Students Teaching Students Course  
Olivia J. Burt, Leila E. Rezvani, and Claire S. Wiggin

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Arts: Olivia J. Burt  
Bachelor of Science: Leila E. Rezvani and Claire S. Wiggin  
Environmental Program

University of Vermont

2016

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# Abstract

The alternative food movement (AFM) in the United States is a collection of organizations, communities, and individuals who are united under a common goal to search for and ultimately carry out alternative solutions to the current industrial, pesticide-laden, monocrop agriculture model. As this movement has evolved and become more nuanced, questions surrounding exclusivity related to race, class, socioeconomic status, gender, and identity have begun to surface. Tied to the neoliberalist regime, the AFM as it stands today benefits the dominant group, white middle-to-upper class citizens who are educated, and vastly excludes underserved populations. Through the analysis of a 13-student, Students-Teaching-Students course at the University of Vermont developed and taught by Olivia Burt, Leila Rezvani, and Claire Wiggin in the spring of 2016, our research aims to critically assess the food movement as it stands today and collectively determine how the food movement could be more inclusive and act as a vehicle for positive social change. Using emergent pedagogy including backwards design and safe space, as facilitators we aim to stimulate conversation and thought for a more realistic and just movement that achieves environmental, economic and social sustainability. This course resulted in collective student visions on a just food system that challenges dominant narratives, centering around self-determination, critical thinking, and community over individual empowerment. As facilitators, we were able to communicate course content effectively because of our positionality as students-teaching-students in a small, safe, discussion based learning environment. Overall, this course serves as a vessel to teach social justice through the lens of food.

Keywords: Alternative Food Movement (AFM), Agriculture, Neoliberalism, Food System, Food Justice, Food Sovereignty, Class, Race, Gender, Labor, Power, Privilege, Oppression, Critical Thinking, Students-Teaching-Students.

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Finally, we would like to dedicate this thesis to those working to create a more just food system: from farmers, farm workers, waiters and waitresses, cooks, factory and slaughterhouse workers to journalists, writers, community activists and organizers, homesteaders, and gardeners. Your tireless work helps us remember that it is possible to affect positive change if we work together.

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# Introduction

Standing in the midst of the hustle and bustle of the Burlington, Vermont Farmer's Market on a Saturday afternoon is akin to standing at the epicenter of the small-scale, local, organic agriculture movement. Since 1980, local farmers and artisans have come together to sell their goods to Burlington residents and tourists. To members of the Alternative Food Movement (AFM), this market is considered a beacon of hope amidst an ever increasing industrial agricultural model. The Alternative Food Movement is defined as the constellation of projects, ideologies, and practices centered on the growth, distribution and consumption of fresh, healthy food, grown locally by small family farmers using ecologically sound and chemical-free methods. This movement seeks to turn away from the industrialized food system and its adverse impacts on environmental and individual health, and instead build localized food systems based on direct, caring relationships between food producers and consumers within geographically bounded areas. This market is exactly what the AFM is fighting for: supporting local farmers and artisans, infusing money into the local economy, and uniting a community around the shared love of food. The increased awareness of the AFM has spurred greater community buy-in and participation in Burlington and beyond.

Further up the hill from the market in Burlington lies the University of Vermont (UVM) campus. UVM educators and students alike often use the Burlington Farmer's Market as a viable case study of the AFM in action. Praise for the AFM is echoed in the curriculum of classes related to environment and agriculture. It is important to highlight the successes in the AFM thus far and the tireless work of the members of this movement, from producers to consumers. While being careful to not detract from these successes, it is necessary to unpack the shortcomings of the movement that hinder its capacity to be inclusive and just.

As residents of Burlington and self-identified members of the AFM, we have all witnessed living examples of the movement's injustice, inequity, and exclusivity. We recognize that the movement is comprised of predominantly white, middle-to-upper class citizens of high education and socioeconomic status. These assumptions are supported by an ever increasing pool of literature assessing various demographics and their perceptions and participation, or lack thereof, in the AFM. This knowledge, coupled with our individual experiences, has compelled us to teach this class. As members of the movement, we feel it is our duty to push against the

oppressive structures that uphold racism, classism, and sexism in the movement, the food system and in society as a whole. We unite to raise discussion of issues including race, class, gender, labor, accessibility, privilege, and work through history, stories, and critical thought in order to envision tangible solutions to enacting a more just alternative food movement for the future.

The Environmental Studies department at UVM offers a program called Students-Teaching-Students (STS) course, in which undergraduate students have the opportunity to design and facilitate a course for a small group of other undergraduates. Once the course is approved by the ENVS faculty, it is officially listed in the registrar as ENVS 197 Special Topics, worth 3 credits. Student facilitators plan lessons and field trips, engage guest speakers, design assignments and give final grades that appear on students' transcripts. Course design and facilitation is often done in pairs, as part of the ENVS senior capstone thesis project.

Through informal discussions in the course ENVS 201: Research Methods, Claire, Leila, and Olivia came to a common conclusion, or query, that as Environmental Studies Majors concentrating in Food, Land, and Community our education has generally neglected the topic of justice and access in relation to the food system. Each of us, with an initial intention to write an individual thesis, decided that the best platform to transfer our collective frustration and questioning would be to facilitate an STS course. We each had varying backgrounds and interests: Claire in Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies and Ecological Agriculture, Olivia in Anthropology and Food Systems, and Leila in Geography and Political Ecology. Unifying our unique visions and diversified academic pursuits ultimately gave rise to a varied, interdisciplinary proposal, syllabus, and course.

Our course, "Envisioning A Just Food System," built on the pioneering work of food systems, agriculture, and social justice by creating a deeper understanding of how ingrained systems of oppression based on race, class, and gender inform the ways that people grow, distribute, relate to and think about food. In organizing our class and gathering readings and materials, we wanted to foreground the role of history in creating these oppressive systems and implicate the positionality of students in order to envision ways of using food as a tool to dismantle inequality.

Much food-related activism has been ill-informed, accessible to a select group, and patronizing toward the communities it seeks to benefit. Many previous STS classes have focused



on the still-important work of activism in the context of other environmental issues. In our course, we want to first create space for learning and critical reflection *before* action, with the goal that students will take what they have learned in our class to inform their future work and everyday life.

We believe that our class is particularly timely and relevant because of the way our generation has latched on to food and farming as an expression of identity, a way to build community and a path towards a meaningful way of life in an increasingly impersonal, money-driven and ecologically destructive capitalist society. Our shared goal for this class is not only to build an awareness of problems, but to collectively envision a just food system and begin to imagine how we will make it a reality.

# Literature Review

## Introduction

The beginning of the Alternative Food Movement (AFM) in the United States was rooted in public dismay as a response to the industrial agribusiness model, consumers demanded a better option. Beginning in the 1980s, the burgeoning sustainable agriculture sector began to take off. Bolstered by the success of the Rodale Institute's side-by-side organic and conventional farming trials and the USDA's reports on organic farming practice, certified organic products entered the mainstream capitalist market with surprising success (Heckman 2006; Rodale 1981). Today, the Alternative Food Movement is still a thriving sociopolitical and environmental movement that offers a clear and direct affront to the industrial model. This movement has reinstated local farmer livelihoods, especially in places like Vermont where rural livelihoods are woven into the fabric of the region's historical identity, prioritized the remediation of almost irreversible nutrient depletion in soil, and on a broader scale confronted the reality of climate change.

The overwhelmingly positive research and public support of the AFM naturally gives rise to the question of why certain individuals are *not* participating in this movement. Food studies scholars suggest that the AFM works within the framework of the neoliberal economy, emphasizing personal responsibility of the individual consumer to “join” in the movement. By placing the burden for action on the individual, and framing ethical consumption as the best way to effect change, the AFM reinforces the structural inequities that maintain the exclusivity of the movement as a whole (Fairbairn, 2012). The neoliberal framework, as Guthman (2008) suggests, underlies the “universalizing impulses of alternative food discourse,” which suggest that limited knowledge and access are the root of the vast whiteness and exclusivity of the movement (Slocum, 2006). This narrative neglects the deeper scars of racism, classism, and the cycle of oppression that reproduce issues of food access and stunt attempts at diversifying the alternative food movement altogether. Given the widespread disparities that will be explored, we seek to locate and understand successful examples of just food systems and the way in which these examples can actualize equal food access and greater food sovereignty in the United States.

Food systems and cultures are highly geographically specific, and it is important to situate our research Vermont's particular context. As both mainstream media and the sheer

market volume suggest, Vermont is one of the forerunners of the movement to re-localize food, particularly food that is grown using sustainable practices. As Jan Albers writes, the Vermont landscape is one of the most cherished for the place it holds in America's rich agricultural history and identity (2002). The community-driven nature by which the land is managed, "reflects the human decisions that have been made about it," such as the widespread growth of the small-scale, organic agriculture sector (Albers 2002). Moreover, our research is being carried out specifically in Burlington, Vermont which is arguably the state's hub for this alternative food economy, centered around food outlets such as the Burlington Farmers Market, Intervale Center, and City Market Cooperative.

## What is the Alternative Food Movement?

The alternative food movement (AFM) in the United States is a collection of organizations, communities, and individuals who fight for environmental, social, and economic sustainability in the food system. The first wave of the AFM began with the rise of organic farming in the 1960s and 70s as a component of the back-to-the-land countercultural movement. Many young people saw a return to a simple, rural way of life as a rejection of an increasingly alienated, corporatized and environmentally destructive lifestyle based on consumption and individuality (Steggles 2015). Back-to-the-landers applied organic farming in conjunction with radical practices like communal work and child rearing and off-the-grid building. This creation of a lifestyle based on an environmental ethic represented the first time conservation had transcended the realm of academia and rooted itself in popular practice, and growing food was a large part of this practice (Conn 2010). The beginnings of the alternative food movement were linked to a vision of a "decentralized democratic society" and the "creation of a material basis for self-reliance", as well as other movements of social protest like feminism and the anti-war effort (Chodorkoff et. al. 2014, Steggles 2015).

What began as a protest against American corporate capitalism slowly evolved into a manifestation of that very system. The organic movement has shifted from a grassroots movement to a multi-billion dollar industry, often referred to as "big organic" and critiqued for its lack of transparency (Pollan, 2006). Organic is now the fastest growing sector in agriculture and many national food conglomerates like Kraft, K-Mart and Walmart have begun to carry organic products, lured by the potential for profit (Green 2008). The corporatization and consolidation of organic has led to a system that largely mimics the industrial model it sought to

reform: large monoculture farms supplying chain supermarkets via long-distance trucking (Johnston et. al. 2009). Further, although a huge array of organic food brands exist, they are consolidated in the hands of a few huge corporations: General Mills owns Cascadian Farms and Muir Glen, while Dean Foods markets Horizon Organic Dairy and Silk soymilk, to cite a few examples (Warner 2005). The role of large corporations in diluting the stringency of organic farming standards has also been a source of concern (Green 2008, Warner 2005).

The term “local” was popularized in the food movement within the past decade in response to the loss of faith in “big organic” agriculture and the “capitalist-industrialist food system” (Gray, 2014). Wendell Berry, an influential writer and proponent of the local food movement, writes frequently about the decentralization of food production, a return to local communities and an “agrarian economy” (Berry, 2002). His work primarily focuses on the negative impact large conventional farms have on soils, watersheds, and the overall landscape (Berry, 2002). Organic was no longer enough because it could be applied to the industrialized food system. Instead, the return to small, organic farms, such as Joel Salatin’s Polyface Farms in Virginia, was touted by influential writers such as Michael Pollan (Pollan, 2006). Pollan maintains that Berry’s writings hold the solutions for many issues in the food system, such as the decline of an idealized agrarian culture in which humans and nature are deeply connected (Pollan, 2009).

It may be argued that local food is undergoing a similar process of commodification and mainstreaming that transformed the meaning of “organic”. In 2007, the word “locavore”, one who eats local food, was added to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (Alkon & Agyeman 2011). People were encouraged to “vote with your fork” and join the locavore movement by consuming local products (Alkon & Agyeman 2011). The “local” argument is almost ubiquitous in modern food discourse and is touted as a win-win solution. Lower “food miles” (the distance traveled from farm to plate) decreases the amount of fossil fuels used, thus reducing one’s carbon footprint, money is kept circulating in local economies, and food is fresher and tastier (Johnston and Baumann 2014). National supermarket chains like Whole Foods have adopted the trend as a marketing technique, advertising their role in “preserving local character” and keeping consumers “connected to the growing seasons and unique flavors and diversity of local crops” (Whole Foods Market 2015).

As the food movement continues its evolution, questions surrounding social justice are taking center stage. Food justice has become an integral part of the alternative food movement, and phrases such as food access, food deserts, and food insecurity now circulate and point towards concerns of class and race within the food movement (Billings and Cabbil 2011, Holt-Gimenez and Wang 2011). In 1995, the Community Food Security Empowerment Act document put forward the idea that food security was an indication of a healthy food system (Morales 2011). Community Food Security (CFS) is defined as “all persons obtaining at all times a culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through local non-emergency sources” (Morales 2011). The idea is that CFS efforts will work within the context of communities to find solutions, otherwise known as “capacity building” approach (Morales 2011). Some scholars argue that the “sustainable food” movement is entirely separate from food justice movement because it does not prioritize “race, ethnicity, class, and gender” (Lo 2014).

Despite the rise in food justice over the past five years, there are many Americans overweight and malnourished, most of whom are “low-income people and people of color” (Lo 2014). Alkon and Norgaard convey that issues of food insecurity are not “poor individual food choices,” but a result of institutional racism (2009). Furthermore, it has been argued that “sustainable food” does not yet incorporate social justice into its intentions (Lo 2014). The sustainable agriculture movement has been critiqued for its inability to address social issues, due to the emphasis on economic success of the farmer through consumer support (Alkon and Norgaard 2009). These issues still remain subordinate to the dominant logic of ethical consumerism and the exclusivity of the movement to mainly white, upper middle-class participants (Alkon and Norgaard 2009). The persistence of hunger and obesity in low-income communities demonstrates that the alternative food movement has yet to effectively address and resolve social injustices (Allen 2008).

## Context of our Course: Vermont, Agriculture, and Identity

Considerations of local food movements must be primarily concerned with the particularities of the locality in question. These movements will manifest differently in California and Vermont, for example, because of the unique place that agriculture and food have in their respective histories and cultures (see Allen et. al. 2003 for a discussion of California). In Vermont, the importance placed on local food and farmers cannot be overstated: the issue of

food is omnipresent and incredibly pervasive. On the positive side, this emphasis on food in Vermont echoes the value placed on a caring, mutually supportive, and nourishing (both physically and socially) community. Engagement with food also connotes an engagement with the land, and thus a feeling of responsibility toward the well being of our planet.

The respect and admiration felt for “our” local Vermont farmers is due to the fact that agriculture is deeply rooted in Vermont’s history. In her history of the Vermont landscape, *Hands on the Land*, Jan Albers traces the development of Vermont farming. Although agriculture began around 1100 A.D. with Vermont’s indigenous population, its cultural importance is grounded in the “Yankee’s vision of bucolic paradise”: neat, modest homesteads that instilled the virtues of hard work and thrift into their proprietors as they tamed the unruly wilds that had been left to degenerate by their original inhabitants, the natives (Albers 2000). As early as the 1790s, Vermont was sold as an agricultural paradise of fertile soil producing crops of corn and wheat abundant enough to export. Thus, moral superiority, economic advancement, the practice of agriculture and the physical character of the landscape were all bound together and solidified in Vermont’s imaginary and identity early on in the state’s settlement. Changes in the population, land availability and most importantly the market led Vermonters to transition through various farming livelihoods, from Merino sheep to dairy cows, beginning in the mid-1800s (Albers 2000). Through these changes, the character of the hardy, resourceful Vermont agrarian was cemented.

After World War II, Vermont’s image as a bastion of small-town American spirit and rurality was solidified in the national imagination, thanks to the art of Norman Rockwell and the poetry of Robert Frost (Albers 2000). However, this idea gained prominence just as the number of farmers and land used actively for farming was decreasing rapidly. Dairy farmers were pushed to increase herd size and mechanize their processes, pushing out the smaller, marginal hill farms in the process. Debt incurred during this upsizing and consolidation forced many out of the business when milk consumption decreased in the 1980s. The move in Vermont agriculture is now toward diversification, including beef cattle, dairy sheep and goats, poultry as well as value-added products, including iconic Vermont food brands like Cabot Creamery and Ben & Jerry’s. These modern companies rely heavily on the image of Vermont as a “wholesome rural paradise”

in marketing their goods nationwide, demonstrating the importance of this reputation not only as a source of identity and pride for residents, but an economic tool (Albers 2000, 283)

Thomas D. Visser calls Vermont's "historic rural landscape" its "greatest intangible asset"- a place where "the sense of the past overwhelms that of the present" (2002, 40). The intensity of the desire to preserve this anachronistic landscape is such that Act 250, the state's land-use planning legislation, mandates that new and relocated power lines be installed underground whenever possible (Visser 2002). Vermont's people are also highly valued as relics of an idealized, morally superior past. In the midst of urbanization, interstate migrations and upheaval in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Vermont's population remained relatively unchanged as compared with the rest of New England. This led many to deem Anglo-descended Vermonters some of the last "true" Americans (Harrison 2005). A National Geographic issue in 1927 went so far to say that Vermont "is today one of the most truly American of our States. Its people have hardly changed in their essential elements in a century. Barely one in nine is foreign-born, and the majority of these are Canadian, and therefore American" (quoted in Harrison 2005, 480).

Vermont's unequivocal support for local farmers as stewards of this prized landscape also valorizes their rugged, individualistic and simple lifestyle. This idolization of the small farmer in America began with Thomas Jefferson: Jefferson characterized the yeoman farmer as morally superior to merchants. Farmers were independent of interaction with other humans through their pure reliance on the land, and thus remained unsullied by economic dependence and thus "subservience and venality" (quoted in Hanagan 2015;34).

Kaufman and Kaliner (2011) identify politics as one main arena for change in Vermont's recent history. From the mid 1800s to the 1950s, Vermont was a solidly Republican state. In the 1920s, a gradual shift toward progressive policies began and continued through the back-to-the-land movement in the 1960s and 70s, when large influxes of migrants were drawn to Vermont by a difficult to define combination of pastoral purity and radical/alternative lifestyle choices (communal living, organic farming, polyamory etc.). This "idio-cultural migration," defined by Kaufman and Kaliner as "the migrants' motivation to join a collective socio-cultural milieu", became self-reinforcing, and Vermont's "hippie" reputation grew into reality as more people were drawn by it (122). More than just a drawing together of like-minded people, this migration

radically shifted the perceptions of Vermont in the eyes of non-residents, as migrants actively re-made the identity of Vermont while defining its relationship to other localities (Kaufman and Kaliner 2011). The current foodie movement in Vermont is the most recent manifestation of this desire “to create permanent lives that deviate from the ‘normal’ American experience” (122). However, as previously noted, even the alternative food movement finds its origins deep in Vermont’s history: the state began actively “branding” itself as a tourist destination, defined by pure, wild nature as well as distinctive Vermont (food) products like maple syrup and dairy as early as the 1890s (Kaufman and Kaliner 2011). Food has been foundational to Vermont’s identity for centuries, and emphasis is still placed on the unique purity and authenticity of Vermont’s agriculture and food.

Intrinsically linked to Vermont’s agrarian identity and landscape is the overwhelmingly white racial composition of the state. Vermont’s particular “type” of whiteness is politically and socially liberal; “racially benign” in contrast to whiteness in the US South (Vanderbeck 2006, 642). Especially through tourist materials, Vermont is portrayed as the source of authentic Yankee rurality, characterized by ruggedness, Puritan piety, self-reliance and individualism (Harrison 2005). It is also the home of the idealized, unspoiled New England village, complete with white church steeple and “pure” products like dairy and maple syrup (Vanderbeck 2006). Yankee whiteness is discursively linked to the Vermont landscape through agriculture: it is through the process of working the land that the white, often male farmer came to possess these desired traits. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, New England underwent rapid industrialization and in-migration of new Europeans and other types of migrants. This perceived “dilution” of Yankee stock caused anxiety within the state government, leading to the infamous eugenics program that attempted to improve the rural population through sterilization and other equally disturbing measures (Vanderbeck 2006). Vermont’s government also actively encouraged in-migration of desirable migrants, including Germans and Scandinavians. The desirability of these migrants was explicitly tied to their ability as “native agriculturalists”, again reifying the connection between Vermont’s agricultural landscape, identity, and whiteness (Vanderbeck 2006, 648).

Continuing a trend begun as early as the 1790s, Vermont’s rural landscape and the accompanying cultural identity of its residents is used to market it as a tourist and settlement



destination. Food has become an increasingly important part of Vermont's marketability. The magazine "Edible Green Mountains" showcases "local, sustainable, seasonal, authentic foods, drink and culinary traditions" in an effort to "transform the way our community shops for, cooks, eats and relates to the food that is grown and produced in Vermont" (Edible Green Mountains 2015). Edible Green Mountains features recipes, interviews, local dining and lodging guides and glossy photographs of food, farms and players in the food system.

## Bridging the Connections Between Oppression, Neoliberalism, and the Exclusivity of the Food Movement

In dividing the literature review into sections like Race, Gender, Labor, Access and Neoliberalism, it may seem as if these systems and ideas are self-contained or separate. In fact, it is just the opposite, as each informs and creates the other. Race and gender together inform one's ability to make a living wage and what food chain jobs are accessible, which in turn influence income and class status, circumscribing food access, for example (Lo, 2014). This set of circumstances determines participation in a neoliberal system that prioritizes market processes of efficiency and individuality over fairness and cooperation. However, laying out a foundational understanding of each concept on its own is necessary in order to understand the deep, layered interconnections and provide a framework with which one can understand intersectionality in the food system.

In order to build these connections, it is first necessary to define the meaning of privilege and oppression. In her discussion of white privilege, Peggy McIntosh (1988) distinguishes between "earned strength and unearned power conferred systematically". Privilege based on being a member of the dominant racial, gender, and/or class group often gives an individual permission to exercise this unearned power over other, less dominant groups (McIntosh, 1988). According to Hardiman and Jackson (1997), social oppression occurs when a social group receives privileges, and others do not. Oppression exists at the individual, institutional, and cultural/societal levels, and it operates across three dimensions: context, psycho-social processes, and application (Hardiman and Jackson, 1997). When one social group maintains more privilege than others, the inequality of social groups upholds that hierarchy (Zutlevics, 2002). In order to introduce change and begin to ameliorate this system, the majority culture has to address the reality that one group has historically held more power than others (ASHE-ERIC, 2002).

In the context of the U.S., this takes the shape of cisgendered, heterosexual, white male privilege (McIntosh 1989). However, identity-based privilege is not as simple as white male hegemony subjecting the rest of the population. Intersectionality states that race, gender, class, ethnicity, age, ability and nation are not self-contained concepts, but mutually constitutive and intertwined (Hill Collins 2013). In the words of Audre Lorde, black lesbian feminist and poet, “there is no hierarchy of oppressions” (Lorde 1983). All arise from the same place- a belief in the inherent dominance of one group over another.

Privilege and oppression shape the inclusion and exclusion of specific groups that participate, have access to, and/or benefit from the alternative food movement. According to Laura Hughes, the alternative food movement does not address the “broader structural inequalities that contribute to disparities in food access and thus face challenges in building truly inclusive, empowering and transformative food systems” (2010). More specifically, Alkon and Mares state that the movement’s market-based strategies, that work within the neoliberal framework (refer to section 6.1 Neoliberalism as a Framework), make alternative food less available to communities of color and of low-income, in addition to overlooking how “racial and economic privilege pervade both conventional and alternative food systems” (2012). In addition, the need for food justice points towards institutional racism that enable “disproportionate access to environmental benefits” to persist as communities of color are geographically and economically confined to “processed, fast, and commodity foods” (Alkon and Norgaard 2009). The food movement remains constrained by the dominant agro-industrial system through which market-based strategies reinforce oppressive structures and uphold the current racial, gender and class hierarchy (Wright 1975).

## Agriculture in the United States: A History of Race & Oppression

With the importation of white indentured servants in the 1600s by British colonists in North America, came the rise and further expansion of the plantation economy within the modern day “Black Belt” of the United States. This economy was built on the mass production of agricultural products driven by worldwide market forces, described as having almost year-round growing seasons of crops such as rice, tobacco, and cotton. As indentured servitude became too expensive for plantation owners in the latter half of the 1600s, they began to seek even cheaper labor, leading to the massive enslavement of Africans through the Atlantic slave

trade and the codification of their inferior status as non-citizens, unworthy of the protection of the law because of their race (Wright 1975). The institutionalized, lawbound system of slavery enabled the creation of a robust national economy based on cotton, enabled in part by the creation of the cotton gin in 1793. From 1820 and 1860, the extraordinary boom in the cotton industry capitalized on the “efficiency” of slave labor and allowed for the economic expansion of the American south (Wright 1975). The precarity of this system, which plantation owners did not foresee, was that it was dependent on the success of the market. The stagnation of the cotton industry due to decreased demand between 1860 and 1900, nested within the Civil War era, instigated the slow unraveling of the initial success of the entire socioeconomic system of slavery (Wright 1975).

As colonists began to use more slave labor on their farms, their agrarian lifestyles and connection to the land waned. In turn, slaves became the primary caretakers of the land and their labor engendered an “intimate and precise” knowledge of the land, from practices of hunting to craft (Stewart, 2006). The system of slavery as a whole has lent a framework for modern-day human rights violations of labor and allowed oppressive, racist structures to persist in the United States. It is important to note that an understanding of the Black experience beyond slavery and oppression can help to “develop more concrete thinking” of Black Americans as agriculturalists (Jordan, 2007).

The end of the Civil War in 1865 saw the passing of the 13th Amendment, which ended slavery in name if not in practice. Farm managers and owners soon turned to other sources of easily exploitable labor. This, coupled with the expansion of industrial agriculture in the early 1900s, led to the importation of Chinese, Japanese and Filipino laborers, especially in California. Exploiting their lack of family ties, willingness to act as strike breakers and work for low wages, acceptance of seasonal labor and apparent docility and industriousness, large-scale farms in California employed increasing numbers of Chinese immigrants from about 1850 to the 1870s (Daniel 1981). The potential of California agriculture seemed limitless, built on upon the backs of these ideal laborers. However, Chinese workers began to experience racist backlash as white family farmers grew view them as “permanently alien, threatening and inferior on the basis of their race, culture, labor and aberrant gender relations” (Lee 2002, 38). These sentiments,

combined with racist political agitation and hysteria, led to the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882.

The Exclusion Act led to an uptick in the number of Japanese farm workers in California: by 1911, they composed about one-fifth of the work force in the southern part of the state and formed the majority of northern California farms (Guerin-Gonzales 1994). Japanese workers often worked in “associations” that granted them a modicum of bargaining power previously unrealized by farmworkers. These groups would agree to work for wages far lower than anyone else, driving out all other farmworkers in the area. Then, at a critical stage in crop growth, when their employers had no other choice, they would threaten to strike in order to force wage concessions or improved conditions (Daniel 1981). Farm owners and managers quickly became disillusioned with this group that they previously viewed as pliable and hardworking: unlike the Chinese, the Japanese were “a tricky and cunning lot” and “their clannishness seems to operate as a union would”, according to a farmer at the 1907 California Fruit-Growers Convention (quoted in Daniel 1981, 75). Again, the state stepped in to further limit the definition of desirable immigrants with the Gentlemen’s Agreement of 1907, which barred the entrance of Japanese laborers, particularly males (Guerin-Gonzales 1994).

Recognizing that a dearth of workers created by restrictive immigration laws would seriously affect their ability to turn a profit, farm owners again turned to other groups: Filipino, Korean, Mexican, Armenian, Italian and Portuguese workers moved into the gaps. The latter three groups of farmworkers often became farmers and landowners in their own right, as under the Alien Land Law they were considered white and could thus own property (Guerin-Gonzales 1994). For Armenians, this was only made possible by a 1909 circuit court decision that overturned their classification as “nonwhite Asians” (Guerin-Gonzales 1994: 21).

It is evident that race was not a pre-existing fact or condition, but was *created* by the hiring practices of farmers, laws on immigration and land ownership and the perceptions of particular groups’ work habits and cultures. Racial divisions were crossed in order to agitate for better working conditions and fair pay, but were exploited by law enforcement and growers to break strikes and defuse labor militancy. This creation of race and citizenship by lawmakers and government in turn informed the ways in which groups were treated differently, adding official

weight to racist practice and making race itself a reality and driving force of the agricultural labor economy.

The interwoven agriculture history of slavery, forced labor, disempowerment, and institutionalized racism in the United States manifests in a modern dilemma as marginalized communities, especially Black Americans, turn back to the land. With a return to farming livelihoods, “a complicated and difficult legacy has been generated” (Jordan, 2007). Today, as it has been since the first colonist set foot in North America, the vast majority of the agriculture production and decision making in the United States has been “concentrated in the hands of White farmers and transnational agricultural corporations” (Jordan 2007). As the agriculture industry stands as a predominantly white field, the narrative of landlessness among black farmers and other marginalized groups endures.

The experience of slavery and African diaspora is one piece of the many “unique cultural, historical, and ecological experiences,” of Black Americans and their agricultural legacy (Jordan 2007). This new way of thinking is known as “Black agrarian thought,” focusing directly on the Black experience of agriculture in the United States. Other elements of this history include sharecropping, tenant farming and concern about modern issues within the food system that inform a sustainable agricultural ethic (Bowens, 2015). Focusing on the resilience of Black Americans and maintenance of agricultural tradition brought from Africa lends a new, hopeful narrative of Black farmers rebuilding their connection to the land. It is important to note that this movement of Black Americans acquiring land transcends any sort of back-to-the-land movement or economic practice. Rather, “It [means] independence, security, self-sufficiency, self-reliance, and the opportunity to control one’s own destiny” (Grant, 1993; Salamon, 1979; Zabawa and Warren, 1998).

## Critiques of the Food Movement

### Neoliberalism as a Framework

Neoliberalism is an economic philosophy that stresses the power of the free market to provide for human well-being through the action of individual rights, private property, deregulation and privatization of public resources, with the state creating the framework within which these processes may take place (Harvey 2007). Divisions between the market and the state are increasingly blurred, with the state creating the environment in which the market may take

primacy (Ferguson 2010). James Ferguson (2010) also cites the tendency of the term “neoliberalism” to denote a vast array of theories and associated practices, ranging from “a sloppy synonym for capitalism itself” to “a kind of shorthand for the world economy and its inequalities” (171). Harvey notes that the pervasiveness of the concept has allowed it to become “common sense” - a lens through which we understand the world, often unconsciously (2007). Echoing this internalization of neoliberal tendencies, the idea of “neoliberal subjectivities” denote the ways in which the ideologies of the neoliberal market, namely individual responsibility, self-help and efficiency, are internalized by people and communities and function to take the responsibility to provide for health and safety from the state and assign it to the individual (Alkon and Mares 2012). Governmentality, a concept originally elaborated by Michel Foucault, extends this theory of subjectivities into a method of discipline, in which individuals self-police by employing market logics in their day-to-day life (Guthman 2006). In an effort to narrow the use of the term and avoid its dilution, the argument with relation to alternative agrifood movements will focus on the latter two concepts.

Many who subscribe to and participate in alternative food movements (AFMs) take it for granted that these movements are the ethically sound, socially just alternative to industrialized, commercial agriculture. Built into the rhetoric surrounding local, sustainable food is an implicit opposition to the injustices of globalized capitalism, and the alternative food movement appears to be an active site for resistance to neoliberalized, free-trade economies. Examples of this resistance are campaigns against the commodification of plant genetic material, and opposition to free trade agreements such as NAFTA.

However, many theorists of the food system have pointed out that alternative food initiatives may in fact reproduce certain neoliberal subjectivities while they claim to stand against the negative effects of a neoliberalized political economy. By emphasizing the power of the “conscious consumer”, AFMs depoliticize food issues and turn attention from structural inequalities that bar access to “good food” to the personal responsibility of the individual to enact change through their purchases (Fairbairn 2012). Local, sustainable food initiatives often center on market-based solutions, such as farmers markets, CSAs and “value added” products (Guthman 2006). Increasingly, responsibility to provide adequate, nutritious food to low-income communities is devolved to voluntary organizations, suggesting that it is no longer the state’s

responsibility to provide food to those in need through entitlement programs (Alkon and Mares 2012).

Food labeling by third parties also represents an emphasis on market primacy. By creating voluntary labeling systems, like Fair Trade and organic, responsibility is placed on the consumer to valorize certain practices through their purchases and on producers to follow these practices based on their power to attract consumers. Nowhere is the state involved in setting standards of what qualifies as environmentally or socially sound agricultural practice. Additionally, certification schemes do little to address the difficulties many farmworkers face, including “eroding wages, exploitative conditions, and treacherous journeys across and militarized border zone” (Brown and Getz 2008: 1195).

This emphasis on the role of the consumer and focus on the physical *product* rather than the *process* behind it is symbolic of the commodification of the food movement and its subjugation to the neoliberalized market (Busa and Garder 2015). Ethical consumerism is a concept that harmonizes two often competing modes, consumerism and citizenship, by framing shopping as a political practice (“voting with your dollar”) (Johnston 2007). The modern-day manifestation of ethical consumerism, beginning in the 1980s, originated in the collective recognition of the environmental unsustainability of consumption patterns and a concern for human rights associated with the anti-globalization movement. Food became an area of intense focus because of its deeply personal nature and its status as a “public/private nexus” (Johnston 2007). The importance of buying practice as a form of political action is apparent: a classic example is the consumer boycott of California grapes in the 1970s, which paved the way for fair labor contracts between the UFW and grape growers (Karten 1992). However, food retailers have internalized this focus on ethics and depoliticized it by turning it into another selling point for their product, on par with freshness or quality.

When individuals are isolated in their action within the food system and consumption becomes the only way to effect change, the possibility of any collective movement beyond many people shopping in the “right” way at the “right” places is eliminated. In the alternative food movement, consumption choice often become a signifier of moral and ethical character. When foods deemed ethical are largely only affordable to the formally educated, liberal, white upper-middle class, those who cannot afford these types of foods are (perhaps unconsciously) deemed

ethically unsound or powerless victims (Busa and Garder 2014; Johnston 2008). The alternative food movement in particular tends to equate “good” consumer behavior with “good” citizenship (Mares and Alkon 2012). The focus on personal health as a tenet of the alternative food movement is another manifestation of neoliberal tendencies, as it places the responsibility on the individual to ensure their own health (through proper food purchases), ignoring the fact that the price of these “healthy” foods excludes a huge portion of consumers, relegating them to the realm of poor health. The resulting problems of poor diet-obesity, diabetes, heart disease- are then linked to personal failings (laziness, lack of determination), while the link to greater patterns of socio-economic inequality remain unquestioned (Firth 2012).

Guthman (2006), notes that the food movement often treats neoliberalism and the accompanying processes of globalization as a source of negative “impacts” on food systems, mostly taking place in the developing world. This focus on impacts ignores the fact that the ideologies that enable inequality in the food system are in fact reinforced within the alternative food movement itself. Thus, the AFM opposes the effect in its rhetoric while reinforcing the cause in its practice. In sum, it is unclear whether alternative food movements are actively *oppositional*- that is, working through their practice to dismantle the hegemony of global capitalism- or merely *alternative*- a somewhat “lesser” evil than conventional food systems that provides other options to a select group, but does not challenge the underlying framework (Allen 2002).

## Localism

Closely tied to issues of neoliberalization in the food movement is the intense focus placed on the local. In a seemingly logical turn, local is placed in direct opposition to global. Local food systems are characterized as inherently morally superior and ecologically responsible, supporting close relationships and community agency in the face of an increasingly hegemonic, environmentally destructive and ethically questionable global food system (DuPuis and Goodman 2005). Winter (2003) applies the theory of embeddedness, which emphasizes the social relations that are tied to all economic transactions, to the local food system. Embedded, localized economies based on face-to-face interaction are founded on trust between the producer and the consumer, and the purchase of local food is tied to individual and community identity building and the collective creation of “meaning” (Winter 2003). Whereas the global system



reduces food to a mere commodity, defined solely by its exchange value, local food systems embed food in a web of non-market relationships based on reciprocity, affection and loyalty (Kloppenburg 1996). Shortening the supply chain of food allows the consumer to support local economies and theoretically exert power over how food is produced through their purchasing habits (Halweil 2006). Buying local is discursively linked to a closer relationship with the land, the development of alternative forms of commerce, the preservation of cultural food tradition and heirloom varieties, and a more mindful and intentional eating practice (Seyfang 2006, Kloppenburg 1996, DeLind 2002, Halweil 2006).

The concept of a “foodshed” is often employed in local food discourse. Originally defined by Arthur Getz, a foodshed links a place and its people through the processes and cultural values associated with food and agriculture. Through its evocation of the ecological term “watershed”, foodshed implies a spatially contiguous area linked by the flow of a natural resource (Kloppenburg 1996). Kloppenburg defines a foodshed as a vehicle for collective social change and organizing. Through familiarity with one’s farmers, food tradition, neighbors and landscape, a collective place-based identity can be created. The willingness to act on behalf of this community will increase because one sees and feels the effects of their actions on the local economy and land. Significantly, Kloppenburg rejects Getz’s contention that a foodshed can be global, maintaining that local food systems are the “preferred, emergent alternative” to an obscured and placeless “global everywhere” (1996; 34).

Doreen Massey contests that the transition from modern to postmodern times, characterized by the internationalization of capital, the ability to communicate instantaneously across massive distances and the globalization of culture have led to a state of “space-time compression”. This compression has rendered localities and one’s sense of place in the world fragile and vulnerable. In response, people turn to identification with the “local” to provide “stability and an unproblematic source of identity” (1991;151). In other words, the static, predictable, and familiar local provides a refuge from the ever-changing, alienating global.

However, this binary is not as simple as it appears. In the valorization of local food systems, physical proximity is used as a referent for positive social interaction. Social embeddedness of local food economies is assumed to lead to a “moral or associative economy” (Hinrichs 2003). This assumption elides the fact that every community, no matter how small,

has its own power differentials and hierarchies, which often manifest through the food system (Hinrichs 2003). The emphasis based on trust in localized food relationships belies the fact that trust is not automatically based on fair relationships or democratic processes (Dupuis and Goodman cite the example of organized crime's involvement in the New York City Fulton Fish Market; 2005, 365). It also ignores the fact that neoliberalism can play out on smaller scales than the global (Guthman 2006). Dupuis and Goodman (2005) point out that discourse surrounding local food often elevates the practice of eating locally to the level of an unquestioned ideal, engaging in a "politics of perfection" which stems from a lack of critical engagement with questions of race, class, and gender inequality and hegemony (362).

Who defines the local, in terms of physical space? Placing arbitrary boundaries (i.e. the Hundred Mile Diet, or the political borders of a state or country) implies the exclusion of certain groups of people and creates a boundary between who is worthy of care and attention and who is not (DuPuis and Goodman 2005). While strong identification with the land and one's immediate community can provide solace in an increasingly "placeless" society divorced from natural processes, blind adherence to a specific idea of local heritage or tradition can erase the fact that "many localities have been enriched-and thus have won the privilege of expending effort to relocate- through the impoverishment of others" (Allen 2008). In areas that find it easy to create a strong identification with the local (Vermont, for example), a critical analysis of *why* those localities are able to claim that specific identity (Vermont as a bastion of the local food movement) is necessary in order to reveal the power dynamics at play in localism. The characteristics that lend local food part of its ideological value (landrace varieties, ecologically responsible farming practice, *terroir*, and traditional knowledge, for example) are also viewed as a means to secure higher prices for farm products. Built into the philosophical underpinning of local food is the assumption that these goods should be more expensive ("commodification of territoriality"), limiting those who can participate in the system to those who can afford to buy the products (Dupuis and Goodman 2005).

Hinrichs (2003) and Dupuis and Goodman (2005) both draw distinctions between a "defensive" localism and an open, "diversity receptive" localism. Defensive local systems are based on the protection of interests and values (assumed to be homogenous within the spatial boundaries) against outside intrusion (Hinrichs 2003). This type of localism is defined by "the

politics of conversion”, in which one group decide what is best for the entire community and tries to convert everyone to their way of thinking about the world (DuPuis and Goodman 2005). This sort of evangelism is widely noted in the food movement, and relates to the emphasis on individual “education” on what is the “right” kind of food as a means of self-improvement, and correct food choices as a reflection of one’s morality and character (Busa and Garder 2014). Within these rigid boundaries, the local can become “elitist and reactionary, appealing to narrow nativist sentiments” (Hinrichs 2003; 37).

In contrast, receptive localism recognizes the fluidity of boundaries, the importance of diversity both within and without the “local”, and the necessity of reflexivity and democratic process in any movement that looks to justice as the end goal (Hinrichs 2003). In this theory of the local, the multiplicity of identities and communities coexisting in a spatially contiguous area is celebrated, rather than suppressed. Receptive localism also incorporates the fact that communities united by shared interests or values may not occur in the same physical space, thus extending and shifting the meaning of local across distance (Massey 1991). Reflexive local food systems would recognize the ways in which ideas of the “right” way to eat are informed by race, class and gender identities and inflected by power and subordination (Dupuis and Goodman 2005). By engaging with these difficult layers, food politics could work towards de-essentializing the practice of eating local and reveal that “eating-like all human action-is imperfect and contradictory” (Dupuis and Goodman 2005, 362).

Localities are the product of process and constant contestation over meaning. Spaces are formed by interaction and are necessarily shared by people with a large variety of identities, experiences, desires and values. No matter how small, the local will always contain contradictions and evolve as a result of conflict and difference (Massey 1991). A receptive local system will value this evolution and recognize that “building on traditions can also mean being critical of them” (Massey 1991, 140).

### **Race: Exclusivity and Whiteness in the Alternative Food Movement**

Although the alternative food movement affronts monoculture farms in the field, the movement itself embodies a monoculture, which consists mostly of white, middle class individuals with similar values and backgrounds that inform their approach towards “good and sufficient food” (Alkon & Agyeman 2011, Slocum 2006). The alternative food movement is

referred to as a space of “whiteness”, both literally and figuratively, by a variety of anthropologists, geographers, and sociologists (Alkon & Agyeman 2011). The whiteness itself is not negative, but the exclusiveness to one identity is an issue that needs to be named in order for the alternative food movement to be a space that is welcoming and open to all backgrounds (Slocum 2006).

The whiteness of the food movement, as Alkon and Agyeman (2011: 3) maintain, is more than a lack of diversity, but also the pervasive culture of “liberal, affluent, white identities and positionalities” that maintains an exclusive narrative. Due to the single identity that composes the alternative food movement, the notion of “whiteness” pervades its spaces (i.e. organic farms and farmer markets), and in turn become a “racialized space” (Alkon & Agyeman 2011). The perspective of participants within the movement tends to come from a “privileged” background that does not accurately, if at all, voice the issues, needs, and opinions of non-white individuals. Alkon and Agyeman discuss how Michael Pollan’s famous writing is a reflection of that viewpoint:

For example, Michael Pollan’s recently offered list of food rules (2007) is intended to guide consumers toward eating practices aligned with the food movement. However, when Pollan begins his first rule by telling us not to “eat anything your great-grandmother wouldn’t recognize as food,” he ignores the fact that ‘our’ great-grandmothers come from a wide variety of social and economic contexts that may have informed their perceptions of food quite differently. Some were enslaved, transported across the ocean, and forced to subsist on the overflow of the master’s table. Others were forcibly sent to state-mandated boarding schools, in which they were taught to despise, and even forget, any foods they would have previously recognized (Alkon & Agyeman, 2011: 3).

White individuals of the food movement are often seen as progressive and left-wing, and incapable of participating in “overt racism”; however, research indicates that “good whites” often overlook the prevalence of “white privilege” within the alternative food movement (Harper 2011). White privilege can be understood as daily scenarios that are mostly granted to white individuals, such as “I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented” and “Whether I use checks, credit cards or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial reliability” (McIntosh 1989: 2). Therefore, as white privilege pervades the alternative food movement, the question goes beyond who is present in the alternative food movement. It ultimately becomes a question

of who feels welcome and represented. Julie Guthman discusses the significance of a study that showed the diversity of the U.S. population is not represented in the food movement (Guthman 2008). Research and literature shows the lack of African Americans present at and participating in common places of alternative food movements, such as farmers markets and CSAs (Guthman 2008). The USDA conducted research on the ethnic composition of farmer's markets, which were 74% white, 14% African American and 5 % Asian (Guthman 2008.). Contrasting the eastern farmer's markets, the west's participation of African Americans was less than 5%, and hispanic and Asian was higher at 10 to 13 % (Guthman 2008). Guthman brings this study further, by arguing that racism is not resolved "if all phenotypes are accurately represented," but by addressing the "messy and controversial concept", that inherent "whiteness" is prevalent in these spaces (Guthman, 2008: 389, 390). White privilege can be more harmful than direct acts of racism because it is often overlooked and can therefore persist (Guthman, 2008).

Natasha Bowen, a self-described "biracial woman in today's exclusive movements" published a photographic story, *The Color of Food*, on the "Black, Native, Asian, and Latina farmers and food activists across the country" (Bowen, 2014). Natasha Bowen's story reveals the vastly overlooked and discredited people of color that are participating in the food movement through organic farming (Bowen 2014). Her blog and book reveal the "white farm imaginary" that permeates the alternative food movement as farmers of color are not recognized or credited as frequently as their white counterparts (Alkon & McCullen 2011, Bowen 2014). Cultural anthropologist Gail Myers (2015) argues that spaces do not need to necessarily represent everyone, but that there need to be spaces for everyone. Myers started the Freedom Farmers' Market in Oakland, California, which is a "gathering place for Black cultural expression and economics" (Myers, 2015: 149). Myers argues that the farmers market is more than an economic exchange, but a place for "community empowerment, farmer outreach, and cultural celebration and preservation" (Myers, 2015: 150). Bowen and Myers' work illuminate the lack of representation in the alternative food movement, specifically organic farming and farmers' markets.

Although alternative agriculture offers an alternative option to the demonized conventional agriculture, it reinforces the neoliberal structure that enabled those initial issues through its racialized niche (Alkon & McCullen, 2011). The argument is that alternative food

perpetuates similar systemic inequalities of conventional agriculture because it creates an exclusive community as a solution (Alkon & McCullen, 2011). Therefore, the solution to these should address, confront, and reform these systems, rather than perpetuate them (Alkon & McCullen, 2011). Similarly, Food Justice arose from the food movement as a way to address racial inequality by achieving a “healthy democracy” that critiques the corporate food system (Mares & Pena 2011). However, activists are often from privileged (white and affluent) backgrounds and food justice organizations do not receive “leadership and direction from communities of color” (Mares & Pena 2011: 202). In addition, food justice often looks at consumption patterns rather than more complex issues of “structural inequalities” that permeate the food movement (Mares & Pena 2011).

## Gender

It is irrefutable that the traditional legacy of agriculture in the United States has tended towards masculine rule. According to the 2007 Census of Agriculture, “just one out of every seven [14%] principal farm operators is a woman” (USDA 2007). Although this statistic is bleak, it reveals the truth that women have been excluded from the agriculture sector in the United States. Seed catalogues, farm machinery websites, and other agriculture advertising outlets reinforce the stereotype that men are farmers and women are not. In many ways, these images of men as the primary owners and operators of farms uphold the gender hierarchy in American agriculture. Despite this, the emerging alternative agriculture sector in the United States is turning the tide of the gender composition in agriculture with a growing number of women returning to the land to begin growing a new food revolution. Examining the gender composition and emergence of America’s sustainable food movement, it is abundantly clear that women are leading the charge.

As agricultural researchers suggest, women in the United States are one of the fastest growing demographics to own and operate farms in the 21st century (Costa 2010). The reasons *why* women are choosing to farm and farm sustainably are varied. One relevant theory recognizes that as farming is an enterprise historically controlled by men, when women assume the role of “farmer”, the conventional, “productivist” agricultural model does not yield the same sense of empowerment as spaces of alternative, sustainable practice (Trauger 2004). Recognizing the masculinist nature of traditional agriculture, women have been able to

carve a rightful place for themselves within the alternative agriculture model. In a greater sense, traditional agriculture reasserts masculine and feminine roles on a farm as this style of agriculture has been defined by the historical legacy in which men were “farmers” and women were “farmwives” (Pini et al. 2015). Alternative agriculture, as a somewhat new, evolving movement, has created the conditions where gender binaries present in traditional agriculture are not as pervasive, allowing for the redefinition of the identity of a farmer (Trauger et al. 2009). What many scholars refer to as, “the feminization of labor,” there is clear data to suggest that an increasing number of women are not only joining the workforce, but are occupying higher paid positions compared to their male counterparts (Freeman 2000). This is a slow, but albeit noticeable trend has allowed for more women to wield more power as laborers, in this case farm laborers and owners, uninhibited by the historical nature of agriculture as a masculine domain. In this case, identity plays a huge role in the emergence of women as respected agriculturalists of the alternative food movement.

As discussed, women in the United States are only just starting to permeate the agricultural sphere, but they have held great influence on the food system for centuries as exercising control over the majority of food decisions of the home (McIntosh & Zey 1989). This raises discussion, as Kansal (2014) indicates, of homemaking as an unremunerated, non-market activity carried out traditionally by women, which is not considered when assessing the gender composition of the labor force or when looking at the gender composition and actors within the alternative food movement. It is significant that women are owning and operating farms, but it is also significant that the historical legacy of women’s role in American society is tied to the flow of food into the home (Kansal 2014). From the mid-19th century onward, the cult of domesticity functioned as an almost religious doctrine to the maintenance of the nuclear family, reinforcing the patriarchal structure of society as a whole. Transcending the inherent oppression of these messages is the notion that women were in many respects responsible for the “health of the nation” through the act of purchasing, preparing, and storing food (Kansal 2014). This critical task performed by women, which goes beyond the framework of the quantifiable market as it stands today, transcends their underrepresentation in the food and agriculture sector and offers a new way of looking at their historic role as advocates for a better food economy.

Moving the conversation beyond the burgeoning movement of female agriculturalists, it is important to explore the experiences of female bodied farmers and farm workers in the United States. One of the most prevailing issues of female farm workers in the United States is workplace violence, coercion, and assault. As stated in, “The Vulnerability of Immigrant Farmworkers in the US to Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment,” a report prepared by Human Rights Watch in 2012, “Sexual violence and harassment in the agricultural workplace are fostered by a severe imbalance of power between employers and supervisors and their low-wage, immigrant workers. Victims often then face systemic barriers—exacerbated by their status as farmworkers and often as unauthorized workers—to reporting these abuses and bringing perpetrators to justice” (Human Rights Watch 2012). The central piece of this quote is the notion of “systematic barriers” that have perpetuated an environment of unsafe working conditions for women. Due to a multitude of factors including, but not limited to, gender, legal status, language barriers, race, and even a perceived lower status on the farm women farm workers therefore often lack the agency and autonomy to prosecute their perpetrator. Moreover, failures to investigate reports of sexual assault, inadequate immigration policies in the United States, and even inadequate sexual harassment trainings and policies have manifested in a crisis of hundreds of thousands of girls and women laborers experiencing workplace sexual harassment and assault.

In order to continue to advance the status of women as farmers and as respected participants in the alternative food movement, the entire community of agricultural researchers and policy-makers must stress, “that it is a great loss for everyone when women are barred from participating meaningfully in the decisionmaking process at either the household, village, or international level” (Mead 1976). As the literature suggests, this understanding must manifest in active, inclusive research that puts women and other marginalized communities at the forefront. It was not until 1978 that the United States Department of Agriculture began distinguishing farm operators based on gender, which in some respects contributes to the general lack of research on female farmers today (USDA 2002). Doss (2013) points out, agriculture research must be designed to capture the gender-specific roles of agricultural resources, rather than making assumptions rooted in social norms of agricultural work. By doing so, new narratives of female farmers may surface, offering concrete knowledge of their work and a



broad understanding of what it means to be a female farmer in a still vastly gendered field of work.

## Labor

Beyond a focus on developing-world's smallholder cash crop farmers through the Fair Trade movement, issues surrounding laborers in the food system- from farm workers to slaughterhouse employees to waitresses- have been largely unaddressed by the alternative food movement (Brown and Getz 2011). A narrow focus on small scale “family farmers” and the romanticization of their lifestyle has precluded significant engagement with the vast array of issues facing other workers, including those in restaurants, distribution facilities, slaughterhouses, grocery stores, and processed food factories. An adequate treatment of the immense importance and complexity of labor issues in the food system is outside of the scope of this literature review. However, a brief overview of the most prominent problems, as well as a discussion of the activism on labor issues within the AFM is pertinent.

Agricultural and food service labor has long been performed by highly vulnerable and oppressed segments of the population. Wages in food chain occupations are incredibly low: in their report entitled *The Hands that Feed Us*, the Food Chain Worker's Alliance found that only 13.5% of workers in the food system make a livable wage, and, ironically, face high levels of food insecurity as a result (2012). Further, people of color, though only comprising 34.6% of the US population, comprise 42.1% of food chain workers (Liu and Apollon 2011). The production sector (defined as farming as well as slaughterhouse work, and cooking, baking, drying and roasting machine operation) employs the most people of color as compared to other sectors, and also pays the lowest wages (Liu and Apollon 2011.). Hired farm work is one of the lowest paid occupations in the country, with median incomes of only \$350 dollars a week in 2006 (Wainer 2011). The seasonal nature of work and unpredictability of weather contributes to the precarious nature of farmworker livelihoods. These factors, combined with the fact that as many as 50% of American farmworkers are undocumented, deepens this group's vulnerability and limits their ability to access state-funded resources like food stamps or education (Liu and Apollon 2011). The creation of this class of easily deportable, deeply impoverished migrant workers has deep roots in American agricultural labor history: the Bracero program (1942-1964), originally a temporary solution to emergency wartime labor shortage, fundamentally altered the United

States' relationship to Mexico, creating the social and political frameworks that undergird sustained flows of migrants from our southern neighbor that persist into the present day (Heisler 2008).

Working conditions in all food chain occupations are notoriously poor. The Coalition of Immokalee Workers, one of the most prominent organizations representing farmworkers in the US today, exposed the slavery conditions to which migrant farmworkers in Florida's tomato fields were subjected: young women kidnapped and forced to work against their will, workers kept in trailers in isolated swamplands and threatened with death if they leave, mostly indigenous workers forced to labor 10-12 hours per day, 6 days a week for as little as \$20 a week (CIW 2012). Mirroring the treatment of Dust Bowl migrants and recently freed African-American sharecroppers, employers kept workers perpetually in debt through a "company store" which deducting the price of food, cigarettes, rent and cocaine from workers pay (CIW 2012). Field workers must contend with exposure to toxic pesticides and other chemicals used on fields: the Government Accountability Office estimates that 300,000 agricultural workers are poisoned by pesticide exposure each year (Food Chain Workers Alliance 2011).

While these represent exceptional cases, conditions beyond the fields are often not much better. Forty percent of food chain workers report working more than 40 hours a week, and 79% do not have paid sick days or do not know if they do (Food Chain Workers Alliance 2012). Workers in the food processing sector have the highest rates of injury, as their jobs often involve physically taxing and repetitive motions and the use of machinery that slices, grinds (Liu and Apollon 2012). Coping with increasing line speeds and denial of bathroom breaks, animal processing and slaughterhouse workers report rates of illness and injury that are twice the national average (Food Chain Workers Alliance 2011). Almost one in ten food chain workers reports having no access to clean drinking water or a clean toilet at work (Food Chain Workers Alliance 2011). This lack of workplace safety and hygiene has obvious implications for worker health, but consumer health is also negatively impacted when the environment in which food is grown, processed, cooked and sold is unclean.

Worker organization in the food chain presents one solution to addressing these grievances. Farm workers have faced more difficulty in organizing: their exclusion from the National Labor Relations Act of 1935 means they are not afforded federally-protected rights to

collective bargaining (Perea 2011). Most cite the United Farm Workers (UFW) efforts, beginning in the mid 1960s, as the first successful effort toward unionization. Working within the social and political climate of the civil rights era and partnering with groups such as the Black Panthers around collective class and racial struggle aided the UFW in accomplishing radical goals (Araiza 2009, Willhoite 2012). Through their 1968 boycott of California table grapes, the UFW called attention to low wages, unfair hiring practice and poor workplace conditions, catalyzing the later boycott of Safeway grocery stores, one of the largest buyers of California grapes in the nation (Araiza 2009). The UFW succeeded in securing contracts with growers that guaranteed rest periods, clean drinking water, toilets, protective clothing against pesticide exposure, a ban on pesticide spraying while workers were in the field, and regular testing to monitor exposure to chemicals (UFW 2015). These efforts were achieved through grassroots community organizing techniques, such as house meetings, establishing community service centers and credit unions, organizing nonviolent training workshops, forming coalitions with other unions and faith groups and mounting a media campaign to raise awareness (Willhoite 2012). This massive mobilization culminated in the passage of the 1975 Agricultural Labor Relations Act, which granted farm workers in California the right to organize and collectively bargain (Willhoite 2012).

Today, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers are following in the footsteps of the UFW. The CIW defines itself as a “worker-based human rights organization”, begun as a farm worker organizing program in 1993 (CIW 2012). Utilizing similar techniques as the UFW (enlisting the help of faith groups, lawmakers and the media while building capacity within the workers themselves), the CIW successfully organized a four-year boycott of Taco Bell to expose the “sweatshops” in the Florida tomato fields that supplied the restaurant chain (Gottlieb and Joshi 2010). The CIW has connected movements and groups across the food system through their work on the Fair Food Program, a partnership between farmer workers, Florida tomato growers, and retail buyers. The Fair Food Program looks to implement Worker-driven Social Responsibility through the creation and monitoring of legally binding Fair Food Agreements , in which buyers commit to purchasing only tomatoes grown by farms who follow the CIW’s guidelines for workplace safety and rights and fair wages (CIW 2012).

Another highly visible group organizing for food chain worker's right is Restaurant Opportunities Centers United (ROC). ROC has exposed exploitation, include wage theft, sexual harassment, and discrimination in restaurant groups like Andiamo in Detroit and Smith and Wollensky's (ROC 2015). Moving beyond addressing grievances, ROC emphasizes the "high road" through Restaurants Advancing Industry Standards in Employment (RAISE), which provides management with "access to critical information, an invaluable support network, and problem-solving opportunities", training, certificates, and curriculum to further their goals of dignified, living-wage work in restaurants (ROC 2015). They also operate COLORS, worker-owned restaurants in New York, Detroit, DC and New Orleans (ROC 2015).

These organizations represent only two salient examples of the worker activism in the food chain. By shifting our focus toward the people involved in producing our food, besides small, local organic family farmers, the alternative food movement will begin to connect the dots between the food that we eat and diverse issues such as immigration policy, the minimum wage, and cooperative business models.

## Access

In an effort to understand food access versus food insecurity, an analysis of historical race relations and tensions, socioeconomic status, and past and present food byways is necessary (McClintock, 2011). To begin, food insecurity is an umbrella term referring to a person's inability to access food because of lack of money and other barriers, monetary or physical, at any point in a given year (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2011). Food insecurity often manifests within a food desert, which is an area, urban or rural, that does not have access to food that is fresh, healthy, affordable, and/or culturally appropriate (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2011; McClintock 2011). Grocery stores and corner bodegas may exist within a food desert, but the categorization still stands if the food does not offer adequate health, affordability, and cultural sensitivity. As a means to access food, citizens living within a food desert are often forced to purchase food at convenience stores or fast food restaurants that offer limited healthy and affordable options (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2011). Food insecurity disproportionately affects landscapes that are poor, urban, and comprised of minority populations.

These identifiers of a food desert: poor, urban, and a higher population of minority status citizens, give rise to the wider discussion of historical and structural roots of food

insecurity. The development of American suburbs beginning in the 1950s to 1980s corresponded with a mass exodus of supermarkets within some of the largest cities in America (Becker, 1991; McClintock, 2011; Nayga et al., 1999). This mass movement of supermarkets to the suburbs was driven largely by demographic and economic forces. The grocery market is extremely competitive and in an effort to increase sales, many large grocery corporations decided to follow the movement of middle-to-upper class citizens who were centralizing in suburbs. These decisions, rooted in capitalist motivations, were made with intention and suggest a level of effective “demarcated devaluation” of a specific group of citizens: black, Hispanic, and other minority groups (McClintock, 2011). Thus it is evident that racialized socioeconomic disparities are woven into the fabric of the United States, which manifest profoundly in food insecurity.

The echo of crime and poverty subsequent to the fall of industry and rise in suburbanization contribute to the decline in supermarkets in the inner city. As early as 1995, anthropological researchers were demonstrating that throughout cities in the United States, urban residents were having difficulty accessing supermarkets outside the city because of transportation barriers while concurrently governmental support going towards food access and nutrition programs waned (Curtis and McClellan, 1995). This complex web of social, political, and economic factors have stunted research on food access and resulted in misinformation on the prevailing issue of food insecurity.

An important piece of this discussion is as Elizabeth Eisenhauer (2001) points out, there has been minimal research conducted on the historical roots of urban food retailing as it relates to food access for the urban poor. Despite the widespread persistence of food insecurity nationwide, the United States government has done little to research and address these issues on a national scale (Curtis and McClellan, 1995). With limited data and research, solutions to the dire situation of food security cannot be found.

In response to the climate of government stagnation when responding to food insecurity, food justice movements have evolved. Food justice can be perceived as a “counter-culture” to the food culture that persists in many white, middle-to-upper class spaces. Despite a thriving, local and organic food economy, there are many citizens in the United States that do not have the basic food necessary to support a healthful diet. These justice movements manifest in a variety of scales and scopes, but in recent years there has been particular emphasis placed on larger policy-

driven, regulatory approaches (Wekerle, 2004). Food justice movements began in the mid-1980s as a localized approach to help citizens access emergency food services. Just Food (2010), one of the founding food justice organizations in the nation, defines food justice as a community exercising a right to obtain food that is fresh, affordable, nutritious, locally grown with care for well-being of the land, workers, and animals”. The language in this definition is similar to the language when speaking about food deserts, therefore one can conclude that food justice is an affront to a food desert. As the movement has taken shape over the past three decades, localized approaches have given way to a greater understanding of the global interconnectedness of the failing food system (Wekerle, 2004; Gottlieb, 2013).

Moving to a global scale, though, has resulted in confusion of the original intentions of food justice movements. Many activists have fought on a local level, but when tasked with addressing food insecurity at a global scale, are stifled by the enormity of this issue. A new discussion, as Gottlieb (2013) points out, then arises as to what is the most effective approach to confronting this crisis. Is food justice about relocalizing food? Can food justice only be achieved through systematic change? Can broader social movements echo a framework for the food justice movement? All of these questions are complex, like the food system itself, and help to conceptualize action steps to achieve food security.

## Envisioning a Just System: Looking Towards the Future

As evidenced by the preceding pages of our literature review, the pervasive nature of neoliberal capitalism and the vast inequalities it engenders are clearly manifested in the food system. However, the subordination of all elements of everyday life to the “brutally objective power” of the market is not as complete or total as it may seem (Henri Lefebvre, quoted in Figueroa 2015). The food crisis created by capitalism may in fact be an opportunity to undermine capitalism itself, as it exposes gaps in the system’s purportedly infallible rationality. The incredible complexity of the issues surrounding food and the ways they intersect with issues of worker’s rights, gender roles, environmental sustainability and racism can be paralyzing to those looking to affect positive change. However, these multiple intersection points, combined with the incredible diversity of the ways in which people interact with food, from field to plate, provide an almost infinite number of starting points for action and change. The current food crisis opens up “conditions of possibility for re-articulating social relations around food”, and perhaps also

for the creation of more egalitarian and caring social relations in general (Figueroa 2015). Many groups and initiatives across the country are taking a grounded, locally and historically informed approach to building a just food system, and what follows is a brief review of some key projects and methods.

According to Siniscalchi and Counihan, “food activism takes aim at the capitalist system of production, distribution, consumption and commercialization.” and includes “people’s discourses and actions to make the food system or parts of it more democratic, sustainable, healthy, ethical, culturally appropriate or better in quality” (2014, 6). Food activism takes many forms depending on the context (urban or rural, global North or South), the targets (biotechnology and agribusiness, fast food companies, policy makers), the methods (ethical consumption, alternative economic structures, re-agrarianization, labor organizing, freeganism) and the goals (environmental sustainability, fair treatment of animals, workers rights) (Siniscalchi and Counihan, 2014). Because our course is focused on the US food system, our overview of food activism will also be limited by that scale.

Much political action surrounding food in the US has centered on the role of the consumer. This framing of activism is in line with the neoliberal ideology (previously elaborated) that privileges individual choice in the marketplace above state regulation and collective action (Johnston and Baumann 2015). This modality allows the process of consumption itself and its social and environmental effects to remain unquestioned, leading to “political anesthesia” and a lack of interest in collective action (Szasz 2007:195, quoted in Johnston and Baumann 2015). Prioritizing consumption as the means of achieving a sustainable food system leaves out the dimension of class, as it remains bounded by a “politics of the possible” and fails to seriously challenge the neoliberal system that engenders class inequality in the first place (Guthman 2008, 1180).

However, food activism that “[expands] the non-capitalist element of our food system that are already present” also exist and thrive (Gross 2012). As previously noted, worker organization and empowerment in the food chain is one visible and effective strategy. Alternative economic practices like collective food purchasing and farming are also powerful. Figueroa (2015) describes one salient example: the Chicago Healthy Food Hub, located in a largely Black neighborhood in the south of the city. The Food Hub seeks to make healthy food a

reality for its community members through collective bulk purchasing of wholesale organic produce, some of which is grown in the historic Black farming community of Pembroke Township, Illinois (Figueroa 2015).

Cooperatively owned local food hubs challenge the commodification of food by embedding the sourcing and purchasing process in the context of democratic relations and a sense of place. Cooperative businesses are controlled by their members, who pay membership fees which provide working and investment capital for the food hub (Matson, Sullins and Cook 2013). Although cooperative business structures do not inherently address social justice issues, many incorporate ethical goals into their operation, like the Just Local Food Cooperative of Wisconsin, which works to “assure that the producers and workers involved are compensated appropriately, and that consumers have access to quality products at fair and reasonable prices” (Matson, Sullins and Cook 2013.). Other strategies that work to transform the price-based exclusivity of local food include work-share programs, in which labor hours are exchanged for food, sliding scale pricing schemes, bartering, and programs to enable the use of SNAP and WIC benefits (Forbes and Harmon 2007).

The current trend of re-agrarianization and the return to farming as a livelihood, especially among young people, is also a hopeful example. Organizations like The Greenhorns and the National Young Farmer’s Coalition aim to support young people and first time farmers by providing educational resources and a sense of community. Apprenticeships are available through the Northeast Organic Farming Association and its state branches, as well as through the ATTRA National Sustainable Agriculture Assistance Program. The 2014 Farm Bill allocated \$18 million to support beginning farmers in order to support efforts toward building community and ensuring food security (USDA 2015). Although the average age of farmers in the US was 58.3 years in 2012, young people are increasingly turning to farming out of a desire to address the threat of environmental destruction, build practical skills and re-attune themselves to the land. Many describe farming as “as a kind of protest against the idea that success means a big paycheck, or as a protest against an economy dominated by big corporations” (Charles 2012).

Efforts toward food sovereignty in American First Nations communities also present a positive, community focused challenge to the corporatized, racist food system. In the Ojibwe communities of the Upper Midwest, this activism centers around the preservation of ancient



foodways, most importantly the wild rice (manoomin) harvest, in the face of genetic engineering and fossil fuel infrastructure expansion (Honor the Earth). The White Earth Reservation in Minnesota has adopted a tribal food policy that links physical health, the preservation of food culture, and economic viability (White Earth Anishinaabe Tribal Food Policy Draft). Other groups such as the Dine Nation have embarked on food sovereignty initiatives, including community-based data collection and historical research to determine the systemic issues that have created the current problems with their food system (Dine Policy Institute 2014). The Native American Food Sovereignty Alliance acts a “network for collaboration” of disparate projects engaged in reasserting Native control (NAFSA 2013). These projects highlight the importance of food as a spiritual and cultural connection to the land held by many Native communities. Dispossessed of their land by colonization, these communities are reasserting control by challenging the commodification and destruction of their place-based food practice (Grey and Patel 2014).

These examples are in no way exhaustive, but it is clear that true food activism is not just an affront to the industrialized food system, but an attack on the commodification of our collective means of subsistence and capitalism itself. Food connects every person, and “food is a modality by which capitalism is lived and made tangible in everyday experience” (Figueroa 2015). In teaching this class and drawing attention to these revolutionary projects and movements, we set out to learn the ways in which we, the generation that has attached itself to food and food politics so deeply, can create a just food system and, in turn, a just world.

## Our Teaching Philosophy: Pedagogy in Practice

Looking at the education system in the United States through a critical lens, it is apparent that the structure of power that exists within a teacher-student relationship echoes many of the oppressive structures in our society that serve to uphold classism, racism, and sexism. In an effort to redefine the teacher-student relationship, educators can emphasize the power of students’ voice and experience (Freire, 1968; Brent Edwards, 2010). Paulo Freire (1968), educator, scholar, and author of the book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, assumes that teachers will maintain power unless they respect the autonomy and knowledge of the students. Recreating the teacher-student relationship is a structural adjustment that can give way to transforming

education as a whole. As summarized by Duncan-Andre and Morell (2007), the education system that will progress society is one that draws upon the lives of marginalized peoples and serves to deconstruct social, economic, and racial oppression. The purpose of reimagining the education system is to empower students to feel active and engaged when responding to the injustices that pervade society.

Backward design, also referred to as backwards planning, is the pedagogical framework that prioritizes goals rather than content (Linder et al., 2013; McTighe & Wiggins 1998). Traditionally, teachers use pre-determined curriculum that may not necessarily be appropriate for particular groups of students and that centers on content rather than goals. Backward design practitioners are transparent about the goals and outcomes of a course from the very beginning, offering students a clear path to achieve those results (Linder et al. 2013). This method can be applied broadly at the course-level and then more specifically at the assignment-level, again prioritizing goals before content. By implementing backward design, confusion related to the goals of the course are addressed at the very beginning and there is more room for questioning and critical thinking surrounding the topic itself.

Critical thinking is a transformative process, especially in a classroom environment. In an age where thinking has often been replaced by regurgitation of basic understanding of material, critical thinking reimagines the process of learning for students (hooks 2010). Learning, today, has been corroded by disengagement and disempowerment of students. To reestablish classrooms that are rooted in active thinking, rather than passive learning, the skill of critical thinking is central (hooks 2010). In an effort to support critical thinking, educators must first restore the ability for students to think and understand the extreme power and privilege that is tied to free thinking. In order to improve the situation for those who are oppressed in society, improving thinking surrounding oppression is the first step (hooks 2010; Paul & Edler 1997). Mindful thinking and the process of mindfulness is directly tied to the notion of critical thinking (hooks, 2010; Tishman & Andrade 2012). Mindfulness, as explored in the contemplative practice section, is a state of deep consciousness and can be helpful in achieving critical thinking.

In an effort to create classroom spaces that are productive for facilitators and students, an emphasis on safety within the classroom is fundamental. The idea of safe space goes beyond the physical boundaries of a classroom or particular learning setting. Rather, safe space is an entire

philosophy that can foster mutual trust, understanding, and acceptance (Lepp PhD, R. N., 2002). Learning, in many cases, is born out shared lived experience. In order for lived experience to be shared, facilitators and learners alike must perceive the space and people around them as safe. Personal comfort, instructor's attitude, and the physical classroom space all contribute to an individual's perception of whether the space is safe or unsafe (Lepp, 2002; Holley and Steiner, 2005). Safe space is of particular significance when teaching about oppression and cultural competency. These topics are emotionally charged and in order for productive conversation to thrive, there must be incredible intention brought to the sense of safety for all individuals (Florian and Linklater, 2010). Recognition of the inequities within a classroom system based upon race, class, and gender offer an opportunity to understand and discuss wider systematic oppression. The formation of a classroom of active learners and listeners who engage in curriculum that is diverse can, in turn, increase the entire community's cultural competency (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007; Danowitz & Tuitt, 2011). An extremely important element of this dialogue is critical thinking, which suggests times of silence to tease through information.

In practice, literature on creating safe spaces is relatively sparse. The literature that does exist, though, strongly suggests that success in establishing safe space is in direct correlation with instructors investing time in understanding their students. In turn, students will learn to understand one another. Laying the foundation of mutual trust begins with active, inclusive conversations on the environment students within the classroom want to create (Johnson-Smith, 2006; Ludlow, 2004). Safe space has been applied to a variety of educational practices outside of traditional classrooms such as storytelling circles (Koenig & Zorn, 1996) and drama (Lepp, 1998). At its core, learning in this alternative form emphasizes freedom of expression.

Hunter (2008) identifies four components in establishing a safe classroom space: physical safety, metaphorical safety in which "expressions of intolerance or policies of inequity are barred", a space of familiarity and community, and a space for experimentation and innovation (8). Although she defines safe space in the context of theater education, her analysis of the concept is applicable to most classroom settings. She cites the importance of incorporating individual and collective histories and past and present tensions in to the creation of a space, particularly through being comfortable with making mistakes, forming new relationships, and presenting personal stories publicly.

Creating a supportive, affirming environment in which students feel empowered to leave the classroom and work against oppression in their everyday lives requires teachers to acknowledge and celebrate difference and recognize their students as “raced, gendered, sexualized, and classed individuals” (Kumashiro 2000, 28). Teachers have the unique responsibility to challenge the hierarchies that determine social relations outside of the classroom (Goodman 2001). As microcosms of the world “outside”, classrooms can be “laboratories for alternative ways of relating” (Goodman 2001). Teaching practice and behavior can demonstrate ways in which power can be used to support instead of subjugate others and how conflict can help groups arrive at new ideas and solutions (Goodman 2001).

Extending the concept of critical thinking previously discussed is the “critical pedagogy of place,” which “challenges all to reflect on the relationship between the kind of education they pursue and the kind of places we inhabit and leave behind for future generations” (Gruenewald 2003). This pedagogical practice allows for the (1) critical social analysis of the human experience and one’s own identity to be coupled with (2) a critical analysis of place-based education (Gruenewald 2003). “[Constructing] knowledge *with* students”, rather than treating knowledge or academic achievement as a concretely defined, unchanging object that can be attained through reading and lecturing only is an important practice in enacting a critical pedagogy of place (Kumashiro 2000).

Difficulty arises when dealing with issues of race, a highly personal and complex element of identity, in curriculum and construction of intentional classroom space. Davis (1992) names three common reactions that students often experience when learning about racial, class, and gender inequality: resistance, paralysis and rage. These three “climates” may coexist in one classroom and are dependent on the composition of the class and the identity of the instructor (Davis 1992). Because classes centered on an examination of inequality often draw more politicized students, discussion is likely to become personal, passionate and charged, presenting the challenge to the facilitators of channeling student anger (Davis 1992).

Looking critically at the social construction of whiteness and race will be a useful starting point. In addition to setting up race as a foundational concept in education focused on power, privilege and justice, thinking analytically about race as a product of history rather than a concrete method of categorizing people may help students overcome the defensiveness which

often accompanies learning about racial oppression as a white person (Ninivaggi 2001). One way to explore race as construction is to engage with racial identity formation. To explain the way white racial identity is formed, Janet Helms (1998) lays out a six-stage theory:

- (1) Contact: people are oblivious to racism, lack experience with people of other races, and claim to be color blind
- (2) Disintegration: the person is increasingly aware of their own whiteness but experiences dissonance
- (3) Reintegration: a period of regression in which the individual re-asserts white superiority and blames other racial groups for their problems
- (4) Pseudo Independence: attempts to understand and recognize racism are made, but from a largely intellectual point of view
- (5) Immersion/Emersion: the individual confronts themselves as a racial being, as well as what it means to be white and how they benefit from white privilege. Understanding of these topics occurs on a deeper, emotional level than the previous stage.
- (6) Autonomy: increased awareness of one's whiteness, recognition of their role in the perpetuation of systemic racism, but reduced feelings of guilt and a renewed interest in creating a positive, anti-racist white identity.

Beyond teaching the theory of whiteness as a race, Ninivaggi cites the importance of asking students to reflect upon their own experiences with difference, both positive and negative, in order to reveal internalized and perhaps unrealized patterns of racism, homophobia, sexism, etc. (2001). Recognizing that facilitators are learning how to address privilege and inequality *with* their students helps to create a less polarized and hierarchical environment, in which students may feel that their identity is being accused. In the context of social justice education, building trust with students through genuineness and empathy will enable facilitators to be viewed as genuine in their passion for equity and credible in their knowledge of the topic (Goodman 2001). This will encourage students to feel comfortable taking risks and exploring new topics in the classroom (Goodman 2001).

In turn, these pedagogical frameworks have the potential to liberate the classist, racist, and sexist nature of education. Paulo Freire, in collaboration with another leading thinker of critical pedagogy, Ira Shor, worked together to create a text that demystified the process of

classroom liberation. Freire and Shor (1987) point out that classroom liberation develops through dialogue, questioning, and risk. These elements must unify in a creation and when necessary, recreation, of knowledge (Freire & Shor, 1987). It is increasingly common that knowledge is created at the scholarly, distant level. Classrooms must also be spaces where knowledge is transformed. To take risks, ask questions, and criticize normalized opinions and ideologies means to push towards liberatory education.

## Contemplative Pedagogy: Mindfulness and Sustaining Contradictions

Contemplative practice, a revolutionary form of pedagogy, has become popularized in the classroom in the past 15 years. Contemplative practices support the student holistically, as opposed to traditional pedagogy, which places an emphasis on learning and memorization (Grace, 2011). Contemplative pedagogy teaches the individual to learn first-hand through “inner research and first-hand experience” (Grace, 2011). It is empirical because a lot of the learning is done through learning and experience, rather than traditional education of third-person logic and theory (Grace, 2011).

The practice “supports development of student attention, emotional balance, empathetic connection, compassion, and altruistic behavior, while also providing new pedagogical techniques that support creativity and the learning of course content” (Zajonc, 2013). Studies demonstrate that the practice “improves attention (ZHA 2008; Tang et al 2007), cognition (Zeidan 2010), and cognitive flexibility (Moore 2009)” (Zajonc, 2013). All areas of education, including poetry, biology, medicine, and law, are incorporating contemplative practices into their curriculum (Zajonc, 2013). The practices of contemplative pedagogy include focused attention, mindfulness, sustaining contradictions, and deep listening (Zajonc, 2013).

One of the most common practices is mindfulness, which entails “moment-to-moment, nonjudgmental awareness and is most commonly applied to breath” (Zedain, 2010). Jon Kabat-Zin provides a similar definition: “mindfulness is awareness, cultivated by paying attention in a sustained and particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgementally” (Kabat-Zinn, 2012). Contemplative practice has incorporated mindfulness as a method because of its improvement of focusing skills, as well as a the student’s positive relationship with themselves (Burke & Hawkins). The practice itself is typically attention on the breath, and when

the mind wanders one simply brings their focus back to the breath without judgment (Zajonc, 2013).

Mindfulness has been praised for not only increasing academic performance, but also social and emotional learning (SEL) (Burke & Hawkins). Social and emotional learning provide skillsets that manage “relationships, our work, and ourselves effectively and ethically” and “developing caring concern for others, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, and handling challenging situations constructively and ethically” (Burke & Hawkins). Mindfulness in the classroom engage the students by encouraging “‘first person’ approaches to the study within the disciplines of science, humanities, and the arts as well as in the professional schools” (Bush, 2011).

Mindfulness has been utilized throughout a variety of courses in higher education. Mindfulness is especially beneficial in courses that explore overwhelming issues because it helps students confront them without getting overwhelmed, by remaining focused and aware. Paul Wapner of American University uses mindfulness practice in his course Practical Environmentalism, which presents a lot of upsetting realities and paralyzing information to the students (Bush 2011). Mindfulness reduced Wapners’ students stress, which allowed them to be fully present and be mindful of their intentions for the course (Bush, 2011). Similarly, Light Carruyo, utilizes mindfulness in her Women’s Studies and Latin American/Latina Studies courses at Vassar to help students not only cope with the information, but “engage students’ experience as social and emotional beings” (Bush 2011).

Mindfulness enables the student to access their inner-wisdom, which encourages the student to think for themselves (Burke & Hawkins). Therefore enabling the student to think critically. In addition, education places an emphasis on focusing, but teaching students how to focus has not been an objective (Burke & Hawkins). Mindfulness’ attention to the current moment teaches the student how to be present, ultimately improving their ability to focus.

Sustaining contradictions exercises the idea that two opposites can be true at the same time (Zajonc 2013). Sustaining contradictions enables the student to “live into opposites” rather than “leave them as distance abstractions” (Zajonc 2013.). The exercise that trains students to sustain contradictions involves envisioning a blue circle, reducing it until it becomes a point, then expanding it to return to the original circle, and then repeating this process until the

movement is fluid (Zajonc 2013.). The same process is repeated with the a yellow circle- the opposite color of blue (Zajonc 2013.). This practice is not widely written about in the literature, but is relevant to studies that explore two-sided issues and realities.



# Methods

## Goal

Claire, Leila, and Olivia designed and facilitated a Student's-Teaching-Students course, ENV5 197, titled, “Envisioning a Just Food System”. The goal of the course was to critically analyze limitations of the food movement by recognizing systems of oppression. We presented our syllabus and background to an ENV5 faculty meeting on October 30th of 2015. It was accepted to be taught as a students-teaching-students course for the spring semester of 2016. The three of us collectively wrote a thesis on the process of creating and executing the course while teaching the course. In order to successfully design, teach, and reflect on the course, we created specific and attainable objectives that helped us achieve our overarching goal.

## Objectives

1. Create a syllabus (see Appendix A) that includes a brief introduction, assignments, grading policies, readings and a weekly schedule that achieve course objectives.
  - a. Critically examine scholarly and popular discourse in order to determine the limitations of the current food movement and how it is exclusive to a specific community.
  - b. Encourage self-awareness by recognizing student biases, histories, experiences and/or privileges, and how these influence their perspective on and place within the food system.
  - c. Explore histories of racial, gender and socioeconomic inequality through the lens of the food system
  - d. Build an understanding of how systemic oppression manifests in the different ways people produce, access, consume and think about food.
  - e. Recognize food as an “ensemble of relations” and a medium through which social processes converge and interact, rather than merely a commodity or ecological factor (Figueroa 2015).
  - f. Determine how the food movement could be more inclusive and act as a vehicle for radical social change.
2. Develop a class structure that works within our pedagogical framework and plan 13 individual classes that cumulatively meet the course objectives.
3. Teach classes that achieved course objectives and maintained safe space.

4. Adapt the syllabus and courses to new readings, students' needs, and any other appropriate circumstances.
5. Determine a grading technique that fairly and accurately accounts for students' understanding, progression and efforts.

## Methods to Achieve Objectives

Objective 1: Create a syllabus that includes a brief introduction, assignments, grading policies, and a schedule (see Appendix A for syllabus).

### **Faculty Guidance:**

Claire discussed our ideas for the course with Amy Seidl, Adrian Ivakhiv, Ernesto Mendez, and Ibit Wright prior to presenting our course to the ENVS faculty. Amy provided Claire with advice on the structure of our presentation as well as concerns we should be prepared to address. Adrian offered a humanities perspective and overall guidance as a current STS Advisor himself. Ernesto spoke about his experience with transdisciplinary teaching and the important role it plays, especially in the field of Environmental Studies. Finally, Ibit offered her guidance in reviewing our future writing for clarity and depth. Olivia met with Teresa Mares twice to develop her ideas for the course, and receive reading suggestions and advice on course objectives. The two main concerns that we held prior to the meeting were if three students could effectively facilitate a course and if the material was addressed in other courses. Through discussions and rehearsal we were able to effectively address these concerns.

We looked at syllabi and previous courses we had taken to prove that although there are a lot of food-systems related courses at UVM, our course takes a new approach that does not overlap with other courses criteria. Drawing from the other courses, we found that the major distinction between our course and others is that we spend time critically analyzing the “alternative” food *movement* in addition to the food system, while others study only the food system. We made this point clear at the faculty meeting. We also drew attention to the importance of teaching this material through the structure of an STS class. Our generation in particular has attached a great deal of ideological weight and power to food, from production to consumption. Young people's identities, particularly in Vermont and in the ENVS department of UVM, are deeply tied up in how they relate to food. We felt that having a peer-to-peer forum to work through how our identities shape and are in turn shaped by our involvement with food was the most productive way to foster justice-focused idea of how to re-form the food system.

Because our generation is poised to move into a world fraught with social-environmental problems, we should be the ones teaching each other how to view and address these issues.

#### Readings:

The readings were the backbone of the course- they stimulated discussion while informing students about issues within the food system. Since we have varying backgrounds- Geography, Ecological Agriculture, Women's Studies, and Anthropology- we had exposure to a diversity of literature. In order to find appropriate readings, we looked through past syllabi from food-related courses and conducted in-depth research through the UVM online database and in the library. We met with professors in these disciplines for suggestions of readings. We listened to their insights on the shortcomings of the Alternative Food Movement as it stands and how their disciplines are trying to enact change. We also looked at the bibliographies of relevant articles in order to find other appropriate readings. Our readings covered these various disciplines and attempted to highlight the overlap between the main "categories" in our units (race, class, gender, labor). The information in readings provided the raw material for critical thinking, which was the tenant of our pedagogical approach, on intersectionality and food as a nexus of social relations and material through which one can address systems of oppression. We tried to provide a balance of denser, theoretical readings and place-specific case studies, as we understood that different students would gravitate toward different writing styles and structures. We also assigned news articles, videos, and radio shows, in order to account for students who learn better by listening and watching (refer to the schedule section of syllabus in appendix A for details on assigned readings and videos). We adapted and changed readings throughout the semester, based on new material we discovered and class discussions. We changed the syllabus online and sent weekly email reminders to our students once we finalized our chosen readings for the week.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

Each week, one student was responsible for emailing the facilitators at least three discussion questions based on the assigned readings by 10 a.m. the day readings were due. The discussion questions were intended to create multiple ways in which students could participate, and similarly to the notecards, made sure that students were actively engaged with the readings. They ensured that concerns and questions students had were addressed in class discussion.

**Notecards:**

We assigned weekly notecards on the readings with the following sections:

1. Source citation (APA format)
2. Argument: summary of the main point the author is trying to convey
3. Keywords: terms and definitions that are critical to understanding the argument
4. Connections: links to previous class readings or material and experience from outside of the classroom
5. Comments/Questions: points of clarification and reactions to the material

Notecards were submitted via BlackBoard on the discussion board, so that students had access to each other's notecards. They were graded based on effort, accuracy and integration of various sources of material. These were designed to ensure that students were understanding the basic argument set out in the readings and served as a resource for class discussion and the (re)definition paper, in which students integrated course readings in order to re-establish the definition of their chosen term or idea.

The notecards were a way for facilitators to ensure that students were relating course material to course goals, a tenant of backwards design. Further, the notecards were means to check to see if students completed and understood the assigned readings, ultimately predicting any ambiguity during the in-class discussion. Backwards design outlines, and as certain practitioners argue, prioritizes goals over content so that students are working towards a forward trajectory rather than just consuming information without contextualizing knowledge. Definition and (Re)Definition Papers:

Pittman and Schnibbe's STS course, "Gender, Power, Action: Ecofeminism for Collective Liberation," had a definition (at the beginning of the semester) and (re)definition (at the end of the semester) assignment that exposed any original perspectives/biases through self-reflection. We decided to emulate this assignment and adjusted it to fit our course. At the beginning of the semester, students defined a food movement term (from a list we handed out in the first class) and explored its implications within the context of the alternative paper. At the end of the semester, students wrote a final (re)definition paper, in which they reflected on how their perspective had or has not shifted. The (re)definition paper was rooted in contemplative pedagogy through its empirical nature, which comprises a first-hand learning experience in which students read their original definition paper and self-reflect. The paper did not persuade

students to judge their original papers, but instead encouraged them to become self-aware of how their perspective has changed, which incorporates both mindful pedagogy and critical pedagogy. Further, the assignment incorporated the practice of racial identity formation.

### **Perspectives Projects:**

The perspectives projects were inspired by Teresa Mares' assignments "Oral Histories" from Anthropology 295: Food and Gender and "Participant Observation" from Anthropology 296: Food and Labor. The oral histories project entailed an interview series with an individual from a different generation and/or background, and the Participant Observation (P.O.) involved a total of three hours conducting P.O. in a food place observing the labor. These assignments encouraged students to witness the food system first-hand, draw upon themes from the class, and reflect. We chose to emulate these assignments and created the Perspectives Project, which provided the option between interviews and participant observation in order to allow students with different capabilities and interests to decide which project best suits their learning style. The second piece of the project was a write-up of 1,000 words, which encouraged students to reflect on their experience and connect it to themes from the class. Students also had the option to create a piece of art (poem, drawing, creative writing, photograph etc) that expressed what they took from the field experience in lieu of a reflection. As a vessel to introduce safe space, mixed methods of approaching education, like art and creative writing, were implemented in this assignment to support individuality and free-thinking.

Encouraging students to observe how concepts from the classroom play out in the spaces outside of school bridged the gap between academic and everyday life, again engaging in the critical pedagogy of place. This assignment incorporated the contemplative practice of awareness. We held a workshop with Kit Anderson on conducting interviews and provided resources for participant observation on Blackboard. During our ninth class, we conducted participant observation in groups at various food markets in the north end of Burlington. We held a D.I.E. training that provided students with the skills necessary to recognize judgement and assumptions they make about what they see and hear, and to ultimately learn from them in order to make appropriate observations.

### **Collective Map of the Food System:**

Our class attempted to cover a broad swath of issues, and our collective map of the food system, a semester-long project involving the entire class, was the means by which we drew

connections between seemingly distant concepts, theories and cases studies. We incorporated material from the readings, discussions, personal experience, multimedia sources and sources students bring in through the “Connections” section in their weekly notecards. Although we allowed the mapping process to unfold organically, letting the definition of a “map” remain loose, the facilitators pushed students to try and portray factors that are sometimes difficult to visualize on a traditional map, such as time, power, and individual, subjective experience. The inspiration for this map came from Leila’s experience in Ingrid Nelson’s “Making Southern Africa” class, during which students led weekly mapping activities based on class readings. Mapping materials varied from week to week but included large sheets of paper, with or without pre-determined country borders, markers, stickers, pipe cleaners, and sticky notes. The guidelines for mapping also varied, and the class was most often divided into two groups in order to produce contrasting views. Each week, mapping prompted rich and interesting discussions about the assigned articles, but also about the process of representing information and working in groups. This aligns closely with our expressed pedagogical goal of facilitating creative and critical thinking and group work in our classroom.

**Objective 2: Develop a class structure that works within our pedagogical framework and plan 13 individual classes that cumulatively meet the course objectives.**

We turned to the leading practitioners of critical pedagogical thought including bell hooks, Ira Shor, and most notably Paulo Freire to ground course topics in critical theory. Critical pedagogy is relevant in that it seeks to prepare citizens, and in the context of this course, students, to be active participants in a democratic society. Students employed critical theory as they teased through layered and multidimensional topics related to the alternative food movement. Through a structured, clear critique our class was able to begin to collectively formulate viable solutions to enact radical change. Freire’s groundbreaking text *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is widely considered the foundational text for critical pedagogy. As outlined in this text, the tenets of the critical pedagogical framework state: (a) reflection upon the individual’s culture or lived experience, (b) development of voice through a critical look at one’s world and society, and (c) transforming the society toward equality for all citizens through active participation in democratic imperatives (Freire, 1970). As we envisioned a more just food system, active participation to achieve this end was key. We drew inspiration from the “hatchet

and seed” approach, popularized by political ecologist Paul Robbins (2004) as a framework to deconstruct and, in time, discard dominant narratives related to the alternative food movement in pursuit of new alternatives.

Further, we followed Meleiza Figueroa’s process of “de-centering” food in food-related fields of study, practicing understanding food as a “nexus of multiple, intersecting social-historical processes” (2015). By examining the relationships, power struggles and histories surrounding food, we worked to re-center dialogue on *people*, instead of food as a mere commodity or material good (Figueroa 2015). In so doing, we built an understanding of the ways in which historically grounded systems of inequality have shaped the way food is grown, processed, bought, consumed and thought about by different groups of people in America today. Putting this pedagogy into practice, we aimed to rebuild a strong foundation for the food movement upon social justice and envision the ways in which food in all its manifestations can act as a vehicle for collective liberation from socially and ecologically destructive patterns.

Prior to designing the course structure, we organized the semester into four units: Culture, Spaces and Places, People and Identity, and Looking Ahead: A Socially Sustainable Movement. We believed these units began with the big picture and then narrowed into more specific, concrete topics. Each unit had its own title in order to communicate clearly the theme that ties together the readings and class activities.

Our course met during a three-hour block once a week. We came up with a class structure that we used almost every class so that students knew what to expect. The structure was as follows: mindfulness and check in (10-15 minutes), video and/or activity (1 hour 15 minutes), break/snacks (15 minutes), class discussion (45 minutes-1 hour), ending with course logistics or food system map (15-30 minutes). The mindfulness practice was guided by Olivia or Leila. The practice occurred at the beginning of class in order to give students time to settle into the classroom, bring their full attention to the class, and possibly become aware of their emotional response to the course material. Despite the set structure, we were open to fluidity depending on the course or topic.

The “Collective Map of the Food System” recurred at various points in the semester. It encouraged students to collaborate and think positively about the future of the food movement. Feedback from students obtained from mid-semester surveys allowed the facilitators to gauge

how well the course material was received. Regular meetings between facilitators allowed us to reflect on the class's progress toward the stated objectives and strategize for the next class meeting.

We started planning the first six classes over winter break, dividing them up so that each of us were responsible for two. We followed the class structure described above, but based the discussion and activities off of the class topic and readings. The first class followed a different structure in order to familiarize students with the syllabus, each other, the facilitators, and the overall course.

### **Objective 3: Teach courses that achieved objectives and maintained safe space.**

Our class was built on an understanding of the foundational concepts of privilege, oppression, and power, and how those ideas connect to the prevailing political-economic system of neoliberal capitalism. By using food as a means to explore these connections, we urged students to look beyond the narrow focus on environmental sustainability and personal health that has preoccupied the food movement thus far.

In order to discuss issues of power, privilege, and oppression in classrooms, intentional teaching strategies were implemented. To begin, it was essential for us to define the broad terms that form the theoretical framework of our course: privilege, oppression, social justice and power. Rather than initially presenting students with agreed-upon or academic definitions, it was instructive for the entire class to arrive at a collective idea of the meaning of these terms. By creating our group definitions first, students “engage[d] in the active process of discovering new knowledge” rather than passively receiving it (Lechuga et. al. 2009). This process engendered engagement and foster a sense of community while laying the groundwork for further work with these crucial terms.

Further, we encouraged students to bring in their personal experiences and opinions and treat them as equally important to “academic” or “scholarly” readings and materials. In so doing, we aimed to create an environment that is open and honest, employing a method of teaching that does not treat information as abstract or divorced from personal histories. Further, we hoped that relating personal experience to course content encouraged students to examine their identity in relation to the AFM.

In order to effectively teach the individual classes, we maintained a consistent course of action throughout the semester. We met the weekend before class to review the class plan and



ensure that each facilitator was aware of their responsibilities. We ensured that course readings were assigned by the weekend before our class on Wednesday. Each of us had a printed copy of the class plan during facilitation, and the main planner would spearhead the class for that day. We wrote objectives and a schedule on the board in the beginning of class in order to follow backwards design pedagogy.

**Objective 4:** Adapt the syllabus and course to new readings, student needs, and any other appropriate circumstances.

#### **Course Topics and Readings:**

We maintained a level of flexibility and made adaptations through various methods. In order to stay current, we constantly evaluated and sometimes changed the readings. As we progressed with our own research efforts, attended conferences and guest lectures, and interacted with professors, we found readings that were more relevant to the course material. We also added new course topics as we discovered more material.

#### **Course Evaluations:**

We developed two course surveys for students to fill out anonymously. These surveys (see Appendix D & E) informed us about what is going well and what we could improve. The surveys asked students can accurately express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with readings, class discussion, activities, assignments, and facilitation. The evaluations also asked students to name any new theories, terms or concepts they learned. We responded to these surveys by adjusting the syllabus and course structure (see results).

#### **Course Reflections:**

We reflected after each class to determine what went well, what did not go well, and how the next class could be better (see Appendix B). Since there are three of us, two were always able to take notes, participate and observe while the one of us facilitated. We payed attention to class participation, as well as the quality of teaching. Students were encouraged to schedule individual meetings with us, as they saw fit, to discuss their feelings about and/or reactions to the course material, structure, or progression, and/or logistical issues such as grading. All of these efforts informed adjustments to our course as needed.

**Objective 5: Determine a grading technique that fairly and accurately accounts for students' understanding, progression, and efforts.**

In order to ensure that the three of us had a strong foundation grading fairly and accurately, we met with previous STS facilitators, Brook Sambol and Amelie Rey, to gain an understanding of their grading technique. Furthermore rubrics can help a student understand what they should learn, how to apply this knowledge to a writing assignment, and how this writing assignment will be evaluated. Creating detailed, written grading criteria in the form of a rubric helped us, the facilitators, understand if students were or were not making connections between course objectives and course content. Through exploring a variety of teaching pedagogies, we agreed that the use of rubrics is an effective strategy for grading assignments and therefore we will be using rubrics in our classroom. We created rubrics (see Appendix C) for each assignment and uploaded them on blackboard for students to use while conducting their assignments and to uphold grading transparency.

An effective strategy that Claire has utilized as a TA is peer reviewing grades. Therefore, we each graded all major assignments separately, then discussed and reviewed the grades before entering the final grade into Blackboard. We decided on grades collectively so that we all had the ability to speak with students about their performance if any questions or concerns arise.

### **Grading:**

We graded each assignment together in order to check each other for biases. The rubrics (see Appendix C) were incredibly useful; they ensured that we deducted points within the requirements of the assignment, in addition to the right amount of points according to the percentage of pieces of the assignment. The first time we graded an assignment, each of us had moments where we wanted to deduct points for flawed opinions and statements. The rubrics reminded us what the purpose of the definition paper was, and when it was appropriate for us deduct points.

In order to abide with UVM's grading policy and navigate Blackboard, Claire met with the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) to gain an understanding of grading policies specific to the University of Vermont and the proper use of BlackBoard in grading and course mechanics. We always graded the assignments by the next class and submitted them on blackboard so that students were aware of their progress and had ample time to meet with us if concerns arose. On the topic of questions and concerns, we offered time outside of class to meet

with any of us to discuss grading, as well as any other course questions. We understood that writing can be very personal and we wanted to be sure that each student in the class felt that their writing was valued and was graded accurately and fairly. At the end of each class, we reiterated how we are happy and open to meet with any students.

Finally, we recognized that our advisors, Kit Anderson and Ernesto Mendez, would be reviewing the grades that we gave each student and this will account for any peer-to-peer bias or misunderstanding of grading to the standards at UVM.

### **Class Discussion:**

Class discussion of the readings were structured similarly to the notecards: moving from an establishment of the “nuts and bolts” of the author’s argument, we will make connections, then answer any questions (including the discussion questions assigned to two students for that week) and share reactions and comments. Class discussion will be guided in part by the questions handed in by students in advance, but will also unfold organically based on what other students wish to address. Facilitators will brainstorm guiding questions before each class to ensure that discussion remains on track.

These discussions will take place in various ways in the classroom: with the entire class, in smaller groups, tied to the assigned readings or following guest speakers and videos. In so doing, we will attempt to connect food, identity and personal experience to larger ideas of the role that privilege plays in our society, moving toward our goal of students acknowledging their position in the food system and how they may use their knowledge and experience to envision a more just system. Self-awareness will be incorporated into these discussions through mindfulness exercises that focus on breathing. This practice will encourage the student to move away from judgment of themselves, and ultimately their peers, and will allow them to delve deeper into complex discussions. Contradictory opinions and experiences might arise, in which we will utilize the sustaining contradictions blue and yellow circle exercise. This will help students recognize the position of the opposing idea, and allow them to visualize the other’s reality, at the very least. This will help avoid conflict and arguments when opposing ideas arise, and instead allow students to critically think about their position. In pursuit of the creation of a safe classroom space as a tenant of our teaching strategy, the processes of class discussion and

small group work during class time will facilitate the creation of a cohesive and open atmosphere.

### **Advertising Course**

The success of this course was quite literally dependent on the students. We actively advertised for the course and encouraged students to register. We spoke to large lectures and small seminar classes including ENVS 001, NR 001, NR 207, PSS 012, NR 205, and even in the current STS Course, Human Ecology: Earth, Body, Mind. We advertised through UVM List-Servs like “ENV\_Talk” as a means of reaching as many ENVS undergraduate students as we can. Finally, we will be discussing our class in other alternative spaces, with friends and acquaintances, at club meetings and in informal discussions, to spark interest. We are extremely excited about facilitating this course and we want to share our excitement, especially during course registration.

# Results

This section outlines the outcome of our procedural elements of our class, including class size, meeting time, demographics, and content organization. We also outline the process of planning classes, grading assignments and adapting our material and facilitation style and assess student engagement, guest lectures given in class and conferences attended. Finally, this section gives an overview of the quality of student work on each assignment and the results of our mid-semester and final evaluations.

## Course Logistics

### **Class Size & Demographics**

On the first day of class, there were fourteen students registered for the course. By the second week, one student had to drop the class because of a scheduling conflict, therefore the final count was 13. The class limit set by the registrar was 15. This allowed for all of us to sit comfortably around a seminar room table and establish a close community of learners. In terms of academic standing, there were 7 seniors, 4 juniors, and 2 sophomores. Eleven of the students were Environmental Studies majors. Of those eleven, four students in the course had an Environmental Studies focus in Food, Land, and Community. Two students were Sustainability Studies concentrations and the other five were self-designed concentrations such as Food Justice and Policy and Food, Culture, and Justice. Justice was a vein that ran throughout many of the students' coursework. Outside of Environmental Studies, one student was an Ecological Agriculture major and another student was a Nutrition and Food Science major. The class had students from Rubenstein (3), College of Arts & Sciences (5), and College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (5). The class was comprised of 11 female and 2 male students. All students, as well as us three facilitators, identify as white.

### **Meeting Time and Setting:**

We secured Jeffords Conference Room 326 as our classroom. The room had four large whiteboards, one long boardroom style table for all of us to sit around, and enough chairs to accommodate all students and guests. There was a large projector screen that allowed for us to present videos, short presentations, and films. The room is well lit by natural light coming from an east-facing window, which allows us to keep lights generally turned off. The class met every Wednesday from 12:00 to 3:00 PM. We chose a three hour time block so that we would have

time for guest lectures and/or field trips and activities followed by in-depth discussion. We consistently filled up the three hour time block.

Because class time fell during typical “lunch” hours, we encouraged students to bring food, drinks, and take breaks as they saw fit. We arranged a snack schedule so that each week 1-2 students would bring a snack for the class. At the midpoint each class day, we stopped for a 15 minute break to allow students to go to the bathroom, eat, and informally chat.

### **Structure**

Our class structure was as follows: settling in and mindfulness practice (5 minutes), check-ins (10-15 minutes), relevant presentation, video, or groupwork (1 hour), break/snacks (15 minutes), mindfulness practice (5 minutes), discussion of readings/food map activity (1 hour), ending with course logistics and questions, comments, and concerns (15 minutes). Directly after we closed for the day, we encouraged students to speak with us privately if they have any individual questions or concerns (5 minutes). Maintaining this somewhat firm class structure helped create consistency and predictability for students and facilitators. We tried to be aware of lulls in energy or enthusiasm and address these moments with a short stretch/bathroom breaks. If we felt as though engagement was lacking, we stopped to check in with the students. When guests came to our class, the daily structure changed and we made this change known to the students ahead of time through an announcement the prior week or an email reminder. Whether it was a regular class day or a guest speaker, we maintained the practice of mindfulness and check-ins to engage in the process of creating a safe, intentional space for students and facilitators. After all students left, we remained in the classroom for an hour to reflect on the class’s progress toward or regression from the stated objectives and strategize for the next class meeting.

### **Class Norms**

On the first day of class, we instructed students to come up with norms for not only a successful classroom experience, but a safe space (see Class 1 Reflection). After creating a list of mutually agreed upon norms, the class signed a “learning contract”. The following were the norms students agreed upon:

Laughter

Respect for everyone

Honesty

Clear expectations

Patience	Smiles / Humor
Participation	Challenging ideas, NOT people
Casual and open atmosphere	Humor
Step up, step back	Willingness to share diverse opinions

### **Content Organization**

Each class has its own individual topic that falls under the theme of one of our four units. We organized the class into the following units that moved from larger theories and frameworks to more specific topics:

#### **UNIT I: Introduction**

Class 1: Foundations of the Course: Mindfulness, Positionality, Establishing Safe Space & Introducing Food System

Class 2: Unlearning, Critical Thinking & Breaking Down the Food System

#### **UNIT II: Culture**

Class 3: Food Movement Introduction, Definitions, and Food in the Media

Class 4: Food Movement and Identity

Class 5: Food Origins, Appropriation and Assimilation

Class 6: Neoliberalism and Alternative Food

#### **UNIT III: Spaces & Places**

Class 7: Black Landownership and Farming in the U.S.

Class 8: Locavorism in Context

Class 9: Food Deserts, Food Mirages, and Food Insecurity

#### **UNIT IV: People & Identity**

Class 10: Gender and Food

Class 11: Land, Labor and Local Food

Class 12: Good Work in the Food System

Class 13: Food and Religion

#### **UNIT V: Looking Ahead**

Class 14: A Socially Sustainable Food Movement

Class 15: Class Potluck & Share Redefinition Papers

### **Class Communication**

In order to honor our norm of clear expectations, as facilitators we worked to be transparent with students. We gave out our emails and phone numbers on the first day of class and were quick to respond to any questions or concerns. We introduced each class day by writing the schedule for the day and course objectives on the board. The few times students missed class,

we made sure to contact the student about what they missed and what they need to do to catch up for the next week. The fifteen minute break during class allowed for casual discussions that were essential to building relationships with both us and peers. This time allowed for students to ask questions or expand upon course discussion outside of the time for discussion.

## Class Planning

In order to efficiently plan classes, one facilitator spearheaded a class plan, while the other two offer support and critique. We divided the class planning evenly and chose topics we each felt most comfortable and experienced with. This was an effective way to plan because we were able to each take ownership and recognize our own areas of passion and expertise while remaining responsible and accountable to one another. For instance, Claire chose to plan “Food and Gender” class because of her background and minor in Gender Studies, Olivia chose to plan “Food Origins” because of her passion for and minor in cultural anthropology, and Leila chose to plan “Locavorism in Vermont ” because of her interest in land use rights and geography. Our class planning system made space for us to utilize our experiences and backgrounds, as well as learn from each other. The delegation of work enabled us to spend more time selecting readings, searching for videos, and finding activities that effectively transferred knowledge and ultimately achieve course goals for the classes we were leading, instead of having to feel responsible for one-third of the planning and material every week of class. Allowing one person to take the lead made the entire process of planning more streamlined and less stressful, as the other two facilitators could take somewhat of a “break” that week. The class plans were all up on our shared Google Drive, which enabled us to collaborate with each other.

Sometimes, staying on top of uploading readings to BlackBoard was difficult, as we changed the readings from our original syllabus (created before the semester began) for almost every class period. However, students never complained about readings being uploaded the weekend before class, and we made sure to send out email announcements with clear directions on what to read and what homework was due the next class period by the weekend before.

As outlined in our Methods, we integrated student feedback from the mid-semester evaluations into our later class plans, incorporating different discussion frameworks and activities like videos and field trips, as requested. Our adherence to the daily schedule (also explained in our Results and Methods sections) meant that students knew what to expect when they walked into class, which fostered a familiar and safe space for students. The classes that did



not follow this routine were the guest lecture classes, the field trip (Class 9), and the first class, but periodic breaks in the routine alleviated any sense of monotony that might be felt in a three-hour long seminar class.

In our Methods, we planned to designate one observer to step back every class period, take notes and generally pay attention to class dynamics. We decided not to implement this technique because we felt it would have interrupted the flow of conversation and perhaps make students self-conscious in discussion, inhibiting our ability to create a cohesive community and classroom space.

## Grading

Our grading strategy is founded on the principles of impartiality, consistency, and fairness based on each student's individual competence of the course material. In order to employ this strategy, we graded the first three assignments together to understand our different grading styles. We would grade assignments individually and then come together to compare the grades we had assigned. Throughout the grading process, we made sure to be open and honest in our assessments and judgements of students' writings. We checked our biases with the grades of each other to be as impartial as possible. We challenged one another to grade to each students' ability and tracked the growth of each student by visiting and revisiting weekly notecard assignments to see if students work was evolving or not. Once we recognized that we were assigning consistent grades, we felt comfortable taking turns grading the notecards. We graded participation together after each class day as it was fresh in our minds.

## Student Engagement

Because our class was structured as a seminar, with only 13 students and a focus on discussion, student engagement was critical. All 13 students consistently attended class, with only a few pre-arranged absences. We graded participation out of four points every day, and most students consistently scored 3s and 4s. Although the more vocal students naturally spoke up more in class discussion, the facilitators generally observed that almost everyone spoke at least once each class. Perhaps more significantly, having large proportions of our students attend the two conferences during the semester (NOFA-VT and Just Food? Forum on Land Use, Rights, and Ecology) clearly demonstrated high levels of passion and engagement with the material. Although anecdotal, the facilitators would often run into our students outside of class, and they would bring up speakers they attended, events they went to or things they read that directly tied to the course, and mentioned how they brought the critical perspective gained in class to these other spaces. High levels of engagement were also apparent from the depth of some of the Perspectives Projects: a few students conducted more than the necessary numbers of interviews, or chose to do both participant observation and an interview, making it clear that they valued the experiential learning process and chance to connect on a personal level with their interviewees or chosen food space.

## Guest Lectures and Conferences

Connecting our class discussions and readings to work being done outside of UVM enriched the course by encouraging students to seek out and integrate new sources of knowledge and experience. Several of our students, as well as all three facilitators, attended the Northeast Organic Farmers and Gardeners (NOFA-VT) Winter Conference the weekend of February 13th and 14th, 2016. Although this conference was largely focused on the more technical aspects of sustainable farming (the theme this year was soil health and sustainability), several workshops considered food justice, the successes and setbacks in the locavore movement, and other AFM initiatives like Farm-to-School Programs. The week after the NOFA Conference, we made time in class to discuss our various points of view on the workshops we had attended and our general experience of the conference. As an important gathering space for the AFM in Vermont and New England as a whole, the NOFA Conference prompted rich discussion on the nature of the

movement and the issues that are commonly discussed, as well as what types of people participate in the discussions.

On March 2nd, cultural anthropologist and food scholar Gail Myers came and spoke to our class the day before giving a lecture on her work to the larger UVM community. Rather than delivering a lecture, Dr. Myers sat around the table with our class, briefly spoke about her projects “Farms to Grow” and “Freedom Farmers Market”. After this, Dr. Myers answered our questions and spoke to us candidly about race and privilege in the food movement, as well as the importance of taking action and building culturally relevant, joyful food spaces in the face of injustice and exclusion. Dr. Myer’s visit to our class provided our students with an example of someone doing positive, impactful, justice-focused work and grounded our theoretical readings and discussions in real-world practice. Most of our students also attended Dr. Myers’ lecture, which focused more on her research, the following day.

On the weekend of March 25 and 26, the three facilitators and four students from the class attended the Just Food? Forum on Land Rights, Use and Ecology at Harvard Law School in Cambridge, Massachusetts. This conference focused on food justice through the lens of lands rights and access and the legal frameworks surrounding them, with panel discussions and lectures on localized food systems in Cuba, urban agriculture in Detroit, First Nations land rights, and land trusts, among other topics. Activist, lawyer and scholar Smita Narula was the keynote speaker, delivering moving and thought-provoking talks on the importance of interconnection, mindfulness and emotion in the food movement, as well as the critical stance we as food activists and scholars must take in order to dismantle systems of oppression, not only within the food movement but within our society as a whole. Students seemed deeply impacted by the discussions and learning that took place at the conference, tying in material from Narula’s speeches and other workshops to later assignments like the Perspectives reflection. As with the NOFA conference, we made time in class the week after for students to share their experience of the forum, linking our classroom space to the greater world of food activism and scholarship.

On April 6, UVM Anthropology Assistant Professor Teresa Mares guest lectured Class 11: “Land, Labor, and Local Food”. Dr. Mares gave a brief presentation on migrant labor in Vermont and the notion of “structural vulnerability”, which she defined as “structural inequalities impede people’s abilities to be healthy and to live.” Dr. Mares spoke to the isolation

of workers and the lack of access to food and health care due to a unique, but not uncommon, set of circumstances. Following this discussion, Dr. Mares introduced her program “Huertas”, a program that supports the development of worker “kitchen gardens” on the dairy farms. Dr. Mares noted that Huertas provides a “sense of agency and control”. A few students asked Dr. Mares questions about her work and how to get involved. Dr. Mares responded to a question about the role of ethnographic work: “ethnography has the power to humanize workers, point out that people are not that strange. Through ethnographic work we can responsibly and respectfully tell people’s stories.” This discussion about ethnographic work was great timing with the Perspectives Project being due that day.

Claire and Leila were kindly given the opportunity to speak in their Organic Farm Planning class by their teacher, Rachel Schattman. They delivered a lecture and facilitated discussion on the role of race, privilege and social exclusion/inclusion in the food movement. The lecture portion focused on introducing the concepts of universalism and color blindness, presented by Julie Guthman in her study of the attitudes of farmers’ market and CSA managers in Berkeley, California (2006). The discussion focused on the students’ perceptions of social exclusion in the alternative food movement, and more specifically, what was the role small farmers had to play in order to address it. The discussion was rich and students seemed engaged and willing to work through tough problems, like the idea of culturally relevant food or perceptions of those using food assistance. Overall, the opportunity to present the type of material we dealt with in *Envisioning a Just Food System* to a different audience was enlightening, as it demonstrated how even young people attending the same school and clearly evincing a shared interest in alternative food systems can have vastly different perceptions of the justice and equity issues associated with food.

## Adaptations

Adaptation occurred organically throughout the semester, as we discovered new readings, videos, events and topics we as facilitators wanted to cover. Although we stuck to the same basic class structure, a major turning point in our facilitation technique occurred after Class 6 (Neoliberalism). We finished this class feeling as though we, the facilitators, were taking up too much space in the discussion, creating a dynamic in which we provided ideas and statements that our students merely reacted to. We felt that we were not staying true to our goal of having our

students act as the co-producers of knowledge, rather than the recipients. This, along with results from our subsequent mid-semester evaluations, prompted us to rethink the way we structured discussions. Completely open-ended discussion, although seemingly conducive to the free flow of ideas and questions, often left students unsure of what to talk about and how. Thus, we decided to add more structure to the discussion portion of the class. A salient example of this is Class 8 (Locavorism in Context) in which the class was divided into small groups, each responsible for a set of readings focused on a different element of localized food systems, including land trusts, cooperative economics, and alternative community structures (see Appendix B for full reflections on each class, including readings assigned). We gave these small groups time to meet and plan a mini lesson on their material at the beginning of class, then each group delivered a 15-minute presentation on the content of their readings to the rest of the class. Each group demonstrated a clear grasp of the material in their mini lessons. Some even thought of creative and participatory ways of presenting, such as when the land trust group drew a map of a landscape and had us each rip off a piece, then try and put it back together, representing the difference between communal and private land ownership. In Class 10: “Food and Gender,” Claire gave a short presentation on “Special Topics in Gender and Food”, then allowed students to self-organize into groups based on these topics, in which they discussed the material presented before coming together as an entire group. We also started distributing ourselves around the table with the students and asking students to introduce their discussion questions to the class so that it was in their own voice.

We experimented more with small group discussions instead of or before full-class conversations during the second half of the semester. We noticed that discussing in small groups first gave students a chance to collect their thoughts, and when these small groups “reported back” to the full class, large group discussions proceeded more smoothly, with less prompting and silence.

After the mid-semester evaluation, we responded to student requests for different course topics by adding a class period on the topic of Food and Religion, replacing a class on food and labor.

We adapted the process of drawing on the Food System Map. After the first mapping session, we all noticed that students were incredibly unsure of how to approach such an open-

ended assignment. Because we (intentionally) gave them very little guidance in terms of what to put on the map and how, students asked questions such as “What do you want me to write?” and “Can we talk to each other?”. For the next mapping session, Claire suggested that we instead place students in small groups to plan together what to put on the map collectively. This made the next session go much more smoothly, as students seemed more confident in their additions to the map after having talked it over with their peers.

## Quality of Assignments

### **Definition Paper**

The Definition Paper assignment asked students to choose from the list of buzzwords/terms that were discussed and collectively defined on the first day of class. The goal of the definition paper was to provide material for the students to return to and reflect on their growth in the class. While we were grading the papers, it was apparent that students put in the time and followed the basic guidelines. However, it also reaffirmed the necessity for this course and made us aware of a few gaps in the students suggestions for solutions. For example, the notion of “educating others” we critically reflected on in the course.

Assigning a paper at the beginning of the course enabled us to assert a serious tone for the semester. We wanted students to relate to us and feel comfortable expressing their opinions. However, we also wanted to establish a level of commitment to the course topic that we believe essential to meeting the course objectives.

### **Notecards**

In the syllabus, we provided a template notecard outlining the important sections that we wanted students to use when taking notes on the readings. However, we also emphasized that the notecards should be a tool for comprehension and should thus be written in a way that made sense to the individual student. Notecards took various forms, from stream-of-consciousness style essays to highly organized formats following our original template. We graded notecards based on apparent effort, detail and reading comprehension, rather than strict adherence to the sections we designated. Most students put a great deal of effort into notecards, picking out relevant quotes and summarizing the readings well. Students mentioned in the final course evaluation that notecards helped them retain information and bring ideas to class discussion. However, the “Connections” section was often missing from some notecards, an element that the

facilitators felt was critical to drawing together the readings and material over the course of the entire semester.

### **Discussion Questions**

We integrated the discussion questions by asking the students to read them aloud and write them on the board. We always wrote our own discussion questions during class planning to ensure we would have a thought-provoking discussion. Most students clearly put thought and effort into discussion questions, drawing out details from readings and connecting concepts to previous classes. The following sample questions demonstrate this high-level thinking and engagement:

- “Do you envision policy changes in the future that address the problem of “differential access to authorized work,” allowing migrant farmworkers in the year-round dairy industry to apply for visas similar to those in the H2-A Visa Program? Do you see an alternative path to authorization/documentation for Latino migrant farmworkers?” (Class 11)
- “The issue of power imbalances, specifically men in positions of power mistreating and harassing women who held lower status job positions, was brought up in both the Yeung and Rubenstein and The Hands that Feed Us report. Do you think shifting the power from being predominantly men to hiring more women for the same positions would make a difference in the amount of sexual harassment occurring on farms, or would is it more important to reduce the power discrepancy between workers and supervisors?” (Class 12)
- “What are the dangers of White Americans attempting to tell the story of a migrant laborer or an African American, or any person of color? Is there an appropriate way to tell their stories?” (Class 10)
- “We have discussed undocumented workers in the farm industry for the past two weeks. Why do you think that farm labor is often not a topic that is brought up in food systems classes? Additionally, what effect does being an undocumented worker have on women in the industry speaking up about their rights?” (Class 12)
- “If you were moving somewhere new and sought to establish yourself in this new place through the food you produced, what would you grow/make?” (Class 8)

- “Do you feel comfortable envisioning an “uncertain” world? How does Gibson and Graham’s focus on a people-centered “here and now” politics seem more tangible or realistic?” (Class 14)

### **Perspectives Project & Reflection**

The Perspectives Project had the widest range of student effort, from obviously very little effort to above and beyond the requirements for the course. As facilitators, we were at first discouraged by the few students who apparently left their project until the last minute, did not put in the specified number of hours for observation, or did not read the rubric for the reflection. However, we reminded ourselves that we went over requirements for the project multiple times during the semester, made ourselves available for questions and advice, required a mid-project check in and conducted two in-class workshops, one on interviewing with Kit Anderson and one on participant observation, spearheaded by Olivia. Grading this assignment was an important lesson in realizing that some students simply do not put in sufficient time and effort on certain assignments, no matter the efforts of the facilitator.

That being said, the vast majority of students did clearly enjoy the project, understand and follow the rubric, and gain something from the first-hand, experiential learning style. Eight of the students chose to conduct participant observation and five students chose to do interviews. Of the students that chose to do interviews, three of them exceeded the time requirement and expectations of the assignment. Two of them chose to do three interviews, and one of them chose to do participant observation in addition to her interview.

The quality of reflections varied from being repetitive and tenous to being incredibly nuanced, critical, and self-aware. One student reflected on their positionality after conducting participant observation experience at a food shelf: “Although I know that there are any food insecure families in Vermont, especially in Burlington, being immersed in ‘foodie’ culture made that fact easy to forget...[I] remained under the belief that I lived in a neighborhood with food access for all, simply because I can afford (and feel socially accepted) at City Market. Social exclusion is a large part of food inaccessibility.” Another student asked critical questions about employee experiences and rights at a popular food space in Burlington. They noted that they would not have questioned or thought critically about this space if they had not conducted the interview.



Overall, it was evident to us that student learning benefits from activities like participant observation and interviews. However, it is left up to the student to take it seriously and benefit from the assignment. One student reflected: “Without taking the time to observe intently with the lens I have acquired from readings and discussions in *Envisioning a Just Food System*, I do not think I would have made connections between the spaces I observed and topics like gentrification, environmental exclusion, and decolonizing the food system.” Another student wrote: “Overall, this experience felt necessary and undoubtedly shifted my perspective on food accessibility. To be talking about food justice is one thing, but to experience the work that is being done to directly confront that inaccessibility is another.”

### **Collective Map of the Food System**

We worked on the food map five times over the course of the semester, for about 20 minutes at the end of the class period. Students were told to simply draw and write about what we had covered in class that day, or anything else they felt was relevant, connect those ideas with things already on the map using lines or arrows, and label the arrows so the connection is made clear. The map was intended as an exercise in visualizing the interconnectedness of systems and situations in the food movement in order to locate points of tension or potential for improvement. As elaborated in the reflections for Class 4, the first mapping session was a bit uncomfortable for students, but as we added to the map, more connections became clear and students seemed to be more eager to add ideas, pictures and quotes. Arrows were drawn that connected “ethics” with “colorblindness”, “universalism” and “identity”. “Political power” was linked to “decolonization” with an arrow labeled “communal power”. Many connections were drawn between “economics”, “privilege” and “whiteness”. Although some of the arrows are labeled, many of them simply link two ideas with little or no explanation making it more difficult to understand the student’s thought process after the fact. On the second to last day of class, we did an activity based on J.K. Gibson-Graham’s “Iceberg” from *A Post Capitalist Politics*, originally drawn by Ken Byrne from the Community Economies Collective. The portion of the iceberg above the water is labeled “capitalist markets and wage labor”- this is the portion we are conditioned to see as the totality. The portion of the iceberg below the water, though unseen, is much larger. We asked students to fill in the lower portion of the iceberg with examples of already existing non-capitalist economic and social relations. Students filled the paper with

words such as foraging, breastfeeding, food shelves, stories, trading, language and NGOs. A complete picture of the map and iceberg can be found in Appendix E.

### **(Re)definition or (Un)definition Paper**

The Redefinition Paper provided an opportunity for students to revisit the term they defined at the beginning of the semester and reflect on if and how their understanding of this term had changed. This paper was an important benchmark in assessing how students understood and internalized the various case studies for alternative systems we provided through class readings. Students particularly gravitated toward the Freedom Farmer's Market as an example of a tangible, achievable move toward food justice and sovereignty, perhaps because the idea of a farmer's market is familiar and relatively benign (as compared to a socialist worker's cooperative, for example), and the concept of separate spaces for distinct cultural "groups" sidesteps the issue of how to retain autonomy, distinctiveness and power in integrated food spaces. Other specific examples of positive initiatives that students mentioned were the gleaning program at the Intervale, the Fight for \$15, Migrant Justice's Milk With Dignity Campaign, and the Food Justice Certification of the Agricultural Justice Project. Students also brought in source material outside of what we covered in class in their final paper, like the Equitable Food Initiative (EFI) and the Diversity Model, a framework for assessing local food systems. We also asked students to include a statement about where they see themselves in the movement toward a more just food system. In the redefinition portion, most students adjusted their original definitions, pointing out how terms like food security fail to include the elements of self-determination and sovereignty, and how the definition of local food often centers on geographic boundaries without a recognition of social exclusion or the importance of transnational ties. A few students named concrete actions they planned to take, like working with Restaurant Opportunities Centers United (an advocacy group for food service industry workers) or starting a small-scale farm that reaches out to low-income youth with learning differences. More generally, collective empowerment and community-based change were commonly cited as tools to move us toward a more equitable system. Many students also mentioned that they plan to sustain the practices of critical thinking, re-examining received knowledge, and deepening an understanding of their own privilege and positionality.

## Evaluations

### **Student Self-evaluations**

Most students gave themselves a A- or B+ in terms of their class participation. Students mentioned that they felt more comfortable in smaller-group discussion and enjoyed listening to their peers rather than speaking up often in full-class discussion. Three students also mentioned bringing the ideas and topics we covered into spaces outside of the classroom, such as conferences, lectures, events and conversations with friends. A few students also expressed concerns about speaking too much and wanting to step back and provide space for others to contribute. All students wrote that they came prepared to discuss the material in class, except for a few missed readings over the course of the semester. On the whole, our students graded their own participation more harshly than the facilitators.

### **Mid-Semester Evaluations**

At the beginning of the seventh class on March 7th, we handed out a mid-semester evaluation (see Appendix D). Many of the students expressed appreciation for class discussion and that they felt comfortable participation (9/13). Students also expressed appreciation for the facilitators' disposition. Students wrote: "I appreciate the positivity and equality from the 'teachers'", "peers/teachers= facilitators", "the space is welcoming for me to share all my thoughts and I think that is because of the students and facilitators surrounding me," and "I appreciate how you always validate people while also shifting points of view."

A few students stated that they wanted more time dedicated to class discussion and working through complex concepts. One student wrote: "I have never left class 'not liking' something besides the disappoint I feel in myself and in others at the reality we have ignored for so long." Another student wrote: "I wish we could have more in depth and some in-class activities and conversations. I feel cut off at some points and want to dive deeper." The only parts of the class students mentioned not liking was the complexity of the issues we cover and lack of time for and structure to discussion.

The average difficulty rating of the class was a 7.6 (10 being high). There was one ten, with a description from the student: "because the class challenges me to expand my perspective and to critically reflect on myself and the food system." Other descriptions for high ratings were: "a lot of complex issues to decipher," and "the readings are challenging and filled with

uncomfortable concepts.” It is apparent that students were expressing the extreme difficulty of the course content, rather than the course expectations.

In terms of adjusting the course, 7/13 students said that they would not change anything about it. For those that did want to see some changes, the responses varied. One student wrote “more movies” and another wrote “field trips”. Two students wrote that they wanted to see more structure in discussion, and two other students wrote that they wanted to learn about more practices and solutions.

Topics that students wanted to re-examine varied. Four students wrote that they wanted to see more solutions. One student responded along those lines, but wrote “show the positive in ‘white’ actions.”

## **Final Evaluations**

At the end of our fourteenth class on April 27th we handed out our final course evaluation (see Appendix E). We asked the students to rate the assignments, discussion and guest lectures on a scale of 1-5 (5 being the most useful). The Definition Paper received an average rating of 3.7. The notecards received an average rating of 4.34. The in-class discussions received an average rating of 4.5 (one of the students left this rating blank). The guest speakers average rating was a 5, all 13 students gave this section a 5. The average rating for the Perspectives Project was a 3.8. The average rating for the Redefinition Paper was a 4.4. The average rating for the Food System Map was a 4.4. The comments on the ratings and the responses to specific questions have been integrated throughout our Discussion section.

## **Grades**

The Definition Paper average grade was a 92.5, the lowest grade was a 34.5/40. The Perspectives average grade was an 85.4. The grades for this assignment varied from a 68 to a 96. The Redefinition Paper average grade was a 94.9. Everyone got above a 92 on this assignment. The average final grade of the class was a 92 (A-).



## Discussion

The discussion consists of an analysis of our results in the context of our course objectives and pedagogical literature, as well as reflections on the process of facilitation and in-class group dynamics.

### Pedagogical Frameworks

#### Intersectionality and intersecting systems of oppression

The “hatchet and seed” approach to teaching, popularized by political ecologist Paul Robbins (2004), offers a framework to deconstruct and, in time, discard dominant narratives related to the Alternative Food Movement in pursuit of new alternatives. Alternative narratives that we sought to explore were specific histories of racial, gender, and socioeconomic inequality in the food system. As facilitators, we recognized that the infrastructure holding up a corrupt food system is built by the historical systems of oppression that exist in our society. For the first readings of the semester, we assigned bell hooks’ *Critical Thinking* and Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* to ground the course in alternative, historical, and critical narratives. These texts helped students begin to draw parallels between history and the current state of America’s vastly inequitable food system. In class that week, some students expressed confusion as to why the readings were not explicitly on the food system. One student stated, “When I first looked at the assigned readings, I was pretty confused how they connected to the class”. After working through the readings in class discussion, students began to make natural connections between histories of oppression and the current state of our food system. One student wrote in their notecard, “This builds nicely...race and the food movement have always gone hand in hand. There is a need to dismantle that pattern and empower disenfranchised communities to achieve a truly sustainable food system”. These connections undergird the histories we set out to acknowledge in our course.

We gradually connected systems of oppression to various elements of the food system by drawing upon history and thinking critically. As this course was an introduction to various notions of power and privilege in the food system, we covered a wide array of topics. During Class 2: “Unlearning, Critical Thinking & Breaking Down the Food System,” we unpacked the “whiteness” of the AFM. In reading the student’s notecards before class, we noted that a lot of

students expressed guilt that felt disempowering. We offered mindfulness practice in the beginning of each class as a mechanism for coping with and moving beyond overwhelming and debilitating feelings of guilt, towards more a more productive state of consciousness. During this class, we facilitated a “Food in the Media” activity where students broke up into groups to investigate representation of AFM cookbooks, social media (instagram and twitter), and blogs/online magazines. Students noticed exclusive trends of the food movement they had not been aware of before.

During Class 4: “Food Movement and Identity,” we watched the film “Black African American Farmers History in America: A Legacy of Land Ownership.” The film is by Charlene Gilbert, a black African American woman who traces her family’s land and agricultural legacy from Georgia to Pennsylvania. We chose to show this film in order to give the story a voice and space in our classroom. The video exposed black dispossession of land due to racist agricultural policy through the stories of her family members. All of the students mentioned they had not been aware of this phenomenon despite their agricultural and/or food systems education. One student said her “eyes had been completely opened” after the video was over.

During Class 5: “Culture: Food Origins, Appropriation and Assimilation” examined how dominant cultures appropriate aspects of “other” cultures and either commodify or exotify them. In the course evaluation, students expressed feelings of being overwhelmed by the history that has created harmful trends of cultural appropriation, from colonization to globalization. However, one student expressed that the Mintz reading *Food and Its Relationship to Power* helped narrow down centuries of history into more comprehensible scenarios of “inside meaning” and “outside meaning”.

Moving later into the course, for Class 10: “Food and Gender,” this class topic linked oppression of women and the inequity in the food system. One student wrote in their notecard,

“It seems that Barndt’s goal of not only this chapter, but for the book overall, was to develop a coherent description of the journey of the corporate tomato across space and time by means of global commodity chain analysis, augmented with gender analysis including ecofeminism, cultural studies, oral interviews with the workers, her own activist experience and popular education projects in which she has been involved. What emerges from this combination of theory, methodological frames, and multiple collaborations is a layered narrative that is accessible at different levels of competency in the globalization field”.

In analyzing the reading, this student made clear connections between the effects of a global market on the labor force, in this case women. These connections were further illuminated in our class discussion that day as students linked stories from the readings of female farm worker sexual violence, issues of labor and migration in the food system, and the power and pitfalls of gender mainstreaming public policy. Students came to the class eager to move beyond the single narrative of the lack of principal female farm owners in the United States, offering a clear understanding of the ways in which systems of violence and migration inform the personal experiences of female farm workers.

The Collective Map of the Food System was a critical assignment in understanding the connected and intersecting nature of the broad topics we covered in class. Through mapping together, we drew out critical connections between food and social systems, in the process illustrating that they are inherently one and the same. Simultaneously, we built group relationships by working together. By visualizing these systems that often seem hopelessly complex and broken, we located points of intervention and bright spots of hope- the first steps in envisioning a just food system.

### Critical Thinking

We took Paulo Freire's tenets of critical pedagogy as guiding principles in teaching our class. One element of this pedagogy is the idea that a curriculum and classroom must enable students to develop "voice through a critical look at one's world and society" (Freire 1970). We planned this class not as a primer for activism, as with many previous STS classes, but as a chance to reflect upon and deeply understand the current state of the food system *in order to* understand how it may be changed- a first step in self-education before societal transformation can be planned or attempted.

We struggled throughout the semester trying to avoid instilling the false sense that solutions are easy to come to in creating a just food system. The first half of the semester was spent elucidating the problems, from the pervasive whiteness and exclusivity of the alternative food movement to the histories of land dispossession and colonization that influenced the ways affected communities view food and farming. Early on in the class, students expressed a desire for "solutions" or methods of action, and the facilitators had to frankly state that there are in fact no easy or universal solutions to the problems of food injustice. We felt that the extent and



seriousness of the problems is not often given adequate attention, and had to be explored before any action steps were provided, in keeping with Friere and Shor's call to take risks, ask questions, and criticize normalized opinions or ways of thinking about issues (1987).

At the mid-semester evaluation point, 4 out of 13 students mentioned a desire to talk about ways to get involved and create solutions for the second portion of the class. For the remaining classes we built in readings and discussion on viable alternatives, like the agricultural cooperatives of the MST and South Central Farm. Our discussion with Gail Myers was an important turning point in the "envisioning" process: students seemed to leave feeling empowered and that it was possible to instill positive change, while keeping in mind the necessity of addressing historical injustices and their legacies of inequality. This push and pull between solutions-based thinking and recognition of the deep, historical inequality is at the crux of critical thinking in our class: recognizing complexity in food politics and being able to stay with often contradictory or intractable ideas is an essential skill we hoped to build among our students and ourselves. Students demonstrated an understanding of alternative futures through their analysis of readings in notecards: one student identified MST cooperatives as a viable alternative to individual land ownership and corporate consolidation of farming, but recognized that the model is potentially difficult to enact in the US. Another student critiqued freeganism and back-to-the land movements as impractical solutions for those "struggling to provide healthy, affordable food for their families", demonstrating the capacity to critically think about alternative futures and tactics. Another student identified "high-class" locavorism as simply unsustainable as the future of the food system because it excludes so many based on income.

As evidenced in notecards and reading evaluations, students found examples of decolonization and reviving native foodways in Naramore's reading inspirational, as well as Peña's speech about Los Angeles South Central Farm providing space for community and nurturing of ancestral foodways for Chicana/o families and Mexican immigrants. These examples clearly connected food production/consumption to challenges to unfair land-use practices in urban areas and the legacy of European imperialism. These projects clearly share the goal of "radical social change" (a concept highlighted in our sixth and final objective). The greatest struggle has been providing the language and examples with which students may articulate *their own* role in creating a just future through food. At the root of this impasse is the

difficult and at times intractable nature of racial and class privilege, and the feeling of political impotence that plagues many millennials and college students.

Another salient example of critical thinking occurred in the weekly notecards: a student pointed out that, although they agreed with and understood the importance of many of the points in Raven Naramore's dissertation "Decolonizing Diet", they felt that the article oversimplified and perhaps romanticized the relationship of First Nations peoples to the land. In the Questions and Comments section of their notecard for that week, one student wrote "I'm wondering what the narrative and purpose is for this article or what perspective is it trying to achieve? What is the goal and who is the audience?". This willingness to question academic and scholarly texts is exactly what we were intending for our class. So often peer-reviewed articles and publications from the ivory tower of academia are taken for unequivocal truth. One of our goals as facilitators is to question this undemocratic and limited knowledge production, and engage in the project of student-driven learning. This instance is a perfect example of the skill of critical, reflective analysis.

Students demonstrated the ability to think critically *and* examine their own positionality when we had a brief presentation from Andrea Solazzo, the head of the Vermont Food Bank's Gleaning Project. She asked whether we thought the Food Bank should continue to distribute candy and soda, even though they are linked to chronic disease and the Food Bank makes fresh vegetables available through the gleaning program. Students questioned if it was the purview of the Food Bank (and us) to make those types of nutritional decisions *for* patrons, and concluded that it was probably best to have soda and candy, as they are a part of many people's diets. Students came to the realization that completely removing "unhealthy" food options would suggest that people who visit the Food Bank are not capable or worthy of making their own choices about food. The fact that many of our students voiced this perspective demonstrated clearly that they had internalized the important critique of AFM ideas that center individual food choices and consumer "education" as solutions, while valorizing eating the "right" foods and demonizing others who eat the "wrong" foods (like candy and soda). Students demonstrated sensitivity and attention to the lives and agency of those who use the Food Bank by maintaining that they should have agency to drink soda and eat candy if they so desire, even if it goes against

the values or “rules” of the AFM. Perhaps this was a result of their Perspectives project, as some students chose to do participant observation at the Food Shelf.

In order to maintain a critical lens throughout the semester we assigned readings that contrasted one another. For instance, the Kuo and Timpf readings (see syllabus, Appendix A) provided polarized perspectives on cultural appropriation and the harm of colonized foodways. During the discussion of these readings, students offered varying opinions that pushed them to respond thoughtfully and critically. We stressed the ability to think deeply about narratives and images often taken at face value. In Class 3: “Food Movement Definitions and Food in the Media,” students discussed how Michael Pollan’s food “rules” are often taken as the unquestioned gold standard of the AFM, but in reality represent an incredibly culturally, racially and socioeconomically specific set of value and realities that do not reflect many people’s experiences with food. Similar discussions during the “Food and Gender” class unpacked the ways in which male and female cooking show hosts are portrayed differently: chefs vs. homemakers and aggressive and abrasive vs. gentle and comforting. Students connected this to how male and female cooking skill is valued, and how this reflects larger-scale ideas of the gendered nature of food-based labor. This ability to dig deeper and recognize the multiple layers and implications of dominant narratives were clear examples of critical thinking in action in our classroom.

Even though it seems like a fault or “failure” on the part of facilitators, the fact that concrete solutions or “fixes” are impossible to arrive at in the context of the food system is an important tool in the process of democratizing the classroom. The production of knowledge *with* our students, rather than just disseminating solutions and ideas, is important part of critical pedagogy and liberatory classrooms outlined by Friere and Shor (1987). The messy, unclear and deeply personal nature of food creates a space for engaging with the “critical pedagogy of place” explained in our literature review. In other words, the fact that there are no clear-cut answers gives students and facilitators alike license to push the boundaries of what is deemed possible in the overarching alternative food discourse. It connects their educational process with their ideas for “the kind of places we inhabit and leave behind for future generations” (Gruenewald, 2003).

The readings for the final class (see syllabus, Appendix A) focused on the importance of reading for difference and heterogeneity in economic and social relations that are often seen as

monolithically “capitalist”. These readings and the Iceberg activity (see Appendix F) pushed students to think beyond the surface level and uncover spaces of non or anti-capitalist ways of being that already exist, rather than imagining them as a hopeful, but distant, future. Students were able to come up with a number of examples of situations and processes for the lower portion of the iceberg, demonstrating the ability to read for difference, an essential component of critical thinking.

Students expressed a desire to think critically moving forwards after the course in the final evaluations (see Appendix G). The “How do you wish to carry what you’ve learned in this class into your daily life?” question received a lot of responses that either named critical thinking or spoke to elements of it. One student wrote: “Critically think always” and another wrote “Hope to continue my critical thinking.” Other students incorporated components of critical thinking into their responses: “Be more mindful of how I conceptualize problems and always take a different perspective before judging/assuming.” Another student wrote: “Be aware. Speak up. Ask questions. Know what I’m supporting.” It was apparent from the final evaluation that critical thinking was a practice students developed, highly valued, and will continue to utilize in their daily lives.

## Personal storytelling, self awareness & positionality

We developed the idea of food as an “ensemble of relations” rather than a commodity, (articulated by Meleiza Figueroa and quoted in our 5th objective for the class), by sharing personal food stories. During our interview workshop with Dr. Anderson, students were asked to share food experiences with a partner. The student listening practiced “mindful listening” and was asked to not interrupt or comment during their partner’s story. This exercise gave students the space to fully share an experience, while also making them aware of their urge to connect by interrupting or commenting on a story. Exploring how deeply individual and relational food can be allowed our students to connect with one another, an important process in building an empathetic and open classroom. Listening to their peer’s stories of baking brownies with their grandmother, or cooking their first meal on their own during a gap year in Israel, drove home the concept that food is important and meaningful to *everyone* in highly culturally, geographically and historically specific ways. Students seemed to gravitate toward these story-telling activities, as it gave grounding and context to our broad, at times over-simplified discussions of race, class, capitalism, or neoliberalism. This more expansive notion of food directly connects to our envisioning process: in order to build a just food system, we must first understand that food is more than a product for consumption, it is a dense knot in which ecological processes, collective and individual histories, and political and economic frameworks are all entangled.

Further, in-class reflection, whether in the form of discussion or in writing, opened space for students to personally connect to the material. During Class 4: “Food Movement and Identity,” the student assigned to discussion questions closed the conversation with the question, “Do you have a food that informs your culture?” This question made space for a dialogue that recognized personal histories and experiences situated within the food system. With little prompting, students went around the table sharing various foods and recipes specific to their religion, culture, or family history. During Class 10: “Food and Gender,” students reflected on gender roles and food in their families. A few students expressed the huge amount of caretaking their mothers performed in the form of cooking. Another student talked about her experience as a female working in a deli. These conversations brought human experience to a highly academic setting, while making these theories about gender more tangible. Personal testimony in class discussion fostered deeper self-awareness and reflection.

The Perspectives Project encouraged experiential learning that helped achieve the course objectives through its ability to expand viewpoints and self-awareness. The students learned from their observations and/or interviews, which they critically thought about in their reflection. Conducting participant observation and interviews also built new skill sets and highlighted the importance of positionality and subjectivity in the creation of new knowledge, which related to our objectives. As students progress with the potentially sensitive and provoking subject material, they employed this strategy as a vessel to move beyond guilt when discussing whiteness, and increased awareness of their own whiteness and ultimately recognized their role in the perpetuation of systemic racism.

Although implicating students' own identity in order to deepen our understanding of privilege and positionality was one of our original course objectives, the importance of listening to the stories of marginalized peoples in the food system became more clear as the semester progressed. We heard these stories through readings like Barndt's "Picking and Packing for the North", about female workers on tomato farms in Mexico, and the articles about farmworker sexual harassment, among others. In their final papers, many students emphasized the importance of personal history and learning from the stories of others as a compassionate tool in the movement toward equality. This demonstrates how our students were able to broaden their vision outside of the classroom space and see personal connection through storytelling as a vehicle for justice.

### Connecting broad theory to case studies

The facilitators strove to select readings that explained *frameworks* the class could use to analyze specific food system and food movement-related case studies. One such framework was provided in the lecture on neoliberalism. A grounding definition of this important concept led one student to make connections between the neoliberal capitalist economy, income inequality, and the accessibility of certain foodways explained in case studies on freeganism or locavorism (for example). Connections such as these demonstrate that our students understood the complexity of food as a lens through which to analyze social processes, and show the importance of balancing broad, theoretical readings (such as Guthman 2008 and Dupuis and Goodman 2005) with more detailed, place-specific case studies. The readings evaluations demonstrated that some students struggles with the more theoretical readings, like Guthman and Mintz, and had difficulty

seeing how the concepts related to our discussions of food politics. However, many students also mentioned that class discussion helped them to clarify the connections and understand more abstract ideas. In the mid-semester evaluations, students mentioned the concepts of neoliberalism, inside/outside meaning (Mintz), and food sovereignty as salient concepts and critiques they learned from course content.

To complement theoretical readings, we infused case studies into the readings and class material, allowing us to more clearly conceptualize these tangled issues. For example, for the class on Gender we assigned the reading, “Picking and packing for the north: Agricultural workers at Empaque Santa Rosa,” in the book *Tangled Routes: Women, work, and globalization on the tomato trail*. The reading offers a rich history of agriculture in Empaque Santa Rosa; fueled by stories of women workers in this agribusiness community. Stories of impoverished Indigenous women migrating to Empaque Santa Rosa to serve as laborers to the mestizo packers who enjoy higher wages and more comfortable lifestyles underscore any prior assumption that the topic “gender and agriculture” is exclusively about the growth of female farmers in the sustainable agriculture movement. For the gender class, one student wrote in their notecard, “There is a clear gender divide in the work force and tasks assigned to employees. Managers explain the gender difference in job tasking by assuming that women are better fit for these type of jobs, ignoring the social constructs behind these assumptions.” Comments such as these revealed to us as facilitators that some students were making connections between the larger structural issues related to food and agriculture, rather than focusing on summarizing individual case studies. Further, this level of insight helped us to identify that many students were in fact engaging in a nuanced critique of the course content.

Class 13: “Food and Religion,” derived from interest of the students, provided an ideal platform for connecting theory to relevant case studies. Within our class, one student was pursuing a thesis on the potential for a sustainable kosher meat market in Vermont. We asked this student to give a short presentation and field questions from our class on their research. Giving a nod to the class objective, envision the potential for faith to restore a lost sense of identity contribute towards food sovereignty, this student discussed that being able to equitably access kosher products are but one way for an individual to achieve a sense of food sovereignty.

A broad theory, food sovereignty, was contextualized by a case study on the burgeoning kosher meat industry in Vermont.

Using the Burlington as a case study during the class period devoted to food deserts and mirages also led to productive conversation on the aspects of food that are difficult to commoditize or account for in a monetary sense. Emphasized in the critical literature on defining food deserts is the importance of *cultural* and economic access, ideas which students clearly observed in their field trip to various food markets in Burlington's Old North End. One student noted that items that were not available elsewhere, like women's hair products and shea butter, were sold at the Mawuhi African Market, demonstrating the importance of food markets as spaces of community cohesion and cultural relevance that moves beyond selling certain food products.

The Collective Map of the Food System acted as a visual guide to all of the material we covered throughout the semester and allowed students to literally draw connections between case studies and broader concepts like privilege, neoliberalism, ethics, and identity. In the final evaluation, student's mentioned that they enjoyed the Food Map as a way to track progress and growth throughout the semester, put thoughts into visual form, and bond as class, in addition to drawing connections. This demonstrates that the Food Map achieved multiple pedagogical objectives at once.

## Openness and ambiguity

As we designed the course, we intentionally left the directions for some assignments open in order to give students the freedom to direct their own learning and complete the assignment in a way that made sense to them. Throughout the semester, we noticed a trend of students grasping for more clear instruction and guidance, particularly with the Perspectives Project, the Collective Map of the Food System and the Redefinition Paper. We tried to balance retaining the open-ended nature of assignments (as a way to support our goal of enabling critical thinking and accommodating a variety of learning styles) with providing clear, adequate directions.

In the beginning of the semester, students struggled with the lack of closure or clear "solutions" for the problems we addressed in the class material. We see this not as a failure on the part of our students or our explanation of the assignments, but a function of the system higher education as a whole. In many classroom settings, the ability to read, memorize and regurgitate



predetermined information is often privileged over the ability to ask thoughtful questions, engage in discussion, or think creatively about assignments. In Environmental Studies in particular, a focus on “solutions” to broad, systemic problems like global climate change often obscures the deeply intractable and the complex nature of these issues. As facilitators, we tried to push back against these two issues we have experienced as students because we believe that giving students greater autonomy and self-direction in their education while fully laying out the nature of the issues at hand helps students become more engaged and passionate learners and citizens- in other words, people who will hopefully leave the space of academia with the drive and skills adequate to confronting the global social/environmental crisis. Students began to be more comfortable with the complexity of these issues and were able to relinquish their need for a single solution. In the final course evaluation a student wrote: “I think that the biggest point I took from this course is that there is not one solution or one right answer. There are many solutions or alternatives, and many of them already exist- the biggest one being the basic goodness of human beings and the power that is created when we share this.” In this same final course evaluation, another student wrote, “I learned to be more comfortable with confusion.” By the end of the semester, the immediate impulse of students to seek bandaid solutions surrendered to a more nuanced vision of the layeredness of the topics we explored together.

**Safe Space & Open Heart - creating a classroom space that mirrors the society of which we want to be a part**

A critical part of envisioning a just future is creating a classroom space that mirrors the kinds of egalitarian relationships and inclusive processes we would like to see in the food system and wider world. Our mid-semester evaluations, as well as feedback during class and the open, candid nature of discussions attest to our success in creating a welcoming classroom space. Nine out of 13 students said they felt comfortable participating in class, with three of those pointing to student facilitators as the reason. However, one student also noted in the mid-semester evaluation that they feel as if they do not have a sufficient background in the subjects we were discussing, and so felt reluctant to participate in discussion. This feedback makes clear how alienating academic spaces can be, and how important it is to attend to the dynamic that deems the teacher the bestower of knowledge and the student the passive receiver of information.

As a way to create an open and honest learning space, we began the first day with an introduction to safe space. We made it known that as a community, we would be delving into sensitive topics related to the Alternative Food Movement such as race, class, gender, socioeconomic status, and religion. Together, we brainstormed a list of safe space norms and once fully agreed upon, signed the norms as a contract to one another. Norms such as (1) challenging ideas, not people and (2) a willingness to share diverse perspectives. These norms encourage reflective practice and support further inquiry into individual biases and experiences.

Students stated that mindfulness helped them be present with their classmates, focus on the discussion topic at hand, set the tone of the classroom space and think more deeply. This demonstrates how mindfulness practice may create a community space conducive to open sharing and in-depth discussion through cultivating individual self-awareness.

Check-ins at the beginning of every class gave time for students to talk about their lives unrelated to class topics- struggles with workloads and stress, weekend adventures, funny stories and delicious meals they had eaten recently. Similarly, break was a time to talk informally and, more importantly, share food. Creating an atmosphere of familiarity and conviviality centered around food put into practice what we had been talking about all semester- the ways in which food can be a vehicle for deep interpersonal connection and social change.

As an entirely white class, we recognized that the critique of the Alternative Food Movement and “white missionary tactics” could lead towards guilt and frustration (Fields 2013). Students wrote about these feelings in their notecards and mid-semester course evaluations. We recognized that guilt is natural, but we aimed to move past it. We found that naming our own insecurities and worries as facilitators broke down barriers and made us more relatable to the students. As a result, students were able to voice their honest feelings and we could meditate on the value of guilt versus awareness. We also found that sense of humor was essential to maintaining morale and reminding ourselves that we have human moments.

Connecting to the world outside of UVM was an important part of placing our class in the larger context of struggles over food and justice. Our field trip downtown during Class 9: “Food Deserts and Food Mirages” gave students the opportunity to interact with non-student residents of Burlington in food spaces which students do not normally visit. This demonstrated the fact that the things we talk about in class are not abstract or located at a distance, but occurring here,

in our very own city, connecting our classroom space to the community in which it is nestled and breaking open the UVM “bubble”. Four of our students came with us to the Just Food? Forum on Land Rights, Use and Ecology at Harvard Law School the weekend of March 25th and 26th. The lectures and panels attended there sparked intense, important conversation in class the next week, once again linking our efforts as students to the larger struggle for food justice and equality going on in the wider world, thereby reinforcing our sense of the importance of our work and relationships with one another.

The changes in discussion structure, seen in the Results section under Adaptations, gave students a greater sense of ownership of the material and the ability to engage with what truly interested them, giving them a chance to be the knower rather than the receiver of information, an opportunity that is not often afforded students at the undergraduate level. This sense of self-direction in the educational process and the emphasis we placed on creating space for all voices is critical to breaking down hierarchical structures in the classroom and will hopefully encourage students to challenge similar systems of power outside of academia. A few students expressed discomfort during class discussion in the mid-semester evaluations. However, the final evaluation demonstrated an improvement in comfort level and overall satisfaction with class discussion. One of our evaluation questions asked students if they felt comfortable speaking up and participating in class discussion. This question received a lot of positive feedback. Most students accredited “safe space” and an “inclusive environment” to their comfort level and overall ability to participate in class discussion. One student wrote in response to the question above: “more than in every other class I’ve taken. I think it had to do with the space created by the teachers and the respect my classmates had for this space and one another.” It was apparent that safe space and openness fostered a comfortable classroom experience that is essential to learning. In the optional comments section of our final evaluation, a student wrote “Top 3 classes of my college career. I will be forever influenced by the people and discussions that took place here”.

## Conclusion

*What does it mean to be a part of counter culture? It is a shift in consciousness in yourself. Want less, live more. Consume less, breathe more. Lead by example and ask difficult questions. Don't pretend to know the answer. Make it personal. Tell your story. Dramatically acknowledge and surrender your privilege. If you choose to be an ally, ask the people you're trying to align yourself with what that means. Show up to the struggle and bring joy to it. We have to unite. Don't be afraid. All you have to do is be seen. That is all life demands of you. Show up and choose love.* -Smita Narula, Just Food? Forum on Land Use, Rights and Ecology 2016

We decided to teach this class because we felt there were vital connections missing in our education at UVM. The industrial food system is consistently criticized, but often only to the point of agrochemicals, corporate consolidation and nutrition or lack thereof. In our collective coursework, food was always narrowly defined as a commodity, lacking any attachment to wider systems of social and political meaning. Where are *people* in this framing? We felt that this discourse robbed food of its power as a vehicle for deep, systemic change toward a more just and equitable world. We wanted to teach social justice through food because food is a point at which so many critical issues converge. We believed that teaching food as an instrument for social change would open space for a dialogue about history, about personal experience, about questions larger than ourselves, and deeper and more complex than the simplified notion of “eat organic and local and save the world”. We found this belief to be true: by speaking about systems of oppression through the highly personal and relational substance that is food, we were able to render these abstract concepts no less complicated, but perhaps more tangible, and thus more meaningful. We found that topics such as race, class, gender, and privilege, which often inspire an automatic negative reaction in students, were more effectively understood when placed in the context of the food system.

We believe that the core value of students-teaching-students is the ability to radically democratize the learning process, creating classrooms that serve the needs of the students and give them a sense of agency and power in their education. The modern higher education system in the U.S. is so often deeply alienating and individualizing, producing students that fit the model of the ideal citizen-consumer rather than critical thinkers capable of challenging broken systems that perpetuate injustice and oppression. Creating a small and egalitarian community of learners

meant that we were able to build meaningful relationships over the course of the semester, beginning during the first check-in and lasting beyond the final potluck, connecting us outside of the classroom, off campus, and outside of Burlington. This sense of community supported thinking and discussion that intentionally confronted and broke down the dominant narratives in the food system, narratives that marginalize so many and privilege so few. By consistently reflecting on our teaching practice and pedagogy, we were able to integrate the feedback we received from our students each week and redirect the course toward their needs and interests, reinforcing the non-hierarchical structure and shared sense of agency in learning together.

The state of the food system mirrors that of our society on a larger scale: polarized, inequitable, exploitative, and segregated by race, class, and gender. Often, our discussions felt hopeless and bogged down in problems. However, we resisted handing our students easy, simple “solutions” because they simply do not adequately address the root of the problem. In this class, we confronted issues for which there are potentially no solutions, or no solutions that are easily achievable by one person in one lifetime. We felt that this was an important point of tension to hold in our class: the emphasis placed on individualized action, whether it be through consumption or voting, only serves to perpetuate a state of alienation and atomization that has stalled any effective change for social justice in our society. We emphasized, through our course material, but also through the practice of building community among our students, that the only true hope is in collectivity, in shared hope, passion, and conscious, collaborative action. We recognized that resiliency can be found in all communities, and that labeling people as victims is reductionist and presumptive. Marginalized communities are often deemed defenseless and in need of savior, which upholds an uneven power dynamic and does not acknowledge their autonomy. In food deserts and front line communities, university campuses and statehouses, the collaborative work of communities has proven to be an extremely powerful and deeply transformative force in the face of oppression and discrimination.

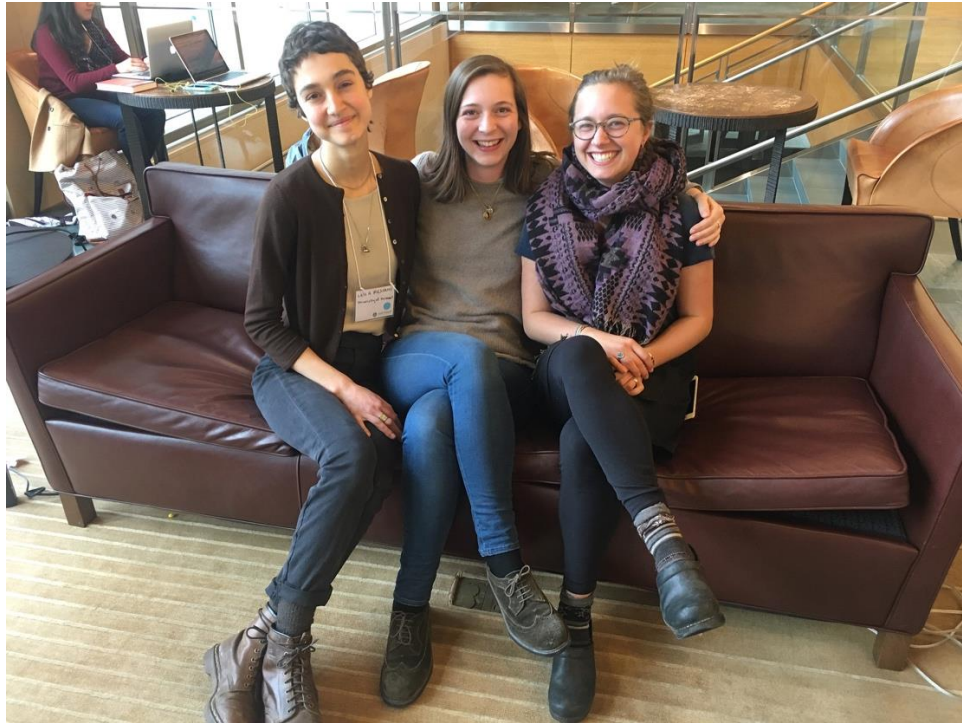
As a class, we envisioned a food system based on collective empowerment and self-determination, in which communities produce, distribute and consume food in a manner that corresponds to their commonly held values and is decided upon democratically, not forced upon them by neoliberal trade policies or missionary tactics. We came to understand a few elements as essential: a fair wage, safety from physical harm and sexual violence in the workplace,

representation and advocacy in policy, available, affordable and healthy and culturally relevant food, and recognition of historical inequality. A conclusion that emerged over the course of the semester is that there is not one right way to actualize a just food system: each community must act on their own principles to create the system that best suits their needs and desires. What remains foundational in our vision is the ability of all people involved to thrive- a goal not only of food systems, but society as a whole. In articulating our vision, one is reminded of the Zapatista movement's goal to create "un mundo donde quepan muchos mundos": a world in which many worlds fit; a world of mutual respect and coexistence, that does not erase or diminish difference but celebrates it (Shenker 2012).

Being a part of this class has been an emotional experience, arousing anger, frustration, hopelessness, sadness, joy and optimism in all three of us and our students. Too often emotion is bracketed off from academic spaces, which is when disengagement and apathy occurs within students. How can one feel invested in the educational process if one is told that feelings must be left at the classroom door because they inhibit rational thinking or are "unscientific"? There is power in shame, power in sadness and fury and there is certainly power in hope and connection. There is a clarity that comes when naming one's enemy, even when that enemy can be found within oneself. There is a sense of purpose in recognizing that the obstacles are immense, and will not be overcome if enough community gardens are planted by well-meaning white folks in food insecure neighborhoods. We must point to slavery, point to the dispossession and genocide of indigenous peoples, the systematic subjugation of women, the scale of ecological destruction and the rapacity of globalized capital. We must remember the collective history and trauma we have endured so that we may find the strength to move forward into an uncertain future. Together, we have explored a tiny fraction of these histories with our students. This is about people and their stories, and through this STS class we are in service to those stories.

Together, we have come to understand how food is an active site of oppression but also a material means of overcoming and realizing connection, joy, and justice. Based on our experience in designing and teaching this course, we recommend that all Environmental Studies and food-related courses should begin teaching the social dimensions of the food system at the introductory level, instead of as special topics and upper level courses. Food systems must be taught with attention to the historical roots of inequality- food deserts didn't appear out of a

vacuum, but were a product of the racist practice of redlining and subsequent neighborhood disinvestment that followed the creation of the Federal Housing Administration. The effects of these racist policies echo into today, and shape not only the lack of fresh food available in these neighborhoods but the siting of hazardous waste sites, factories, and power plants that places a disproportionate burden of toxicity on these low-income communities and communities of color. Just in this example, the deeply entangled nature of social justice, food, and environmental issues is apparent. Food systems must be taught at this level of complexity because, as we have seen from the high level of student engagement in our class, students respond positively to the intricacy and entanglement of these problems. Trusting in the capacity of students as active, passionate, and self-directed learners is a central finding of our project: if taught at a superficial level, students will engage with the same lack of depth. However, if teachers or facilitators show that they recognize the intelligence and capacity for critical thought in their students by presenting complex, interdisciplinary material, students will respond with equal levels of passion and effort. Social issues are intrinsic to discussions of the food system, and we firmly believe that any curriculum that is not centered on justice cannot truly be called a food *systems* program, as it fails to acknowledge structural inequalities that shape how our food system functions today. Through this education, we may come to understand how food is an active site of oppression, but also a material means of overcoming it and realizing connection, joy, and justice.



*Facilitators (left to right) Leila Rezvani, Claire Wiggin, & Olivia Burt at Just Food? Forum on Land Use, Rights, and Ecology 2016.*



*"Envisioning a Just Food System" Students Finalizing the Collective Map of the Food System.*



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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Syllabus

Syllabus  
**ENVS 197: Envisioning a Just Food System**  
Spring 2016  
W 12:00-3:00, Jeffords 326

Facilitators: Olivia Burt, Leila Rezvani, Claire Wiggin

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*“When we make a commitment to become critical thinkers, we are already making a choice that places us in opposition to any system of education or culture that would have us be passive recipients of ways of knowing.” - bell hooks*

### **Overview:**

The Alternative Food Movement (AFM) is comprised of sustainable, local, and fair trade foods and their associated provisioning systems, such as community gardens, community supported agriculture (CSAs), farmers markets and cooperatives. This movement has become arguably one of the most important, albeit contentious movements of the 21st century. The AFM developed from a growing concern over the globalized, environmentally destructive and socially unjust industrialized food system. Diverging from its origins in counterculture and its goals as a vehicle for collective, radical social change, the alternative food movement has become a largely mainstream, individualized phenomenon. Consumers are the privileged actors in these “alternative” systems: judging by the label on the food, buyers “vote with their fork” and buy the foods they believe to be the most ethical, healthy or environmentally responsible. Increasingly, participants in and scholars of the food movement are pointing out that a consumer-based effort excludes those who cannot afford or access “good” food. And even well-intentioned food justice initiatives have failed to seriously subvert this market-based logic and ingrained hierarchies based on race, class, and gender.

This course will be a critical analysis of the movement. We will begin by assessing the AFM as it stands and address the privilege and positionality of its participants, leaders, and popular writers. We will then investigate the accessibility of alternative foods, the role of neoliberalism, Vermont’s local food system, the role of race, class and gender in determining one’s place in the food system, and labor issues, as well as the interconnections between all of these topics. Throughout, we will be highlighting projects and initiatives that seek to address these systemic issues. We will finish the course by synthesizing this knowledge and use it to create a collective image of an equitable and sustainable movement.

Class time will provide students with an opportunity to break down common words and phrases such as food deserts, food justice, organic, local, conventional, and fair in order to examine the implications of their use. Readings, assignments, and videos will stimulate class discussions, which will explore how we can improve upon the existing alternative food movement. Our intention is to encourage a healthy dose of criticism, so that

students can formulate their own understanding of what an inclusive food system means to them. Conversations and movements are constantly evolving. Trends surface and fade. The original framework of a movement remains, but it's questions evolve as intersectionality arises.

### **Course Objectives:**

1. Critically examine scholarly and popular discourse in order to determine the limitations of the current food movement and how it is exclusive to a specific community.
2. Encourage self-awareness by recognizing student biases, histories, experiences and/or privileges, and how these influence their perspective on and place within the food system.
3. Explore histories of racial, gender and socioeconomic inequality through the lens of the food system.
4. Build an understanding of how systemic oppression manifests in the different ways people produce, access, consume and think about food.
5. Recognize food as an “ensemble of relations” and a medium through which social processes converge and interact, rather than merely a commodity or ecological factor (Figueroa 2015).
6. Determine how the food movement could be more inclusive and act as a vehicle for radical social change.

### **Expectations of Students:**

- The classroom is a community. Students will learn as much from their peers as they will from the facilitators, and vice versa.
- Students are expected to complete all readings and assignments on time in order to participate in class discussion and activities.
- Students will attend every class unless exceptional circumstances arise and are communicated with the facilitators beforehand.
- Students will respect contrasting backgrounds and experiences of other students, speakers, and facilitators and strive to be inclusive. If issues of insensitivity arise, they will be addressed as the situation dictates, based on norms developed by the class.
- Together, we will strive to create a safe space where students feel comfortable engaging in respectful debate and critiquing the work and ideas of other students and the facilitators.

**Assignments and Participation:** *Note: We ask that all assignments be written in Times New Roman, 12 point font, with 1” margins, double-spaced. Minimum length of papers, in word count, is indicated in the assignment description. Citations must be in APA format. Please follow directions accordingly.*

**Definition Paper:** Choose from the list of buzzwords/terms discussed in the first class. In your own words, define this term and explore the wider implications of this term as related to the Alternative Food Movement. The essay should be minimum 750 words and sources should be cited properly.

(40 pts) *Due January 27th*

**Note Cards:** There will be ten note cards written in a journal throughout the course of the semester. The note cards will integrate readings, class work, and personal reflection. Each entry should incorporate the following elements: source, key words, argument, connections, significant quotes, and a final section of comments, questions, and/or reflections that you are left with. These journals will help to guide readings. The entries will be graded on the basis of effort, thoughtfulness, and integration of assigned reading material and outside sources. Notecards are due by 10 am on the due date noted in the schedule. They will be submitted to a discussion board on BlackBoard to facilitate collaboration and sharing of ideas between students. Each student can miss one notecard and will still receive full credit.

(10 Note Cards x 10 pts each)

**Participation and Attendance:** Class engagement includes both mandatory attendance at every class session and participation in class discussions and activities. We ask students to participate to the best of their ability and respect fellow peers and facilitators. Students are encouraged to bring in articles, objects, readings, videos or anything else they find relevant and worthy of discussion.

(4 pts/day x 15 classes = 60 pts)

**Collective “Map” of the Food System:** This will be an in-class, semester-long endeavour that will incorporate assigned readings, ideas that come up in discussion and reflective journals, student experiences and findings, and other relevant materials. As a class, we will draw a ‘map’ of the food system (on one large piece of paper), visually linking the various themes we cover as we progress through the material. Students will be encouraged to think creatively about what a map looks like and to bring in outside material to enlarge our understanding of how issues in the food system are connected.

*(Part of participation grade, counts for half of class participation points of days designated to working on the map)*

**Discussion Questions:** Two students will email discussion questions to facilitators Olivia, Leila, and/or Claire by midnight the night before readings are due. These discussion questions will help direct the discussion portion of the course that day. Students will sign up for these dates on the second class day.

(20 pts)

**Perspectives Project:**

*These projects are intended to get students out of the classroom and into Burlington's community. Before students begin their projects, we will discuss how to conduct interviews and participant observation in class.*

**(Option A) Participant Observation:** To explore different food spaces and the food system in Burlington, VT, students will visit a food area, such as grocery stores/farms/restaurants and take field notes. Suggestions of food retail areas/restaurants to visit will be discussed in class. Students should spend a total of three hours observing these spaces, but should spend a suggested maximum of one and half hours at a time. (record the date and time in notes). The notes should contain general info about the place, such as the location, size, mission statement (if there is one), etc. Pictures are encouraged, if permitted in the space. Once the area has been contextualized, the notes should start to notice any details/patterns, sights, sounds and smells. Here are some guiding questions to help start off: What are the emotions this location evokes? How does this place relate to food? If food products are sold here, how are they advertised? How many employees are there, and what are they doing? Are there customers? What are they doing? How do the customers interact with employees, or do they not interact? What does this space appear to offer to customers? What does it appear offer to the public? Assumptions should not be made about the individuals at the store. To avoid making assumptions, describe what you see and utilize phrases such as “appears to be”. There will be an introduction on how to appropriately take notes mid February. (75 points)

**(Option B) Interview:** Students will go out into the Burlington community and gather first-hand information on varying perspectives of the alternative food movement. The interviewees do not necessarily need to work in the food system, they just need to be a part of the Burlington community. Students are encouraged to speak to friends and peers, as well as older and younger community members and non-students. The student should conduct 2-3 interviews, all of which should add up to total of 1 hour and 30 minutes (record dates and times). Students should develop questions on their own, and should feel free to review them Olivia, Claire and/or Leila. There will be example questions provided to help guide students. With permission, students can record the interviews using a phone or a recording device (available at Bailey Howe Library, Media Resource Desk). The interviews should then be transcribed. Students are encouraged to include pictures (with the interviewee's permission). (75 points)

**Perspectives Reflection:**

There are two options for this component of the project. The first option is to write a 1,000 word reflection (around 4 pages double spaced), on the student's experience gathering data. Students should discuss the following questions: How did this experience compare to conducting scholarly research using secondary sources? Has the student's perspective changed? If so, how? If not, why? The reflection should connect their field research to at least 3 readings. The second option is to create a piece of artwork, such as a drawing of the space or interviewee, poem, or creative writing piece that conveys a prevailing from class. Along with the art piece,

there should be a 250 word write up that briefly answers the questions posed for the write up. Any writing should be 12 pt, Times New Roman Font, double spaced.  
(25 points)

(100 total points)

*Students have the option to decide between the Participant Observation Project, or the Perspectives Project.*

*Decision between Option A and B March 2nd.*

*Progress Report due March 23rd.*

*Entire project due April 6th.*

**Final (Re)definition or (Un)definition Paper:** At the end of the semester, students will return to their original definition paper and reflect on how their ideas have (or have not) changed. Included in this paper should be a vision for the future of our food system. Students should critically define what “justice” means in the context of food, drawing on material from class readings, discussions and individual reflection and research. Students should also explain how they view their place in this movement toward justice and equity, and how they plan to carry what they have learned in this class moving forward. It is expected that this paper will be more in-depth and lengthy than the initial definition paper. It should be a minimum of 1,750 words (roughly 7 pages), not including the source list. We ask that students incorporate a minimum of three readings from the course and a minimum of two outside sources.

How do you see yourself in this movement? What spoke to you the most in this class? “Manifesto Piece”

(100 pts)

*Due April 27th*

### **Grading:**

The assignments are designed to allow students to demonstrate critical thinking about the food movement in various capacities. The facilitators will look for development in critical thinking and the ability to draw connections between readings, class discussions and outside material through the weekly journals, as well as the progress made from the definition paper to the (re)definition paper.

Definition Paper.....40 pts

Note Cards.....100 pts

Discussion Questions.....20 pts

Perspectives or Participant Observation Project.....100 pts

(Re)definition Final Paper.....100 pts

Participation & Attendance.....60 pts



## **Total: 420 Points**

**Student Learning Accommodations:** In keeping with University policy, any student with a documented disability interested in utilizing accommodations should contact ACCESS, the office of Disability Services on campus. ACCESS works with students and faculty in an interactive process to explore reasonable and appropriate accommodations via an accommodation letter to faculty with approved accommodations as early as possible each semester. All students are strongly encouraged to meet with their faculty to discuss the accommodations they plan to use in each course.

Contact ACCESS: A170 Living/Learning Center; 802-656-7753; [access@uvm.edu](mailto:access@uvm.edu); [www.uvm.edu/access](http://www.uvm.edu/access)

UVM's policy on disability certification and student support: [www.uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/disability.pdf](http://www.uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/disability.pdf)

**Religious Holidays:** Students have the right to practice the religion of their choice. If you need to miss class to observe a religious holiday, please submit the dates of your absence to us in writing by the end of the second full week of classes. You will be permitted to make up work within a mutually agreed-upon time.

**Academic Integrity:** The policy addresses plagiarism, fabrication, collusion, and cheating.

<http://www.uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/acadintegrity.pdf>

**Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities:** [www.uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/studentcode.pdf](http://www.uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/studentcode.pdf)

**Grading:** For information on grading and GPA calculation, go to [www.uvm.edu/academics/catalogue](http://www.uvm.edu/academics/catalogue) and click on Policies for an A-Z listing.

**Wellness & Personal Support:** The Center for Health & Wellbeing offers a wide range of services to support your mind, body, and soul while you're at UVM. <http://www.uvm.edu/~chwb/>. The Mind-Body Wellness program offers meditation, yoga, and mindfulness sessions. <http://www.uvm.edu/~chwb/psych/?Page=mindfulness.html&SM=mindfulnessmenu.html>

## **Tentative Schedule:**

*Note: Readings and assignments are due the day they are listed. Due dates and readings are subject to change, students will be notified well ahead of time.*

<b>D a t e</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Class Activities</b>	<b>Homework Due</b>
Jan 20  U N I T  1	Class 1: Introduc tion: Foundat ions of the Course: Mindful ness, Position ality, Establis hing Safe Space & Introduc ing Food System	Introductions  Mindful Listening/Identity Sharing  Establish Safe Space  Review Syllabus	None
Jan 27	Class 2: Introduc tion:	Watch “Lettuce Liberate”  Free Write	<b>Assignment Due:</b> Definition Paper

	Unlearning, Critical Thinking & Breaking Down the Food System	Discussion of Readings	<p><b>Readings Due:</b>  Freire, P. (1993). <i>Pedagogy of the Oppressed</i>. 1970. <i>New York: Continuum</i>. Chapter 1, “The justification for a pedagogy of the oppressed...”.</p> <p>hooks, b. (2010). <i>Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom</i>. bell hooks the teaching trilogy. New York: Routledge. Chapter 1, “Critical Thinking”.</p> <p>McIntosh, P. (1989). <i>White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack</i>. <i>Peace and Freedom Magazine</i>, July/August, 10–12. Philadelphia, PA: Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom</p>
Feb 3 UNIT 2	Class 3: Culture: Food Movement Introduction, Definitions, and Food in the Media	<p>Food Movement in the Media activity</p> <p>Discussion of Readings</p>	<p><b>Assignment Due:</b>  Notecard #1</p> <p><b>Readings Due:</b>  Alkon, A. H., &amp; Agyeman, J. (2011). In A. H. Alkon &amp; J. Agyeman (Eds.), <i>Cultivating Food Justice: Race, Class, &amp; Sustainability</i>. Massachusetts Institute of Technology, (pp. 1-20).</p> <p>Pollan, M. (2006). What’s for Dinner? <i>The New York Times</i>. Retrieved from: <a href="http://michaelpollan.com/articles-archive/whats-for-dinner-2/">http://michaelpollan.com/articles-archive/whats-for-dinner-2/</a></p> <p>Ragovin, H. (2012). Not My Revolution. <i>TuftsNow</i>. Retrieved from <a href="http://now.tufts.edu/print/articles/not-my-revolution-food-access?utm_source=PANTHEON_STRIPPED&amp;utm_campaign=PANTHEON_STRIPPED&amp;utm_medium=PANTHEON_STRIPPED">http://now.tufts.edu/print/articles/not-my-revolution-food-access?utm_source=PANTHEON_STRIPPED&amp;utm_campaign=PANTHEON_STRIPPED&amp;utm_medium=PANTHEON_STRIPPED</a></p>
Feb 10	Class 4: Culture:	Watch Greenhorns Trailer	<b>Assignment Due:</b> Notecard #2

	Food Movement and Identity	<p>Watch “Black African American Farmers history in America: A Legacy of Landownership”  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Grp-1HzXqzI">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Grp-1HzXqzI</a></p> <p>Discussion of Readings</p> <p>Food System Map</p>	<p><b>Readings Due:</b>  Guthman, J. (2011). "If Only They Knew": The Unbearable Whiteness of Alternative Food. In A. H. Alkon &amp; J. Agyeman (Eds.), <i>Cultivating Food Justice: Race, Class, &amp; Sustainability</i>. Boston: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.</p> <p>Naramore, Raven. (2012). Decolonizing diet: Looking to the past for the health of the future. University of Kansas Master of Arts in Indigenous Nations Studies.</p>
Feb 17	Class 5: Culture: Food Origins, Appropriation and Assimilation	<p>Description Interpretation Analysis Training</p> <p>Cultural Relativism and Cultural Appropriation Lecture</p> <p>Free Write/Discussion</p>	<p><b>Assignment Due:</b> Notecard #3,</p> <p><b>Readings Due:</b>  Mintz, S. (1997). Chapter 2: Food and Its Relationship to Power in <i>Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom</i> (pp. 17-32). Boston: Beacon Press.</p> <p>Kuo, R. (2015). The Feminist Guide to Being a Foodie without Being Culturally Appropriative. <i>Everyday Feminism</i>. Retrieved from <a href="http://everydayfeminism.com/2015/11/foodie-without-appropriation/">http://everydayfeminism.com/2015/11/foodie-without-appropriation/</a></p> <p>Timpf, K. (2015). “Are You Even Thinking about Oppression While You Eat That Taco?” <i>National Review</i>. Retrieved from <a href="http://www.nationalreview.com/article/427436/cultural-appropriation-authentic-">http://www.nationalreview.com/article/427436/cultural-appropriation-authentic-</a></p>

			<a href="#">food-racist</a>
Feb 24	Class 6: Culture: Neoliberalism and Alternative Food	Interview Training with Kit Anderson  Neoliberalism Lecture & Discussion  Work on Food Map	<p><b>Assignment Due:</b> Notecard #4</p> <p><b>Readings Due:</b> Mares, T. M., &amp; Alkon, A. H. (2011). Mapping the Food Movement: Addressing Inequality and Neoliberalism. <i>Environment and Society</i>, 2(1), 68-86.</p> <p>Guthman, J. (2008). Neoliberalism and the making of alternative food politics in California. <i>Geoforum</i> 39(3): 1171-1183.</p>
Mar 2 UNIT 3	Class 7: Spaces and Places: Black Landownership and Farming in the U.S.	Gail Myers guest lecture! Course evaluation	<p><b>Assignment Due:</b> Perspectives Project Decision, questions for Gail Myers</p> <p><b>Readings Due:</b> Listen to: <a href="https://soundcloud.com/viewpoint-radio/dr-gail-myers-founder-executive-director-farms-to-grow-inc-oakland-ca">https://soundcloud.com/viewpoint-radio/dr-gail-myers-founder-executive-director-farms-to-grow-inc-oakland-ca</a> Watch: <a href="http://rhythmsoftheland.com/the-film/">http://rhythmsoftheland.com/the-film/</a> Look at: <a href="http://www.farmstogrow.com/">http://www.farmstogrow.com/</a></p> <p>Myers, G. (2015). Decolonizing a Food System: Freedom Farmers' Market as a Place for Resistance and Analysis. <i>Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development</i>, 5(4): 149-152.</p>
Mar 9	SPRING BREAK		

	!		
Ma r16	Class 8: Spaces & Places: Locavor ism in Context	Student-led topic presentations	<p><b>Assignment Due:</b> Notecard #6</p> <p><b>Readings Due:</b> DuPuis, E. M., &amp; Goodman, D. (2005). Should we go “home” to eat?: toward a reflexive politics of localism. <i>Journal of Rural Studies</i>, 21(3), 359-371. doi:10.1016/j.jrurstud.2005.05.011</p> <p>Group readings (see class plans)</p>
Ma r23	Class 9: Spaces & Places: Food Deserts & Food Insecuri ty	Interview Slips Due  Field Trip to Old North End Markets	<p><b>Assignment Due:</b> Notecard #7, Perspectives Progress Report</p> <p><b>Readings Due:</b></p> <p>Moulton, M. (2014). Food Mirages, Purity &amp; The Other Bodies.</p> <p>Sullivan, D. M. (2014). From food desert to food mirage: Race, social class, and food shopping in a gentrifying neighborhood. <i>Advances in Applied Sociology</i>, 4(1):30-35.</p> <p>Newkirk, V. R. (2014). Irrigating the (Food) Desert: A Tale of Gentrification in D.C. <i>The Gawker</i>. Retrieved from <a href="http://gawker.com/irrigating-the-food-desert-a-tale-of-gentrification-1617679708">http://gawker.com/irrigating-the-food-desert-a-tale-of-gentrification-1617679708</a></p>
Ma	Class	Introduction to special	<b>Assignment Due:</b> Notecard #8

r30 U N I T 4	10: People and Identity: Gender and Food	topics related to food & gender  Discussion of Readings	<p><b>Readings Due:</b> Barndt, D. 2008. Picking and packing for the north: Agricultural workers at Empaque Santa Rosa in <i>Tangled Routes: Women, work, and globalization on the tomato trail</i>. (pp. 222-242) Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield</p> <p>Sharpless, R. (2010). <i>Cooking in Other Women's Kitchens: Domestic Workers in the South, 1865-1960</i>. (preface). Univ of North Carolina Press.</p>
Apr 6	Class 11: People and Identity: Land, Labor, and Local Food	<p>Guest speaker: Teresa Mares</p> <p>Share Perspectives Projects (informal)</p>	<p><b>Assignment Due:</b> Notecard #9, Perspectives Project Due</p> <p><b>Readings Due:</b> Mares, T., Mazar, J. &amp; Wolcott-MacCausland, N. (2013). <i>Cultivating Food Sovereignty Where There are Few Choices</i>. Food Sovereignty: A Critical Dialogue International Conference. September 14-15, 2013.</p>
Apr 13	Class 12: People and Identity: Good Work in the Food System	<p>Discussion of Readings</p> <p>Free Write/ Storytelling</p> <p>Andrea Solazzo: gleaning presentation</p>	<p><b>Assignment Due:</b> None!</p> <p><b>Readings Due:</b> Food Chain Workers Alliance (2011). <i>The Hands that Feed Us</i>. Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 9-35).</p> <p>Myers, J.S., Sbicca, J. (2014). Bridging Good Food and Jobs: From Secession to Confrontation within Alternative Food Movement Politics. <i>Geoforum</i>, 61(2015), 17-26.</p>

			<p>Yeung, B. and Rubenstein, G. (25 June 2013). “Female workers face rape, harassment in US agriculture industry”. Center for Investigative Reporting. Retrieved from &lt;<a href="http://cironline.org/reports/female-workers-face-rape-harassment-us-agriculture-industry-4798">http://cironline.org/reports/female-workers-face-rape-harassment-us-agriculture-industry-4798</a>&gt;</p> <p>National Farmworker’s Ministry (2016). “Women’s Issues”. Retrieved form &lt;<a href="http://nfwm.org/education-center/farm-worker-issues/womens-issues/">http://nfwm.org/education-center/farm-worker-issues/womens-issues/</a>&gt;</p>
Apr 20	Class 13: People and Identity: Food and Religio n	<p>Frances Lasday Presentation</p> <p>Michael Twitty Film</p> <p>Discussion of Readings</p>	<p><b>Assignment Due:</b> Notecard #10</p> <p><b>Readings Due:</b></p> <p>McCutcheon, P. (2011). Community food security “by us, for us”: The Nation of Islam and the Pan African Orthodox Christian Church In A. H. Alkon &amp; J. Agyeman (Eds.), <i>Cultivating Food Justice</i>. Boston: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.</p> <p>Weissman, M. (2016). His Paula Deen Takedown went viral. But this food scholar isn’t done yet. <i>Washington Post</i>. Retrieved from:  <a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/food/his-paula-deen-takedown-went-viral-but-this-food-scholar-has-more-on-his-mind/2016/02/12/f83900f8-d031-11e5-88cd-753e80cd29ad_story.html?hpid=hp_hp-top-table-main_foodscholar-1220pm%3Ahomepage%2Fstory">https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/food/his-paula-deen-takedown-went-viral-but-this-food-scholar-has-more-on-his-mind/2016/02/12/f83900f8-d031-11e5-88cd-753e80cd29ad_story.html?hpid=hp_hp-top-table-main_foodscholar-1220pm%3Ahomepage%2Fstory</a></p>
Apr 27	Class 14:	Iceberg Activity	<b>Assignment Due:</b> Redefinition paper



U N I T  5	Looking Ahead: A Socially Sustainable Food Movement	<p>Discussion of Readings</p> <p>Finalize food map</p> <p>Final course Evaluation</p>	<p><b>Readings Due:</b></p> <p>Figueroa, M. (2015). Food Sovereignty in Everyday Life: Toward a People-centered Approach to Food Systems. <i>Globalizations</i> 12(4): 498-512</p> <p>Gibson-Graham, J.K. (2006). The Makings of An Imaginary In A Postcapitalist Politics. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: xxii-xxvii.</p>
May 4	Class 15: Class Potluck & Share Redefinition Papers		



## Appendix B: Class Plans and Reflections

### UNIT I: Introduction

#### **Class 1 January 20th: Mindfulness, Positionality, & Introducing the Food System**

##### Objectives:

1. Introduce course
2. Get to know each other
3. Go over syllabus, course expectations and assignments
4. Introduce key terms

##### Assignments Due:

None

##### Readings Due:

None

##### Schedule:

12:05-12:35 Course Introduction

12:35-12:55 Student Introductions

12:55-1:15 Safe Space

1:15-1:30 Free Write

1:30-1:45 Break & Mindfulness

1:45-2:00 Discussion of Free Write

2:00-2:20: Key Terms Group Discussion

2:20-3:00 Review Syllabus

##### Reflection:

Our goal for this class was to familiarize the students with the facilitators, peers, common terms, and the syllabus. We wrote our objectives and the schedule for the day on the board in order to follow the backwards design pedagogy. We began the class with a brief introduction of ourselves, followed by a quick description of how the course came together and why we wanted to conduct it. We established ourselves as facilitators, rather than teachers. We read over the course objectives and were explicit about our intentions with the course. We were slightly nervous and this took less time than intended because we rushed through the objectives.

We moved into an identity sharing activity that intended to familiarize students with one another, but also to foster the skill of mindful listening. Students were broken up into pairs of two and were prompted with various questions (i.e. where do you see yourself in 5 years, 10 years?). We instructed them to alternate between listening for two minutes and talking for two minutes. We were eager to commence the activity, and could have spent more time providing clear instructions. We found that students were not mindfully listening, but instead interjecting while their partners' were speaking. In addition, the students that went outside of the classroom did not get to answer the questions we wrote on the board. However, it was apparent that students were comfortable talking amongst themselves. This also gave us some time to slow down and mentally prepare for the remainder of the class.

Following the activity, we moved towards establishing class norms and safe space. We asked students to write down activities or phrases that they associate with some of their most successful classes. We then told the students to write some of them on the board. This activity established a sense of safe-space and common ground in the classroom. It was helpful for us as facilitators to reflect on the elements that students appreciate most in the classroom at the beginning of the

semester. We had all of the students sign a sheet of paper stating they would abide by notion of “safe space” that was established by the criteria on the board.

Following the establishment of safe space, we broke for our 15 minute break. We brought homemade bread, jam and apples. Taking the time to eat with one another fostered a sense of community and trust in the classroom. It was a less formal time for students to familiarize themselves with each other and the facilitators. We followed this with a five-minute mindfulness activity. We found that the mindfulness helped bring the students’ awareness back to the classroom.

We then had students free-write definitions for the food system and the food movement, followed by an explanation of their relationship to one another. After the free-write, Claire wrote key words that students used to define both the food system and the food movement. This successfully developed and summarized the students’ ideas. Claire was able to draw the connection between the food system and food movement that we had hoped students would articulate. The purpose of this activity was to ensure that students were all on the same page about key ideas and phrases, so that we could move forward with more challenging material.

Followed by the discussion we handed out a Key Terms sheet and assigned a different set of terms for three groups to define and then share with the class. This activity further allowed students to become familiar with common phrases that might be used throughout the semester. In addition, this activity prompted our first assignment, the Definition Paper.

Following the discussion of key terms, we projected the syllabus and reviewed it as a class. The purpose of this was to ensure that students were fully aware of the expectations and topics that would be covered. Preceding this, a student asked, “so where are the solutions?” This question was challenging and could have been better answered if we had predicted it.

We found that moving between class discussion, group activities, and individual writing were successful in keeping students engaged with the material. We planned just enough so that we used the entire class period. In our post-class discussion, we mentioned that we wanted to discuss the importance of the material as well as the concept of “missionary tactics” and solutions that tell “others” how to behave. We felt that the first class was successful because an unsure student came up to us and gave his 95 number so that he could officially register for the course.

## **Class 2 January 27th Introduction: Unlearning, Critical Thinking, & Breaking Down the Food System**

Objectives:

1. Explore themes from reading
2. Relate themes of readings to the class
3. Re-evaluate safe space norms
4. Review course logistics and changes to the syllabus

Assignment Due:

- Definition Paper

Readings Due:

1. Freire, P. (1993). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. 1970. *New York: Continuum*. Chapter 1, “The justification for a pedagogy of the oppressed...”.
2. hooks, b. (2010). *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom*. bell hooks the teaching trilogy. New York: Routledge. Chapter 1, “Critical Thinking”.

3. McIntosh, P.(1989). White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack. Peace and Freedom Magazine, July/August,10–12. Philadelphia, PA: Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom.

Schedule:

12:05-12:10 Mindfulness Practice

12:10-12:30 Introduction to Check-Ins / Do Check-Ins / Layout for the day

12:30 - 12:55 Tanya Fields Video [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wzRzF3\\_YXcs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wzRzF3_YXcs)

12:55 - 1:30 Free Write & Discussion

1:30-1:45 Break and Snack

1:45 - 1:50 Mindfulness

1:50-2:40 Discussion of Readings

2:40-3:00 Course logistics

Reflection:

Although this was the second class, it was our first class really digging into the meat and bones of the course. We used the first class to set the stage for the logistics, space, and topic and used this second course as a way to begin to unlearn commonly held assumptions in the food system and begin a class practice of deep, critical thinking. After mindfulness, we began the day with an introduction to check-ins. We explained our reasoning for having check-ins, as a way to start off each class day understanding where everyone is at. We offered that students are not required to share and can say “pass” if that feels more comfortable. Although we left the check-ins open ended for all other classes, this first check-in began with a prompt, discuss a food experience you had recently. We decided to do this so students did not feel pressed to share personal details if they did not feel comfortable. We then began going around the table. Claire began the check in to model an appropriate length of time to share.

In order to connect the readings, which were not explicitly on the food system, to the course we began the class with the video, “Lettuce Liberate,” by Tanya Fields. In the video, Fields poses the question, “How do we create a new food system model that includes those most impacted by a broken and corrupt system?”. Nested within that question is the critical thinking that we, as facilitators, sought to promote. We felt as though the video was successful in solidifying topics from reading and connecting those readings back to the food system and food movement. Students came in seeming confused about the relevance of the readings and this video helped to demystify some of this hesitation.

One student stated, “I didn’t think the readings really fit the course, but now I understand what you were going for”.

When planning this course, we anticipated that students would pose some question like: Well, what is the solution to all of these problems? This happened right in the beginning of discussion and Leila replied, “I have no clue”. Although this seemed startling to students, we were given a natural opportunity to explain that our individual academic careers have brought us to this question, what is the solution? Because we, as students, have yet to find many viable solutions, we were able to share that this course is meant, in part, to be relevant platform to collectively envision a more just food system.

After the video, we moved into a free write to allow students 10-15 minutes to gather their thoughts before our first class discussion. These seemed to give students time to process the video and when we came back together, without prompting students began to react to the video and make connections between the video and class topics.

After the class, Olivia stated that she felt like she could talk less. Leila felt as though she talked enough and so did we all. Claire felt like she had some moments of anxiety and kept hoping that everyone felt comfortable. Despite these worries, we ended the class feeling as though students made very natural connections between the readings and content provided in class. Before students left, we reviewed course logistics and expectations for the next week. We received a lot of positive feedback and cues as students left the class and through these social cues, we were able to gather that students felt welcome in the environment. We also made sure to grade student participation right at the end of class because it was fresh in our minds.

## UNIT II: Culture

### Class 3 February 3rd: Food Movement Definitions and Food in the Media

#### Objectives:

1. Critical discussion of readings
2. Recognize/discover/discuss common patterns of representation in the AFM

#### Assignments Due:

- Notecard #1

#### Readings Due:

1. Alkon, A. H., & Agyeman, J. (2011). The Food Movement as Polyculture in Cultivating Food Justice (pp. 1-20): Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
2. Pollan, M. (2006). What's for Dinner? *The New York Times*. Retrieved from: <http://michaelpollan.com/articles-archive/whats-for-dinner-2/>
3. Ragovin, H. (2012). Not My Revolution. *Tufts Now*. Retrieved from [http://now.tufts.edu/print/articles/not-my-revolution-food-access?utm\\_source=PANTHEON\\_STRIPPED&utm\\_campaign=PANTHEON\\_STRIPPE&utm\\_medium=PANTHEON\\_STRIPPED](http://now.tufts.edu/print/articles/not-my-revolution-food-access?utm_source=PANTHEON_STRIPPED&utm_campaign=PANTHEON_STRIPPE&utm_medium=PANTHEON_STRIPPED)

#### Schedule:

12:05 - 12:10 Mindfulness  
12:10-12:30 Introductions & Check-Ins  
12:30-12:40 Alternative Food Movement in the Media Introduction  
12:40-1:10 Small group activity  
1:10-1:30 Share and discuss media activity  
1:30-1:50 Break & Snacks & Mindfulness Practice  
1:50-2:45 Discussion of readings  
2:45 - 3:00 Logistics

#### Reflection:

In planning this class, Claire felt as though there might not be enough material to fill the entire three hour time block, but the media activity ended up taking the allotted time, if not more therefore we were right on track the entire class period. To prepare for this class, Olivia, Claire, and Leila collected books, magazines, websites blogs, and even Instagram accounts that all showcase some element of the Alternative Food Movement. This week, we had two announcements from students outside of class of (1) the Farm worker Student Solidarity Network, Juntos and (2) the ENVS Peer Mentoring Program. We were excited to have these students make announcements because not only does it encourage student involvement, student speakers reinforce the power of students-teaching-students as a whole. After those short announcements, we began with introductions and check-ins. We then moved on to a short

introduction to our common perceptions of the Alternative Food Movement in the media. We tried to remain diplomatic in our introduction of the topic because we wanted students to make their own conclusions as to the common demographics and trends prevalent in the AFM. We showed a short, funny clip from the show, “Portlandia,” to lighten the mood.

The media activity went as follows: students broke up into three groups. (1) Articles and blogs, (2) Instagram, (3) and cook books and magazines. We gave out the materials we suggested and, with computers that students were asked to bring to class, we encourage each group to search for more examples of media showcasing the AFM. With the media collected, we posed the simple question, “What do you *notice* about these sources?”. While the media activity was going on, Olivia, Leila, and Claire noticed that all students were interested and engaged. Students were all taking turns to step up and step back, one of our class norms. After we concluded the activity, we had each group share. We encouraged students to keep these ideas in mind for the larger discussion after break and snack.

When we returned from break we got into a lively discussion of the readings. Students seemed slightly less engaged in the discussion as compared to the media activity, but we continued to pose new questions to try to spark new ideas. After the class finished for the day, we recognized that in the future it may be better to write all the discussion questions on the board for reference rather than say them out loud. Olivia noted that she felt as though she could have stepped down a little and let the class speak more. Claire felt as though some of the discussion rambled a bit, which could have been a good thing. We all agreed that we need to be sure we are staying on topic. Our overall class takeaway was that we want to be sure that when introducing new class material, it is not repetitive and continues to engage and inspire students as well as foster an atmosphere of critical thinking.

#### **Class 4 February 10th: Food Movement and Identity**

##### **Objectives:**

1. Understand the effects of colonization and disenfranchisement on the relationships of First Nations groups and African-Americans to food and farming.
2. Continue to examine the influence of “whiteness” on the food movement and system.
3. Discuss how family history and cultural heritage influences one’s relationship to food.

##### **Assignments Due:**

- Notecard #2

##### **Readings Due:**

Guthman, J. (2011). "If Only They Knew": The Unbearable Whiteness of Alternative Food. In A. H. Alkon & J. Agyeman (Eds.), *Cultivating Food Justice*. Boston: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Naramore, Raven. (2012) Decolonizing diet: Looking to the past for the health of the future. University of Kansas Master of Arts in Indigenous Nations Studies.

##### **Schedule:**

12:05-12:15 Mindfulness and check-ins

12:15-1:15 Watch Greenhorns trailer and Black African American Farmers: A Legacy of Landownership

1:15-1:45 Discuss readings and movie

1:45-2:00 Break

2:05-2:10 Participant observation and Interview explanation

2:20-2:50 Work on Food System Map

2:50-3:00 Debrief assignments and readings for next class

Reflection:

Our goal in planning this class was to provide a range of stories and perspectives on how different cultural groups relate to food and farming as a result of their histories and collective experience. We began the class by watching a short trailer of the Greenhorns documentary film, about young and first-time farmers who are returning to the land in search of a more honest, simple and ecologically conscious way of life. We followed this with “Black African American Farmers: A Legacy of Landownership”, an hour-long film that talks about the struggles to retain and work the land experienced by Black landowners and farmers in the South. These stories were told through the lens of one woman’s family history and her process of rediscovering a connection with her ancestors through the land. Although the film was long and the group’s attention seemed to wane towards the end, it provided interesting material to discuss in conjunction with the Greenhorn’s trailer. One student brought up the interesting point that, for the young Greenhorns, farming represented a new beginning, whereas for many Black farmers, holding on to their land feels like “a last chance” to keep their families together. Students seemed receptive to the film’s message overall, and recognized that land dispossession is an important topic that is not often addressed in class on food and farming.

Based on the readings evaluation, students seemed to enjoy Naramore’s “Decolonizing Diet” and felt that the message was more positive and inspiring. Students also responded well to the level of detail about indigenous foodways and customs, and mentioned that reviving these traditions is a concrete step that can be taken in the direction of a more just food system. Although we didn’t spend much discussion time on Naramore’s dissertation, Leila appreciated these comments in the readings evaluation because her intention with assigning Naramore’s piece was to present a perspective that is both hopeful and resistant to the dominant alternative food paradigm.

Many students mentioned being shocked and disappointed in the often blatant racism of farmer’s market managers and vendors brought up in Julie Guthman’s article. This reading seemed to inspire feelings of guilt and shame in students, as they perhaps felt complicit in the “unbearable whiteness” of the food system. Others felt that it was redundant and that “we talk about whiteness a lot”. However, the readings evaluation shows that more students felt the readings provided a necessary perspective and important “realizations about food justice and inequality” grounded in a case study.

We then explained more clearly the two options for our semester-long Perspectives Project. Leila felt that taking time to go over this again impressed upon our students the importance of this project for the class, and perhaps clarified some questions they had. However, she felt that some students were uncomfortable with how open-ended the project was. Leila left the class feeling as if we needed to devise a more concrete guiding question or idea for the Perspectives Project, rather than just talking to different people about food in general or observing a food space. However, Claire and Olivia pushed her to stick with the highly individually motivated and open nature of the project, pointing out that it would encourage students to be creative and make sharing the projects once they were completed more interesting and dynamic.

We also worked on the Food System Map for the first time during this class period. Leila was nervous to introduce this project, as I viewed it as “her” assignment and idea and wanted it



to “succeed” and not fall flat. She struggled with how to go about setting the students to work on the map, as she wanted it to be motivated by their ideas and desires rather than any concrete guidelines or rubric (much like the Perspectives Project). Students seemed confused at first, and very reluctant to put pen to paper and start the map. Students repeatedly asked what *we* (the facilitators) wanted them to do, how we wanted it to look, if they should discuss or work separately etc. It was probably intimidating to have a large blank sheet in front and a teacher looking over one’s shoulder, but eventually students seemed to get over their shyness and began to write out general concepts and draw lines and arrows connecting them. Leila requested that students make these connections clearer by labeling the arrows with *how* the concepts relate so we would remember when we looked at the map later.

We finished the class by debriefing and talking about assignments and readings for the next week.

### **Class 5 February 17th: Food Origins, Appropriation and Assimilation**

Objectives:

Assignments Due:

Notecard #3

Readings Due:

Mintz, S. (1997). Chapter 2: Food and Its Relationship to Power in *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom* (pp. 17-32). Boston: Beacon Press.

Kuo, R. (2015). The Feminist Guide to Being a Foodie without Being Culturally Appropriative. *Everyday Feminism*. Retrieved from <http://everydayfeminism.com/2015/11/foodie-without-appropriation/>

Timpf, K. (2015). Are You Even Thinking about Oppression While You Eat That Taco? *National Review*. Retrieved from <http://www.nationalreview.com/article/427436/cultural-appropriation-authentic-food-racist>

Schedule:

12:05-12:15 Mindfulness and Check In

12:15 - 1:00 D.I.E. Activity & Discussion

1:00-1:30 Discussion of Culture and Cultural Relativism

1:30-1:45: Break

1:45-2:00: Review Perspectives Project

2:00-2:50 Discussion of Readings

2:50-3:00 Closure

Reflection:

Our goal for this class was to encourage students to recognize cultural assumptions that are made about foods other places, as well as an introductory understanding of colonized food systems and its impact on our current food system. We began with mindfulness and then moved into an activity that Olivia learned on her study abroad program in India. The activity, Description, Interpretation, and Evaluation (D.I.E.), informs students of their own cultural biases. The students were shown 5 pictures and were asked to do three things: First they were instructed to objectively describe the photo. (What is happening?) Second, they were asked to interpret what is happening. (Why is this happening?) Third, they were asked to evaluate their interpretation. (Do you feel positively or negatively about your interpretation, why?) We used five photographs that pertained to the food system. Students were split into pairs of two. This

activity encouraged students to recognize their own cultural biases that informed their description and interpretation of the photograph. Students were fully engaged in the activity and provided positive feedback.

Preceding the reflection of D.I.E., we moved into a discussion of cultural relativism and how it is connected to inside meaning/outside meaning. There was a great discussion and students asked critical questions about the Mintz reading. Students made connections between inside/outside meaning and colonization/appropriation of foods. It was apparent that the notecards encouraged students to critically think about these themes.

Following the activity, we had a relaxed lecture/discussion about culture and cultural relativism. Some students had a difficult time grasping the notion of cultural relativism; however, it fostered an in-depth conversation about subconscious assumptions. We moved into break and then mindfulness.

After this, we discussed the Perspectives Project and made students aware of deadlines and resources available for interviews and participant observation. Moving into a discussion of readings, we wrote down specific terms “inside meaning” and “outside meaning” on the board and encouraged students to define them. Students made connections between Mintz’ theories to the other two readings about cultural appropriation on their own, which demonstrated their level of interest.

### **Class 6 February 24th: Neoliberalism and Alternative Food**

#### **Objectives:**

1. Define the concept of neoliberalism
2. Understand how this term applies to the food system and alternative food movement
3. Incorporate these terms and ideas into the food system map

#### **Assignments Due:**

- Notecard #4

#### **Readings Due:**

Mares, T. M., & Alkon, A. H. (2011). Mapping the Food Movement: Addressing Inequality and Neoliberalism. *Environment and Society*, 2(1), 68-86.

Guthman, J. (2008). Neoliberalism and the making of alternative food politics in California. *Geoforum* 39(3): 1171-1183.

#### **Schedule:**

12:05-12:15 Mindfulness and check-ins

12:15-1:00 Introducing neoliberalism presentation

1:15- 2:00 Interview workshop with Kit

2:00-2:15 Break

2:15-2:30 Discussion

2:30-2:50 Work on Food System Map

2:50-3:00 Debrief for next class

#### **Reflection:**

We began the class a bit flustered because Kit forgot about giving her presentation on interviews and Leila had to start class with the introduction to Neoliberalism. Leila felt that the presentation went well- she had prepared a brief PowerPoint that covered the basic concepts of neoliberalism and governmentality and how they related to alternative food practice as explained

by Guthman, Mares and Pena. Students asked insightful clarifying questions and seemed to understand clearly how the relatively abstract concepts related to our discussions of food. This understanding was also reflected in the notecards: one student drew connections between the talk by Tanya Fields and the Mares and Pena article, as both emphasized the need for change to come from affected communities if progress toward true food sovereignty is to be made. In the readings evaluation we handed out in the seventh class, other students expressed frustration at the complexity and density of the Guthman article, but noted that our discussion in class helped clarify the ideas. Leila tried to direct the conversation away from discussions of whiteness and privilege and toward the idea of ethical consumerism as activism in alternative food discourse, as she felt that the students were becoming exhausted and guilty when we continued to focus on the topic of race. Although the discussion was brief, students seemed excited to try and think of modes of action outside of capitalism, which the facilitators thought was the main call to action presented in the readings.

Kit's presentation on interviews was a nice break and a chance to interact one-on-one with peers. After pairing up, one student told a detailed, food-related story while the other listened without providing any sort of verbal or non-verbal feedback. Then, the listener retold the speaker's story, taking care to restate the most important details. The speaker then assessed if the listener had covered everything, and the roles switched. This activity helped us practice active listening in preparation for interviews. Kit also answered specific questions from students planning to do interviews for their Perspectives Project, and briefly touched on the processes of formulating questions, recording and transcription. The facilitators felt that having another teacher was a welcome break, and enjoyed having Kit convey her expertise on the topic.

After the interview practice session and readings discussion, the class worked on the Food System Map. After a discussion on the first mapping session, Claire presented the idea of having students first discuss in small groups and come up with draft maps or plans, which they would then put on the big, collective map. This seemed to work much better than having students add to the map individually all at once, and the class seemed more excited and less intimidated by the mapping activity the second time around.

### UNIT III: Spaces and Places

#### **Class 7 March 2nd: Guest lecture and conversation with Gail Myers**

##### Objectives:

1. Complete mid-semester readings, course and self-evaluations
2. Talk with Gail Myers!

##### Assignments Due:

Perspectives Project Decision, questions for Gail Myers

##### Readings Due:

Viewpoint! Radio Interview with Gail Myers

Myers, G. P. (2015). Decolonizing a food system: Freedom Farmers' Market as a place for resistance and analysis. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development* 5(4), 149–152. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5304/jafscd.2015.054.025>

##### Activities:

1. Complete mid-semester class, self- and readings evaluations
2. Meet and talk with Gail Myers

## Reflection:

In preparation for having Gail come to speak, the facilitators had students formulate at least three probing, insightful questions based on a radio interview and an article that Gail recommended they read. While students were filling out evaluations, Claire, Leila and Olivia went over the questions and wrote down a few good ones to have on hand during the discussion. Gail sat at the table with us and had an intimate discussion with us about her experiences with black farmers and landowners. Gail told us about her work in the Freedom Farmer's Market and research on black agrarian tradition throughout the south and Ohio. Her emphasis on hope, agency, community and happiness resonated strongly with the students, who had previously expressed feeling paralysed or overwhelmed by the scope of issues covered in the class. Gail spoke frankly about racial oppression and hierarchy, but affirmed that there was a place for middle class, college educated white folks to enact change and create a more just food system. She eloquently described the sense of community and tradition she felt when researching black food culture while writing her dissertation, and creating a space where this culture is cultivated at the Freedom Farmer's Market in Oakland, California. Her emphasis on the universality of valuing the land for what it provides us, and connecting with it through gardening and farming, as well as the fact that we all "come from soil" was as a reminder to the entire class of *why* we are all drawn to this work in the first place.

We all felt honored to have her in our classroom and spoke gushingly of how smart and awesome she was as soon as she left the room. Students expressed how grateful they were for the guest lecture and the positive impact it had on them. We were happy to see many students from the class at Gail's lecture for the wider university community the next day, as it affirmed that they had enjoyed their discussion with her and wanted to learn more.

## **SPRING BREAK!**

### **Class 8 March 16th: Locavorism in Vermont**

Objectives:

Assignments Due:

Notecard #6

Readings Due:

DuPuis, E. M., & Goodman, D. (2005). Should we go "home" to eat?: toward a reflexive politics of localism. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 21(3), 359-371. doi:10.1016/j.jrurstud.2005.05.011

**Group 1:** Community Land Trusts and alternative land ownership

Swann, B and Witt, S. Land: the Challenge and Opportunity. Center for New Economics  
Explore the Yorkley Court Community website <https://yorkleycourt.wordpress.com/>

**Group 2:** Cooperative businesses and economies

Massicotte, M.-J. (2014). Solidarity economy and agricultural cooperatives: The experience of the Brazilian Landless Rural Workers Movement. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, 4(3), 155-176. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5304/jafscd.2014.043.011>

Gray, T. W. (2014). Historical tensions, institutionalization, and the need for multistakeholder cooperatives [Commentary]. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, 4(3), 23-28 <http://dx.doi.org/10.5304/jafscd.2014.043.013>

### **Group 3: Localized food systems and community**

Gross, J. (2012). Capitalism and its discontents: Back-to-the-lander and freegan foodways in rural Oregon.

Pena, D.G. Farmers Feeding Families: Agroecology in South Central Los Angeles.

#### **Schedule:**

12:05-12:15 Check-ins and mindfulness

12:15-1:05 Group meetings and planning

1:05-1:20 Group 1 presentation

1:20-1:35 Group 2 presentation

1:35-1:50 Group 3 presentation

1:50-2:10 Break

2:10-2:45 Full group discussion

2:45-3:00 Debrief for next class

#### **Reflection:**

Taking into account students' desire for differently-structured discussion, Leila divided the class into three groups, based on concepts connected to local food systems, and assigned one reading that everyone had to read to inform the full-group discussion (Dupuis and Goodman 2005). Students met with their groups and planned a mini lesson on the material in the readings to teach the rest of the class. After the planning period, Group 1 started with the concept of community land trusts and alternative land ownership, beginning their lesson by having everyone rip off their individual piece of a landscape that they had drawn on a large piece of paper. This action represented the traditional mode of land ownership- highly individualized and fragmented, with little consideration for how the parts interact. Group 1 then talked through the definition of a community land trust and connected it to the idea of "reflexive politics" explained in Dupuis and Goodman. They used the whiteboard to draw an "information bubble" that elucidated the main components of a land trust, including affordable access to land, ecological assessment, and democratic decision making.

Group 2 explained cooperative business and economies, beginning by explaining the general overview of agricultural cooperatives (Gray 2014), outlining the differences between a co-op and an investor oriented firm (democratic decision-making, geographic embeddedness, and the overlap of production and consumption). Then, they gave a summary of the article on the Brazilian Landless Rural Workers movement (MST) by Massicotte, drawing attention to the importance of agroecological principles and the strength and size of these cooperatives in the context of the Brazilian economies, in contrast to the relatively weak status of agricultural co-ops in the US.

Group 3 summarized the article by Gross on back-to-the-landers and freegans in Oregon, giving a balanced summary before engaging with the more problematic elements of freeganism and the idea of going "back" to the land. This group clearly demonstrated strong critical analysis of the readings, connecting back to our other discussions on uneven land access and racial and class privilege as a determining factor in *who* can choose to be a freegan or grow all of their own food. One student brought in a wonderful phrase: "Capitalism is a time suck", explaining how attempting to live "outside" of capitalism takes an inordinate amount of time that some people simply do not have, based perhaps on their occupation or geographic location. The Gross reading also brought up the important question of "checking out" of the system as a viable way to challenge it. Most students seemed to think that freegan and back-to-the-land lifeways were not

adequately challenging capitalism by opting out. This group mentioned that the Peña article on the South Central Farm was more hopeful, and it reminded them of the “Lettuce Liberate” lecture by Tanya Fields that we watched during the second class.

After the break, we had Annie write her discussion questions on the board and we began with a question on what we would bring to grow in a garden if we were to move somewhere else (Mexico specifically, in response to Peña’s article). We then moved into a discussion of what a fully sovereign food system would look like, which brought in the material covered in the Dupuis and Goodman article on the complexity and desirability of a fully local food system. Students seemed to agree that “local” is a messy, complex term, weighted with certain values and ideals. One of Annie’s questions, “If you were moving somewhere new and sought to establish yourself in this new place through the food you produced, what would you grow/make?” prompted a discussion about foods that were familiar to each student. WE finished the class with a debrief for next week.

### **Class 9 March 23rd: Food Deserts (Food Mirages) & Food Insecurity**

Objectives:

Assignments Due:

Notecard #7, Perspectives Progress Report

Readings due:

Moulton, M. (2014). Food Mirages, Purity & The Other Bodies.

Sullivan, D. M. (2014). From food desert to food mirage: Race, social class, and food shopping in a gentrifying neighborhood.

Newkirk, V. R. (2014). Irrigating the (Food) Desert: A Tale of Gentrification in D.C.

Schedule:

12:05-12:15 Mindfulness & Check-Ins

12:15-12:40 Discussion of Readings Break into Groups

12:40-1:00 Get Packed Up & Walk Downtown

1:00-2:00 Food Desert/Food Mirage/Burlington Food System Walk

2:00-2:45 Mapping Activity & Tea & Cookies at Claire’s House

2:45-3:00 Let folks leave a bit early to get back to campus

Reflection:

The function of this class was to transcend common rhetoric around food deserts and food access. We recognized that much of our education in Environmental Studies has been focused on defining food deserts and food insecurity, but we have yet to engage in critique of these definitions and the tactics employed to address food insecure communities. As this day we were going on a field trip, we began the class day alerting students that we would be breaking the usual cycle for the field trip. A few days before the class, we sent an email to everyone to remind them to wear comfortable, weather-dependent clothing and shoes for walking. After mindfulness and check-ins, we randomly assigned students into five working groups for the class period by having students count off. After finding their group, each group was assigned one of five questions: (1) What are elements that make a grocery store inclusive? (2) What type of research could a grocery store benefit from to improve its inclusivity? (3) What are the benefits and drawbacks of having one grocery store, versus many markets? (4) If there is only one grocery store, do they have an obligation to meet the needs of everyone in the community? (5) What are

your current perceptions of food markets in Burlington? We gave students 20 minutes to discuss these questions in the context of their reading. When we came back together, we decided not to do a share out to save more time at the end of class to share and work on the food systems map.

We situated ourselves in what the USDA would define as a food desert, the Old North End in Burlington, as a means to spark discussion and engage in participant observation. Each group was assigned a market: Mawuhi African Market, Community Halal Market, Central Asian Market, Thai Phat, or Himalayan Food Market. We walked to Olivia's house on Loomis Street and dropped off our things and handed out the addresses to the different markets. We encouraged students to spend a good amount of time at the market they were assigned, but gave them space to visit other markets if they were interested. We asked students to be mindful and respectful of their disposition walking into new spaces and to make observations of what was being sold at the market, who was at the market, how the food was labeled, and even speak to the workers or shop owners if it felt right, and recognize their own feelings in the space. Finally, we asked that if students were comfortable and able, to go through the process of purchasing something at the market.

After an hour of walking in and out of markets, we met at Olivia's house to share. Each group went around, as we snacked on the food that students had bought, their experiences. The students that went to the Mawuhi African Market said that they spoke to the owner of the market, Charles, about his nine children and the business. He gave the three students who visited the market a donut and discussed the values he lived by, "That once you have enough, you should give to other". The students that his shop carried a variety of products outside of groceries, like African hair products and spices. Experiences and observations such as these informed a more nuanced vision of the markets. Students shared all sorts of stories and interactions and after about a half an hour of discussion, we brought out the food map and asked students to try to translate their experiences and new understandings of food access onto paper.

## UNIT IV: People and Identity

### Class 10 March 30th: Gender and Food

#### Objectives:

1. Understand and discuss a sampling of prevailing issues related to agriculture and the food system
2. Conceptualize the ways in which these issues are connected to larger systems of oppression
3. Offer visions of how pervasive, oppressive gendered systems can be challenged

#### Assignments Due:

Notecard #8

#### Readings Due:

Barndt, D. 2008. Picking and packing for the north: Agricultural workers at Empaque Santa Rosa in *Tangled Routes: Women, work, and globalization on the tomato trail*. (pp. 222-242)

Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield

Sharpless, R. (2010). *Cooking in Other Women's Kitchens: Domestic Workers in the South, 1865-1960*. (Preface). Univ of North Carolina Press.

#### Schedule:

12:05 - 12:15 Settling In, Mindfulness, Check-Ins

12:15 - 1:00 Debrief from conference (Mariah, Emily, Michelle, Melissa, Claire, Olivia, and Leila)

1:00 - 1:20 Videos from Food Network (how cooks are portrayed differently)

1:15 - 1:45 Introduction to special topics on gender & agriculture

1:45 - 2:00 Break / Snack Mindfulness

2:00 - 2:25 Self organize into special topics for discussion

2:25 - 2:45 Come together to discuss (discussion questions person introduce their ideas here)

2:45 - 3:00 Questions / Comments / Concerns / Perspectives Project Any last Questions /  
Preparing for next week

Reflection:

Continuing on the vein of giving students more autonomy to be self-directed learners, we made a lot of space for student-driven discussion in this class session. We began with an open share of the conference that four of our students attended along with the three of us facilitators called, “Just Food? Forum on Land Use, Rights, and Ecology,” a collaboration of the Harvard Food Law Society and the Food Literacy Project at Harvard. All of the students who attended the conference shared a reflection, reaction, or personal story. It was clear and beaconing that this conference was deeply moving for all of us. Students in our class who did not attend the conference asked relevant, interested questions and it sparked a lively discussion.

From there we transitioned into the presentation on special topics related to gender and food. Claire began with a short disclaimer on the triggering nature of some of the topics, especially farmworker sexual violence and coercion. In pursuit of our safe space goals, we made sure that all students in class were aware of what we would be talking about and gave them the autonomy to leave at any point if they did not feel comfortable. The presentation began with a discussion of food in the media, centering on the portrayal of female and male chefs in Food Network shows. Next, Claire introduced the ways in which farm tools and machinery are not made or marketed to women, the sexual division of labor, the feminization of labor, and farmworker sexual violence. The presentation ended with an introduction to gender mainstreaming public policy as a potential cog in the wheel of a deeply gendered agricultural system worldwide. Throughout the presentation, students shared stories and insights, making the presentation a more informal exchange. One student told a story about her grandmother who was a chickpea farmer and her experience coming to the United States and no longer being able to practice her agricultural work. It was personal and profound to hear our students share stories.

After the presentation we had a short break, during which we asked students to begin to think of what topic, out of the six presented, they would like to dive deeper. Students came back together and three groups emerged: (1) Gender in the media, (2) Feminization of labor, and (3) Gender and farm machinery and tools. We split off for 25 minutes to discuss and lively discussions broke out, as we encouraged students to search for more information online and connect to their readings. We came back together for 30-minute share-out and conversation. Students naturally made connections between the presentation, reading, and other topics. We were nervous that students would see these topics as unrelated entities, but students quickly began to make connections. One student made a connection to the wider issue of systematic gender disparity by telling a story about her aunt being the first female police chief in her town and the disrespect and backlash she experienced. This story helped to contextualize that issues of gender are far-reaching and transcend discussions related to food.



One student brought in fantastic, critical discussion questions, but due to time constraints we were unable to bring them up. We wrote them on the board and encouraged students to mull over these topics throughout the day. Finally, we left 10-15 minutes at the end of class for students to come speak with us about any questions or concerns as the final Perspectives Project is due next week.

## **Class 11 April 6th: Land, Labor and Local Food**

Objectives:

Assignments Due:

12:10 - 1:30: Guest Speaker Teresa Mares

1:30 - 1:45 Break

1:45 - 3:00 Check In/ Sharing Perspectives Projects

Readings Due:

Mares, T., Mazar, J. & Wolcott-MacCausland, N. (2013). *Cultivating Food Sovereignty Where There are Few Choices*. Food Sovereignty: A Critical Dialogue International Conference. September 14-15, 2013.

Schedule:

12:10 - 1:30: Guest Speaker Teresa Mares

1:30 - 1:45 Break

1:45 - 3:00 Check In/ Sharing Perspectives Projects

Reflection:

Teresa Mares, assistant professor in the Anthropology department at UVM guest lectured on her “scholar-activist” role in the food system, specifically with migrant labor on dairy farms in Vermont. Teresa is affiliated with the Research Initiative in Food Systems and started the Huertas program, which facilitates kitchen gardens for migrant workers on dairy farms. Teresa stated that the work is both inspiring and troubling, and named that these are stories about people who are laboring for our ice cream and other dairy products we consume.

Teresa began her lecture by discussing migrant workers within the context of Vermont, which is a “hot racial climate” due to the fact that it is the 2nd whitest state in the US. Teresa introduced her concept of “structural vulnerability,” and defined it as “how structural inequalities impedes people’s abilities to be healthy and to live.” 90% of the 1500 migrant workers in Vermont are undocumented and therefore are vulnerable to issues of food insecurity and lack of access to healthcare. Teresa noted that 81.6% of the 92 workers surveyed were food insecure; however, the phrasing of questions were flawed. They asked if the workers made enough money to buy food, which does not capture their ability to access grocery stores or the fear of being noticed by border patrol in public. Teresa highlighted four distinct causes of food insecurity for migrant workers: rural isolation and border proximity, lack of mobility, dependency on third parties to access food, and limited culturally appropriate food. Teresa noted that even though there is a lot of injustice and the statistics are incredibly troubling, there is amazing RESILIENCY, CREATIVITY, and INVENTIVENESS occurring.

After contextualizing students, Teresa talked about her project “Huertas”, a program that improves migrant worker food security by providing necessary support for the development of their own “kitchen gardens” on the dairy farms because they are not likely to leave. The program

enables workers to grow foods that have cultural meaning and prevents them from depending on other people to get food. Teresa noted that Huertas provides a “sense of agency and control”. This lecture was highly connected to various themes from our class, such as food sovereignty, food culture, and access. Teresa talked a worker and friend named Tomas (pseudonym) who knew more about gardening than any student would be able to learn from a Plant Soil Science program. She named that the Alternative Food Movement does not give credit to people like Tomas, which tied to our course on representation and credibility in the AFM.

The second part of Teresa’s lecture was an open discussion. Since the Perspectives project was due that day, Leila and Olivia prepared questions for Teresa. A few students asked Teresa questions about her work and how to get involved. Teresa responded to a question about the role of ethnographic work: “ethnography has the power to humanize workers, point out that people are not that strange. Through ethnographic work we can responsibly and respectfully tell people’s stories.” This question and response was great timing with the Perspectives Project. Teresa’s lecture demonstrated that meaningful and impactful projects can arise out of ethnographic research.

After the lecture we had a 15 minute break. Following the break we asked each student to check in and share their perspectives project. Students spent about 4-5 minutes talking about what they did, how it connected to themes from the class, and what they learned from it. Most of the students expressed that they made clear connections to what they saw/heard with topics from the class. One student mentioned that the “Food Mirage” readings named trends of gentrification they saw at the Richmond Market. Another student mentioned that they used a critical lens at the Burlington Farmer’s Market and was able to draw connections to the exclusivity of the AFM. Due to the level of personal stories and experiences that were shared, it seemed that a safe space had been established and that students felt comfortable being honest and open with each other and the facilitators.

## **Class 12 April 13th: Good Work in the Food System**

### **Objectives:**

1. Explore labor issues in food system worker across all sectors, from farm to table.
2. Understand how larger systemic issues, like minimum wage laws and workplace sexism, underlie labor issues in the food system.
3. Understand how alternative food movement projects and politics may articulate with the fight for good work in all parts of the food system, including industrial farms and chain supermarkets and restaurants.

Assignments Due: None

### **Readings Due:**

Food Chain Workers Alliance (2011). *The Hands that Feed Us*. Chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 9-35).  
Myers, J.S., Sbicca, J. (2014). Bridging Good Food and Jobs: From Secession to Confrontation within Alternative Food Movement Politics. *Geoforum*, 61(2015), 17-26.  
<http://nfwm.org/education-center/farm-worker-issues/womens-issues/>  
<http://cironline.org/reports/female-workers-face-rape-harassment-us-agriculture-industry-4798>

### **Schedule:**

12:05 - 12:20 Mindfulness & Check Ins

12:20 - 12:50 Videos

Saru Jayaraman on Behind the Kitchen Door

Raj Patel on Michelle Obama and Walmart

12:50-1:00 Free Write about Food Work Experiences

1:00-1:20 Sharing about food work experiences

1:20-1:35 Break

1:35-2:15 Discussion of Readings (small groups with sets of questions, report back to full class)

2:15-2:50 Presentation about the Vermont Food Bank's gleaning project, Andrea Solazzo

2:45-3:00 Debrief for next class, talk about final paper

### *Reflection:*

Following mindfulness and check-ins, we watched Saru Jayaraman's TEDx talk about the treatment of restaurant workers in the US and her organization, Restaurant Opportunities Centers United (ROC United). Saru Jayarman's video exposed how "legal" status, race, and gender all impact the experience of restaurant workers, which relates to Teresa's term "structural vulnerability". Following the videos we moved into a freewrite on personal experience working in restaurants or eating in restaurants. After the freewrite we came together as a class and shared stories. This was a time for students to connect their own experiences to themes from the class, which many of the students were able to do. Students shared their work experiences. Students also shared their experiences. It was apparent that a safe space had been established and that students felt comfortable opening up with their classmates. We followed the story sharing with break.

After break, we discussed the readings briefly. Students made clear connections between neoliberalism and the Myers & Sbicca reading. Following the discussion on readings, Andrea Solazzo came to our class to talk about the Vermont Food Bank gleaning project. After her presentation on her work and the food bank and the importance of a "dignified" experience, she asked the students if the Food Bank should continue to supply Mountain Dew. One of our students responded: "why don't you ask the people who use the food bank?" Another student responded: "why should we take away someone's choice between candy and vegetables away when we have that choice ourselves?" It was apparent that our students were thinking critically and were aware of their positionality.

### **Class 13 April 20th: Food and Religion**

#### **Objectives:**

1. To have a greater understanding of the role of faith in food systems.
2. Envision the potential for faith to restore a lost sense of identity contribute towards food sovereignty.

Assignments Due: Notecard #10

Readings Due:

McCutcheon, P. (2011). Community food security “by us, for us”: The Nation of Islam and the Pan African Orthodox Christian Church In A. H. Alkon & J. Agyeman (Eds.), *Cultivating Food Justice*. Boston: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Weissman, M. (2016). His Paula Deen Takedown went viral. But this food scholar isn’t done yet. *Washington Post*. Retrieved from: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/food/his-paula-deen-takedown-went-viral-but-this-food-scholar-has-more-on-his-mind/2016/02/12/f83900f8-d031-11e5-88cd-753e80cd29ad\\_story.html?hpid=hp\\_hp-top-table-main\\_foodscholar-1220pm%3Ahomepage%2Fstory](https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/food/his-paula-deen-takedown-went-viral-but-this-food-scholar-has-more-on-his-mind/2016/02/12/f83900f8-d031-11e5-88cd-753e80cd29ad_story.html?hpid=hp_hp-top-table-main_foodscholar-1220pm%3Ahomepage%2Fstory)

Schedule:

12:05-12:20: Mindfulness and Check Ins

12:20-12:30 Frances Lasday Guest Lecture on her Thesis

12:30-12:50 Michael Twitty Video

12:50-1:00 Free Write

1:00-1:30 Share Stories and Discuss What Food Faith Traditions Contribute to Communities

1:30-1:45 Break

1:45-2:45 Small Group Discussion of Readings

2:45-3:00 Questions about Paper

Reflection:

The idea for this class topic, food and religion, was born out of general student interest. We had made the syllabus flexible enough to support diverse interests and when we noticed students discussing an interest in religion in the context of food, we made necessary arrangements and dove into relevant literature to make this possible. The week of this lesson, Olivia had contracted the flu, therefore Leila and Claire spearheaded the facilitation. The class began with Frances Lasday, a student in the course, sharing her thesis work titled, “An exploration of the challenges and possibilities of local kosher meat in the Jewish Community of Vermont”. Frances discussed her research, rooted in interviews, and answered questions related to the potential for a local kosher meat market in Vermont. Students were very engaged and Frances was excited to share all that she had been working on. From there, we showed the Michael Twitty video, “Culinary Injustice”. We had originally planned to only show the first 7 minutes, but student engagement was high so we decided to watch the whole thing. This film was not outwardly religious, but sparked discussion on the ways in which religion is but one mode of experiencing food. Because the film had a range of topics, we provided 10 minutes for students to reflect in a free write to tease through the information before jumping into discussion. Students were quick to mimic Twitty’s personal tenor, sharing stories of the ways in which their family’s specific religions informed food decisions, especially food during religious holidays. After the break, we came back together to situate the conversation in the context of the readings. We displayed four central questions on the projects and had students self-select a question they were interested in tackling and organize themselves accordingly. Students were given 30 minutes

to discuss in small groups and then came back together and shared. The questions were as follows:

Group 1: Twitty mentions using food to talk about the past. What could those stories contribute and why are they important to share (ethnographies)? How could food be used to help marginalized/oppressed peoples in terms of re-connecting to their ancestors? How does NOI and PAOCC do this with food?

Group 2: Due to the notion of Black Nationalism, NOI and PAOCC will not gain much traction in the overall food movement. Would they still be self-reliant movements if they began to operate within the food movement? Is this the secessionist type of approach that Myers and Sbicca discuss?

Group 3: “Individualism is not useful to Blacks and contradicts the communal nature of African religion, the black church in the United States, and the black nation more broadly” (182). How could the emphasis on community and sense of belonging (to a faith & race) contribute towards food sovereignty? Is there a singular food movement that can cover everyone’s needs, or do we need to localize?

Group 4: Many food traditions, especially in America are a melting pot of culture – some might view this melting pot as culturally appropriated food traditions. Why might some people view this as a good thing while others view it as a bad thing, or somewhere in between? Discuss how players from this week’s readings might/do feel about these food traditions? Other week’s readings? Real life examples?

The final question was informed by Ariana’s discussion questions from the week. We gathered during the break that there was some ambiguity on the final project so we left the last 15 minutes of class to discuss the prompt and answer questions. A few students wanted to speak about their creative projects ideas and to get official approval to go ahead with their visions.

#### Class 14 April 27th: Looking Ahead: A Socially Sustainable Food Movement

##### Objectives:

1. Discuss the ways in which capitalism is but one contributor to the inequity in the food system and in our world.
2. Locate divergent, non-capitalist practices in order to understand how capitalism is not a totalizing system.
3. Work on Food System Map and Iceberg Activity
4. Complete final course evaluation.

Assignments Due: Redefinition paper

Readings Due:

Figueroa, M. (2015). Food Sovereignty in Everyday Life: Toward a People-centered Approach to Food Systems. *Globalizations* 12(4): 498-512

Gibson-Graham, J.K. (2006). *The Makings of An Imaginary In A Postcapitalist Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: xxii-xxvii.

**Schedule:**

12:05 - 12:25 Mindfulness and Check Ins

12:25-12:30: Reading of “Dinosauria, We” by Charles Bukowski

12:30 -12:50: Discussion of Reading

12:50-1:00: Iceberg Activity

1:00 - 1:30 Finalize Food System Map

1:30 - 1:45 Break

2:15 - 2:45 Final Course Evaluations (Reading, General & Participation Grade)

2:45-3:00 Closure / Discuss Potluck for next week

**Reflection:**

We began with mindfulness and check ins. There was a lot of excitement and positive energy in the classroom. Claire followed the check ins with a recitation of the poem “Dinosauria, We” by Charles Bukowski. This poem spoke to the fall of capitalism, the beauty and power of uncertainty, and segwayed into our discussion of the readings by Gibson-Graham and Figueroa. Although some students brought thoughtful questions and ideas to the discussion, most were honest about not completing the readings because they were working on the final paper. This made the discussion portion of the class a bit shorter.

We followed the reading discussion with the iceberg activity, in which students write down anything that exists and functions outside of capitalism (see appendix F). At first students were unsure of what to write down, but once a few students participated the iceberg began to fill up. This segwayed into the finalization of the food systems map, in which students were able to add last thoughts and their names. We had break and snacks and then gave the evaluations to students and left the room.

**Class 15 May 4th: Celebration and Potluck!**

## Appendix C: Assignment Rubrics

Name \_\_\_\_\_

### Rubric for ENVS 197 Papers

*Note: If you have an idea that you deem is outside of these guidelines to demonstrate your learning, we encourage you to contact us before you submit your assignment.*

*We do not want the rubric to be a limiting factor to your creativity or success.*

	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D (and below)</b>
<b>Correct word count (5%)</b>	-Correct amount of words	-Off by ~100 words	-Off by ~250 words	-Off by ~500 words or more
<b>Structure (5%)</b>	-Paper is organized -Transitions are thoughtful and appropriate -Paper flows smoothly	-Paper is mostly organized -Some transitions -Paper is slightly choppy	-Paper is not very organized -No smooth transitions -Paper is choppy	-Thoughts are scrambled -No transitions -Paper is choppy
<b>Grammar/ language (10%)</b>	-Sentence structure is varied and engaging -No spelling errors -Good punctuation	-Sentence structure is mostly varied and engaging -Less than two spelling errors -Good punctuation	-Poor sentence structure -At least three spelling errors -Poor punctuation	-No full sentences -Poor punctuation -At least four spelling errors -Poor punctuation
<b>Research (30%)</b>	-Correct number of sources -Cited correctly -Used appropriately and effectively	-Incorrect number of sources -Mostly cited correctly -Sources do not significantly add to paper quality	-Incorrect number of sources -Cited incorrectly -Sources do not significantly add to paper quality	-No sources

<b>Content (50%)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Paper topic is correct</li> <li>-Original ideas</li> <li>-Clarity of purpose</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Paper topic is correct</li> <li>-Ideas are repetitive of class discussions</li> <li>-Purpose is mostly clear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Paper is off-topic</li> <li>-Ideas are repetitive of class discussions</li> <li>-Purpose is unclear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Paper is off-topic</li> <li>-Purpose is unclear</li> </ul>
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**Rubric for ENVS 197**  
**Perspectives Project: Participant Observation and Reflection**

	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D (and below)</b>
<b>Time in Field (25%)</b>	-Spent minimum of 3 hours.	-Spent 2 ½ hours.	-Spent 2 hours.	-Spent less than 2 hours.
<b>Content of Field Notes (25%)</b>	-Thoughtful and appropriate notes. -Details that demonstrate focus and attention. -Utilized phrases such as “appears to be” and “seems to be”	-Notes are adequate. -Notes contain a good amount of detail.	-Notes contain little detail and/or are biased.	-Notes contain little detail and judgemental phrases.
<b>Reflection Spelling &amp; Grammar (15%)</b>	-Sentence structure is varied and engaging -No spelling errors -Good punctuation	-Sentence structure is mostly varied and engaging -Less than two spelling errors -Good punctuation	-Poor sentence structure -At least three spelling errors -Poor punctuation	-No full sentences -Poor punctuation -At least four spelling errors -Poor punctuation
<b>Reflection Word Count (10%)</b>	-Correct amount of words	-Off by ~100 words	-Off by ~250 words	-Off by ~500 words or more
<b>Reflection Content (25%)</b>	-Thoughtful reflection of experience, (what went well, what didn't). -Connects themes/topics to 3 or more class readings. -Clearly demonstrates if their perspective has or hasn't shifted with an explanation. -Provides an in-depth comparison between this project and a formal research paper.	-Reflects on what went well and what didn't. -Connects to 2 class readings. -States whether perspective has changed with some explanation. -Provides a brief comparison between project and formal research paper.	-Provides a brief reflection. -Connects to 1 class readings. -States whether perspective has changed with little/no explanation. -Reflects on experience but does not compare it to writing a formal research paper.	-Does not connect to class reading. -Does not compare experience to writing a research paper. -Does not discuss if perspective has changed.



**Rubric for ENVS 197**  
**Perspectives Project: Transcription and Reflection**

	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D (and below)</b>
<b>Time in Field (25%)</b>	-Spent minimum total of 1 hour and 30 minutes.	-Spent 1 hour interviewing.	-Spent 45 minutes interviewing.	-Spent 30 minutes or less interviewing.
<b>Content of Transcription (Include Questions) (25%)</b>	-Thoughtful questions that encourage detailed responses but do not suggest bias. -Transcription of responses are accurate and checked for spelling errors.	-Questions are thoughtful, but slightly biased. -Transcription is accurate.	-Questions allude to specific responses. -Transcription was not checked for spelling.	-Questions are not thoughtful and biased. -Transcription is missing responses.
<b>Reflection Spelling &amp; Grammar (15%)</b>	-Sentence structure is varied and engaging -No spelling errors -Good punctuation	-Sentence structure is mostly varied and engaging -Less than two spelling errors -Good punctuation	-Poor sentence structure -At least three spelling errors -Poor punctuation	-No full sentences -Poor punctuation -At least four spelling errors -Poor punctuation
<b>Reflection Word Count (10%)</b>	-Correct amount of words	-Off by ~100 words	-Off by ~250 words	-Off by ~500 words or more
<b>Reflection Content (25%)</b>	-Thoughtful reflection of experience, (what went well, what didn't). -Connects themes/topics to 3 or more class readings. -Clearly demonstrates if their perspective has or hasn't shifted with an explanation. -Provides an in-depth comparison between this project and a formal research paper.	-Reflects on what went well and what didn't. -Connects to 2 class readings. -States whether perspective has changed with some explanation. -Provides a brief comparison between project and formal research paper.	-Provides a brief reflection. -Connects to 1 class readings. -States whether perspective has changed with little/no explanation. -Reflects on experience but does not compare it to writing a formal research paper.	-Does not connect to class reading. -Does not compare experience to writing a research paper. -Does not discuss if perspective has changed.

## Appendix D Mid-Semester Course Evaluation Form

### ENVS 197 Envisioning a Just Food System: Mid-Semester Evaluation

What have you liked so far about this class?

What haven't you liked?

Do you feel confident and comfortable participating in class discussions? Why or why not?

On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being high), to what degree do you feel challenged in this class? Why?

What is one significant concept, idea, insight, or critique you have learned in this class so far?

Are there any topics you particularly want to see covered in the remainder of the class? Are there any we have already covered that you would like to reexamine in greater depth?

What changes (if any) would you like to see for the rest of the semester?

## Appendix E Final Course Evaluation Form

### Final Course Evaluation ENVS 197: Envisioning a Just Food System

On a scale of 1-5 (5 being the most useful), rate the utility the following assignments/ in helping you to understand the material. *Please include a brief note on why you chose that rating!*

Definition paper (first paper)    1        2        3        4        5

Notecards            1        2        3        4        5

In-class discussions    1        2        3        4        5

Guest speakers            1        2        3        4        5

Perspectives project            1        2        3        4        5

Redefinition paper    1        2        3        4        5

Food System Map    1        2        3        4        5

Did you enjoy the mindfulness practice? Was it helpful in integrating/dealing with the information conveyed in class? Why/why not?

What is one (or more!) important idea or concept you took away from this class?

How do you wish to carry what you've learned in this class into your daily life?

Did you feel comfortable speaking up and participating in class? Why/why not?

Did you feel that grading was fair, accurate and timely?

Any other comments, questions, or concerns?

## Appendix F Collective Food System Map and Iceberg Activity

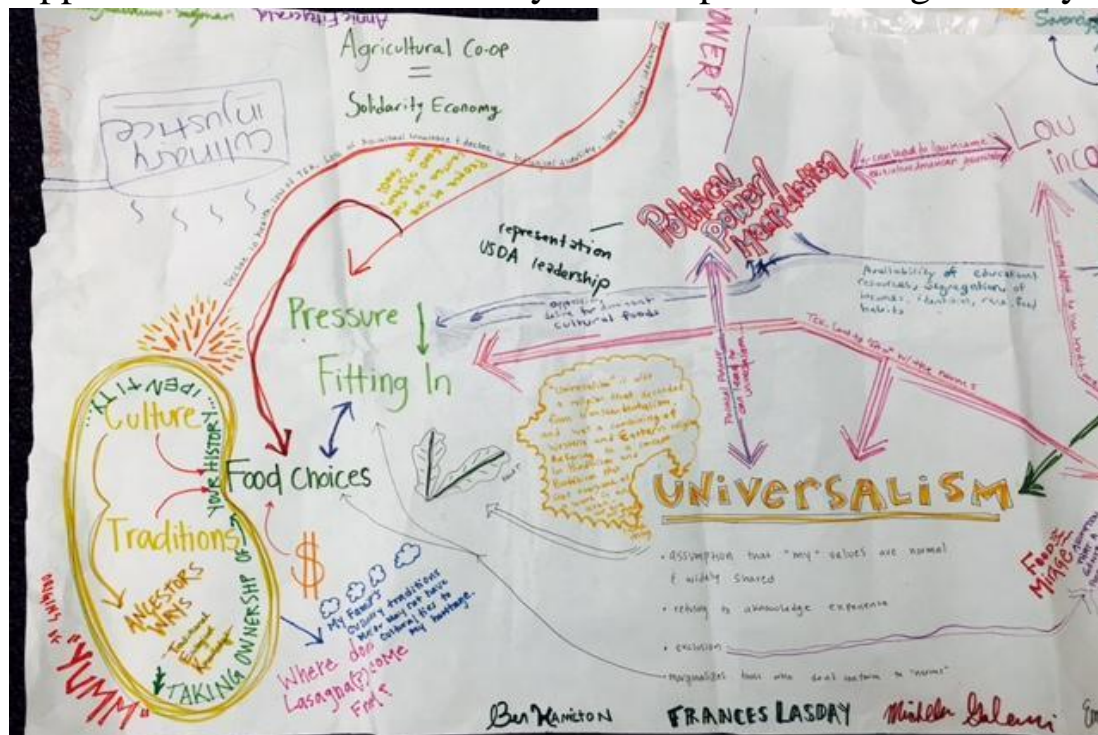
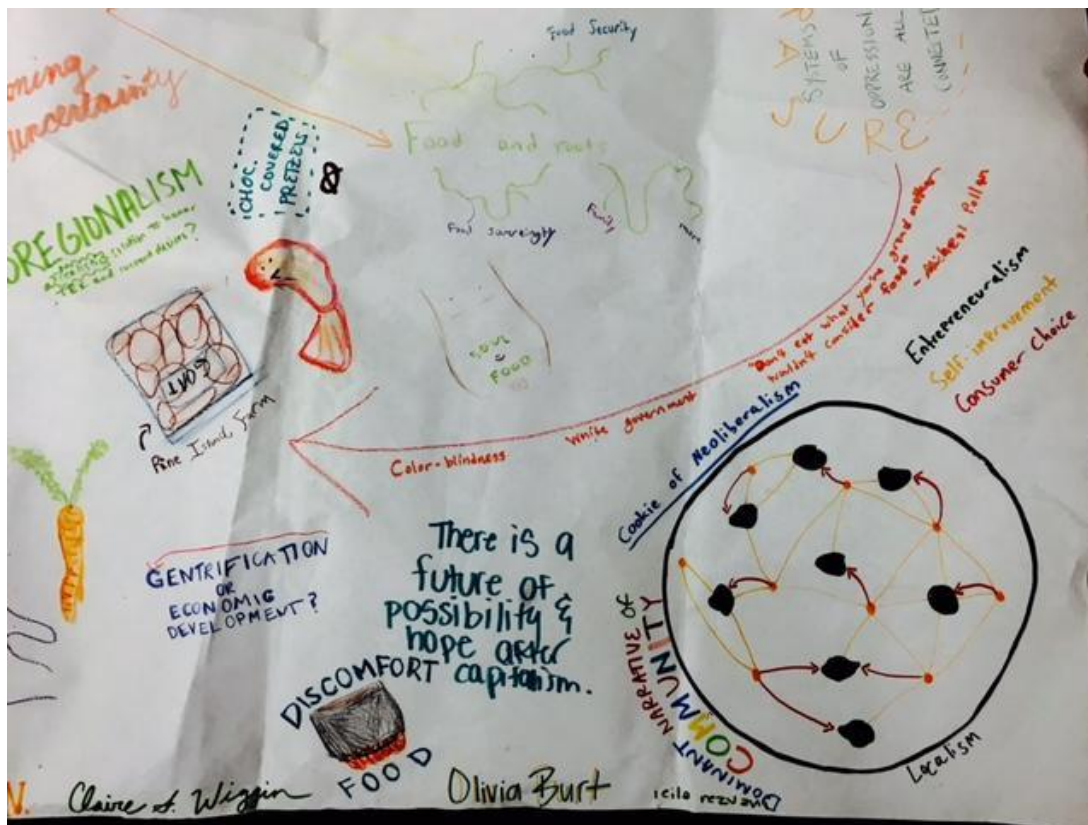
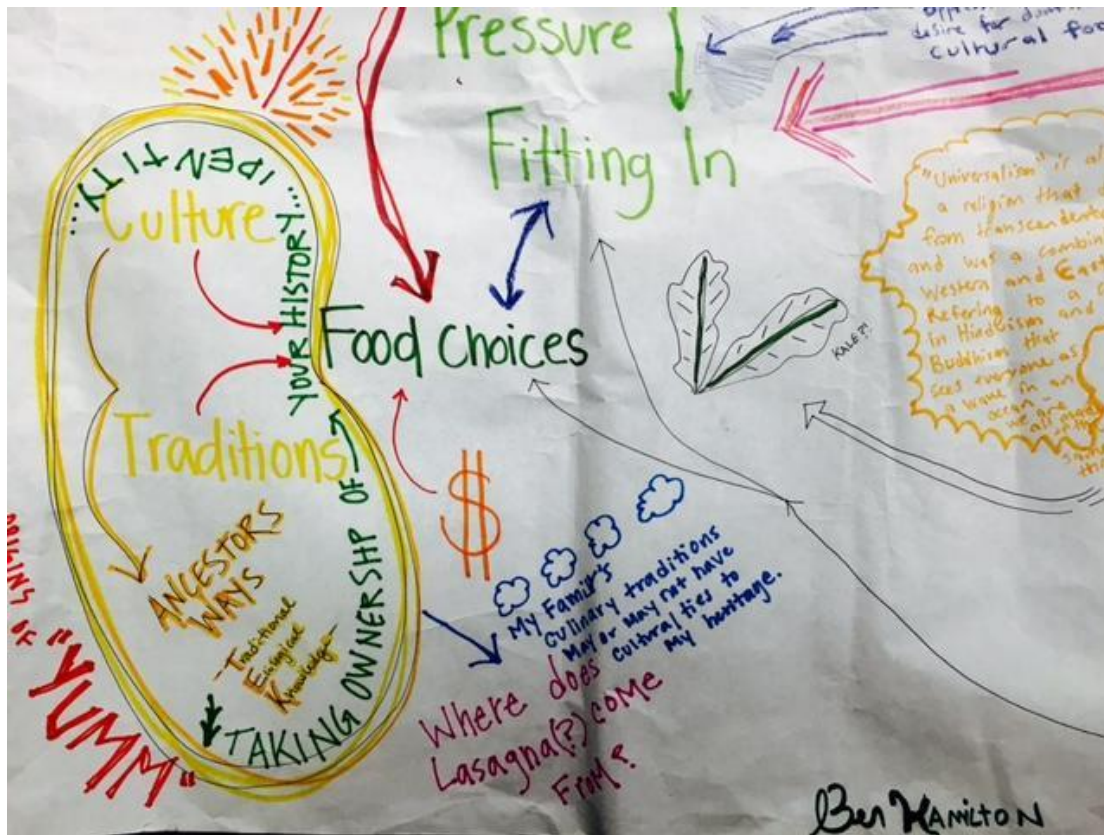
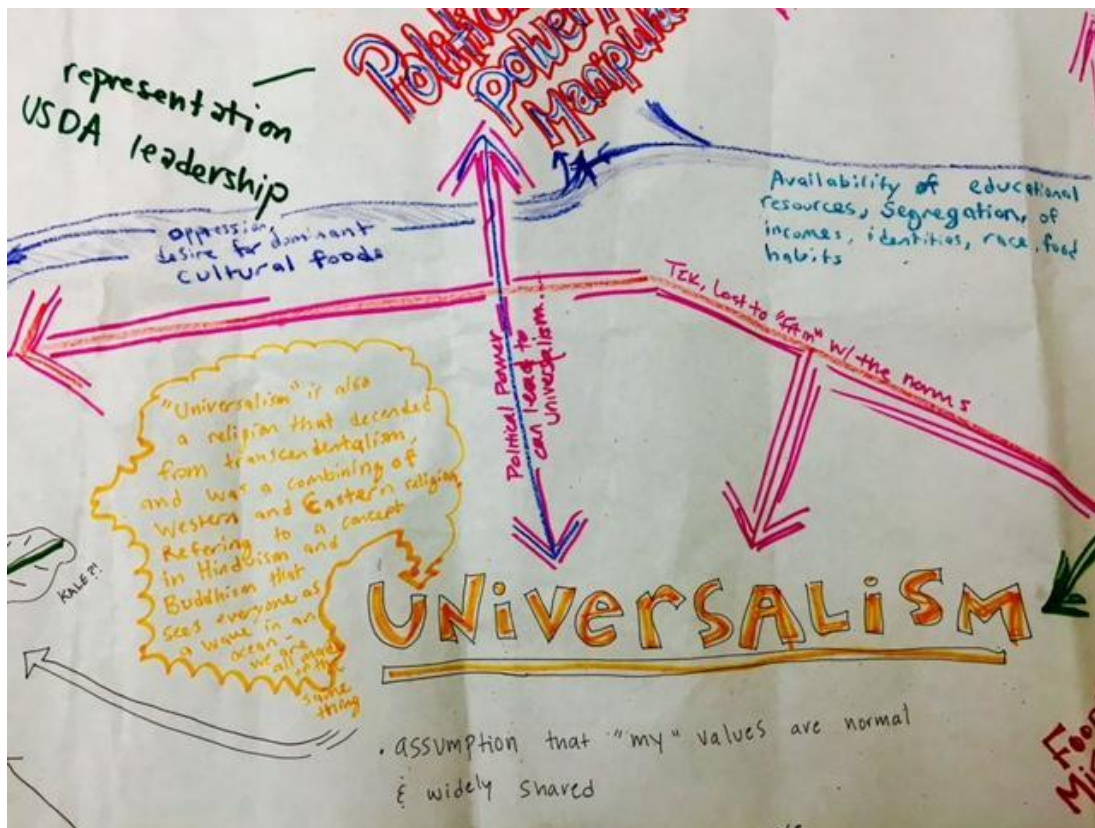


Figure 1: Collective Map of the Food System adapted from from Professor Ingrid Nelson, University of Vermont (2015).







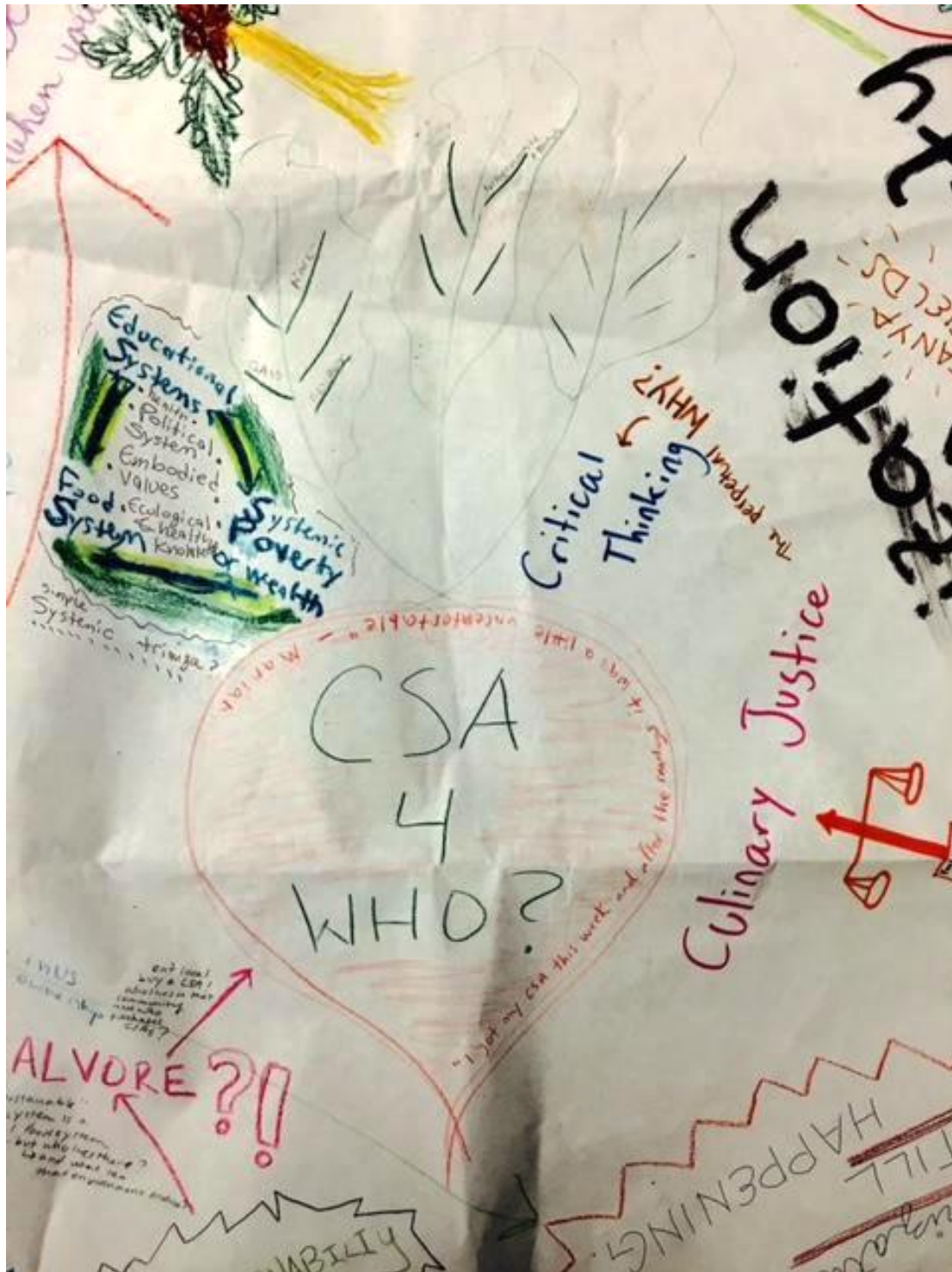




Figure 2: Iceberg Activity (adapted from Gibson-Graham 2006).



## Appendix G: Final Course Evaluations

### Final Course Evaluation ENVS 197: Envisioning a Just Food System

On a scale of 1-5 (5 being the most useful), rate the utility the following assignments/ in helping you to understand the material. *Please include a brief note on why you chose that rating!*

Definition paper (first paper) 1 2 3 (4) 5

helpful to create a baseline to reflect on

Notecards 1 2 3 (4) 5

It forced me to really dig deep into the reading, but at times they felt a little long.

In-class discussions 1 2 3 4 5

Guest speakers 1 2 3 4 (5)

I enjoyed all the guest speakers.  
Gavin Myers was great

Perspectives project 1 2 3 4 (5)

Enjoyed getting out of the class room

Redefinition paper 1 2 3 4 (5)

I wrote poems, so I enjoyed the flexibility

Food System Map 1 2 3 4 (5)

loved putting our thoughts into visual form

Did you enjoy the mindfulness practice? Was it helpful in integrating/dealing with the information conveyed in class? Why/why not?

Yes! It helped me to focus and bring me back to the classroom before we dug into the material.

What is one (or more!) important idea or concept you took away from this class?

See redefinition paper for details about what I took away from class.

How do you wish to carry what you've learned in this class into your daily life?

I want to read more + find a way to share this knowledge w/ others.

Did you feel comfortable speaking up and participating in class? Why/why not?

In small groups yes and I enjoyed participating in the food map + other activities.

Did you feel that grading was fair, accurate and timely?

Yes I did feel that it was fair, accurate + timely.

Any other comments, questions, or concerns?



Final Course Evaluation  
ENVS 197: Envisioning a Just Food System

On a scale of 1-5 (5 being the most useful), rate the utility the following assignments/ in helping you to understand the material. Please include a brief note on why you chose that rating!

Definition paper (first paper) 1 2 (3) 4 5

It was fun to look back on ~~the~~

Notecards 1 2 (3) (4) 5

I liked the structure, but writing the notes wasn't personally helpful in doing the readings. However it will be good for reference!!

In-class discussions 1 2 3 (4) (5)

many good thoughts! Loved the videos

Guest speakers 1 2 3 4 (5)

LOVE MAIL LOVE

Also really like d Teresa!

Perspectives project 1 2 3 (4) 5

Took a lot of time & wasn't clear on direction but really loved the interaction w/ others

Redefinition paper 1 2 3 (4) 5

good final paper! kinda wish we brainstormed more ideas to make it create

Food System Map 1 2 3 (4) (5)

fun and creative - I love markers

Did you enjoy the mindfulness practice? Was it helpful in integrating/dealing with the information conveyed in class? Why/why not?

yeah - nice way to breathe before start of class - good break from busy schedule

What is one (or more!) important idea or concept you took away from this class?

please  
refer to  
re definition  
paper  
(-)

How do you wish to carry what you've learned in this class into your daily life?

Did you feel comfortable speaking up and participating in class? Why/why not?

yes but I think I speak too much  
good vibes + everyone is nice

Did you feel that grading was fair, accurate and timely?

yes, most of the time!  
perspectives project expectations a bit unclear, but okay  
Everything done very timely!

Any other comments, questions, or concerns?

Love you all! ♡



Final Course Evaluation  
ENVS 197: Envisioning a Just Food System

On a scale of 1-5 (5 being the most useful), rate the utility the following assignments/ in helping you to understand the material. Please include a brief note on why you chose that rating!

Definition paper (first paper) 1 2 3 4 5  
It was good to reflect back in the end.

Notecards 1 2 3 4 5  
made me read more thoroughly.

In-class discussions 1 2 3 4 5

Guest speakers 1 2 3 4 5  
more perspectives! so added!

Perspectives project 1 2 3 4 5

Redefinition paper 1 2 3 4 5  
didn't have to be so long though!

Food System Map 1 2 3 4 5  
cool to visualize

Did you enjoy the mindfulness practice? Was it helpful in integrating/dealing with the information conveyed in class? Why/why not?

Meditation really doesn't help me, but it did settle myself into class.



What is one (or more!) important idea or concept you took away from this class?

refer to (re)definition paper.

How do you wish to carry what you've learned in this class into your daily life?

everything is going to be ok. we have to do the best we can - think critically and act with our values...

Did you feel comfortable speaking up and participating in class? Why/why not?

Yes, loved the learning community.

Did you feel that grading was fair, accurate and timely?

Sure.

Any other comments, questions, or concerns?

You all rock!!

Final Course Evaluation  
ENVS 197: Envisioning a Just Food System

On a scale of 1-5 (5 being the most useful), rate the utility of the following assignments/ in helping you to understand the material. Please include a brief note on why you chose that rating!

Definition paper (first paper) 1 2 3 4 5

REALLY HELPED ESTABLISH MY UNDERSTANDING OF MY KNOWLEDGE OF THE FOOD SYSTEM  
Notecards 1 2 3 4 5

The grading for the notecards was never really made clear

In-class discussions 1 2 3 4 5

Really helped establish connections from reading

Guest speakers 1 2 3 4 5

AWESOME ASPECT OF THE CLASS → especially for experience

Perspectives project 1 2 3 4 5

Did not fully comprehend assignment description in syllabus

Redefinition paper 1 2 3 4 5

Great way to tie everything together

Food System Map 1 2 3 4 5

Somewhat convoluted and hard to connect everything

Did you enjoy the mindfulness practice? Was it helpful in integrating/dealing with the information conveyed in class? Why/why not?

1 2 3 4 5

Great transition at the beginning of class to adjust class atmosphere



What is one (or more!) important idea or concept you took away from this class?

Cultural Appropriateness

How do you wish to carry what you've learned in this class into your daily life?

Be a role model

Did you feel comfortable speaking up and participating in class? Why/why not?

Somewhat, my personality tends to be more reserved,  
I enjoy listening and comprehending more than talking

Did you feel that grading was fair, accurate and timely?

~~Not at all~~ YES.

Any other comments, questions, or concerns?

Final Course Evaluation  
ENVS 197: Envisioning a Just Food System

On a scale of 1-5 (5 being the most useful), rate the utility the following assignments/ in helping you to understand the material. *Please include a brief note on why you chose that rating!*

Definition paper (first paper) 1 2 (3) 4 5

It was helpful for setting the tone of the class.

Notecards 1 2 3 4 (5)

Comprehension of info, helpful for reference

In-class discussions 1 2 3 4 (5)

helpful to understand where my classmates are at

Guest speakers 1 2 3 4 (5)

Nice to see people acting on what we're learning

Perspectives project 1 (2) 3 4 5

I appreciated the participant observation but not so much of the project.

Redefinition paper 1 2 3 (4) 5

Hard to get into words what I feel.

Food System Map 1 2 3 (4) 5

Cool to see how we have transformed.

Did you enjoy the mindfulness practice? Was it helpful in integrating/dealing with the information conveyed in class? Why/why not?

Yes!



What is one (or more!) important idea or concept you took away from this class?

Although capitalism sucks, there is the light at the end of the tunnel and people who also want the betterment of society.

How do you wish to carry what you've learned in this class into your daily life?

Mindfulness and understanding that people have different experiences based on their culture and place in society.

Did you feel comfortable speaking up and participating in class? Why/why not?

Yes, but at the same time I like to observe more.

Did you feel that grading was fair, accurate and timely?

Yes timing  
But I don't think there should have been grades for notecards

Any other comments, questions, or concerns?

Final Course Evaluation  
ENVS 197: Envisioning a Just Food System

On a scale of 1-5 (5 being the most useful), rate the utility the following assignments/ in helping you to understand the material. Please include a brief note on why you chose that rating!

Definition paper (first paper) 1 2 (3) 4 5

- good to get thinking on track - just unfamiliar w/ material

Notecards 1 2 3 (4) 5

- Useful to organize thoughts + remember things

In-class discussions 1 2 3 4 (5)

- always thoughtful

Guest speakers 1 2 3 4 (5)

- meaningful + valuable perspectives + stories

Perspectives project 1 2 3 (4) 5

- unique project, good use of time

Redefinition paper 1 2 3 (4) → (5)

- great to wrap up + reflect

Food System Map 1 2 3 (4) 5

- fun to track progress + growth

Did you enjoy the mindfulness practice? Was it helpful in integrating/dealing with the information conveyed in class? Why/why not?

Yes - think deeply, calm down, focus + prepare for class



What is one (or more!) important idea or concept you took away from this class?

- food justice = social justice

How do you wish to carry what you've learned in this class into your daily life?

- be aware - speak up, ask questions,  
know what I'm supporting

redef.  
paper  
has more

Did you feel comfortable speaking up and participating in class? Why/why not?

- yes - inclusive environment, no judgment

Did you feel that grading was fair, accurate and timely?

yes

Any other comments, questions, or concerns?

- loved this class - memorable & meaningful!

Final Course Evaluation  
ENVS 197: Envisioning a Just Food System

On a scale of 1-5 (5 being the most useful), rate the utility the following assignments/ in helping you to understand the material. *Please include a brief note on why you chose that rating!*

Definition paper (first paper) 1 2 3 (4) 5

Set the tone nicely for the class

Notecards 1 2 (3) 4 5

could have been more structured.  
graded strictly.

In-class discussions 1 2 3 4 (5)

Best part of class

Guest speakers 1 2 3 4 (5)

incredible - GAIL + Theresa!

Perspectives project 1 2 (3) 4 5

interesting & challenging

Redefinition paper 1 2 (3) 4 5

feels like I've written this type of paper  
for other classes before

Food System Map 1 2 3 4 (5)

Very fun and nice reflection

Did you enjoy the mindfulness practice? Was it helpful in integrating/dealing with the information conveyed in class? Why/why not?

Yes, I enjoyed mindfulness very much.  
Helped me to feel settled before the topics  
we delved into. Helped me to be  
present.



What is one (or more!) important idea or concept you took away from this class?

- the importance of critical thinking
- culinary justice
- feminization of poverty
- 

How do you wish to carry what you've learned in this class into your daily life?

- hope to continue w/ my critical thinking

Did you feel comfortable speaking up and participating in class? Why/why not?

Yes, very safe space

Did you feel that grading was fair, accurate and timely?

I felt grading was fair. Although it was harsh, that helped to ensure students took the class seriously. Very timely.

Any other comments, questions, or concerns?

Final Course Evaluation  
ENVS 197: Envisioning a Just Food System

On a scale of 1-5 (5 being the most useful), rate the utility the following assignments/ in helping you to understand the material. *Please include a brief note on why you chose that rating!*

Definition paper (first paper) 1 2 3 (4) 5

Notecards 1 2 3 4 (5)

In-class discussions 1 2 3 4 (5)

Guest speakers 1 2 3 4 (5)

Perspectives project 1 2 3 4 (5)

Redefinition paper 1 2 3 4 (5)

Food System Map 1 2 3 4 (5)

Did you enjoy the mindfulness practice? Was it helpful in integrating/dealing with the information conveyed in class? Why/why not?

I enjoyed mindfulness because it was always a way to settle my brain before class. It helped me get in the mood for class.



What is one (or more!) important idea or concept you took away from this class?

There are always multiple dimensions to the AFM "solutions" that we learn about. Always think critically about an issue.  
(Refer to final paper)

How do you wish to carry what you've learned in this class into your daily life?

Be more mindful of how I conceptualize problems and always take a different perspective before judging/assuming.

Did you feel comfortable speaking up and participating in class? Why/why not?

Yes, everyone was respectful and willing to talk about material.

Did you feel that grading was fair, accurate and timely?

Yes

Any other comments, questions, or concerns?

Had a blast, awesome time w/ everyone

Final Course Evaluation  
ENVS 197: Envisioning a Just Food System

On a scale of 1-5 (5 being the most useful), rate the utility the following assignments/ in helping you to understand the material. Please include a brief note on why you chose that rating!

Definition paper (first paper)	1	2	3	4	5	(3) → difficult to write a lot about the word "green" - felt tedious
Notecards	1	2	3	4	5	(5) helped me remember material
In-class discussions	1	2	3	4	5	(4) often vibrant. however, there's a lot of discussion in ENVS courses
Guest speakers	1	2	3	4	5	(5) AWESOME WOMEN!
Perspectives project	1	2	3	4	5	(3) funky grading?
Redefinition paper	1	2	3	4	5	(5) great synthesis of how I feel about food systems
Food System Map	1	2	3	4	5	(4) fun ~ good class bonding activity

Did you enjoy the mindfulness practice? Was it helpful in integrating/dealing with the information conveyed in class? Why/why not?

Yep! Helped set the tone for the rest of the class (esp. the check-ins)



What is one (or more!) important idea or concept you took away from this class?

- food mirages
- feminization of labor
- capitalism ~~really~~ sucks etc. etc. etc.
- lots of great authors & speakers

How do you wish to carry what you've learned in this class into your daily life?

- think about the way I think!
- build community!

Did you feel comfortable speaking up and participating in class? Why/why not?

- personally, I really like hearing others' ideas/thoughts because I ~~don't~~ have many thoughts flooding my mind
- felt comfortable, ~~and~~ didn't always find it necessary

Did you feel that grading was fair, accurate and timely?

yep!

Any other comments, questions, or concerns?

Final Course Evaluation  
ENVS 197: Envisioning a Just Food System

On a scale of 1-5 (5 being the most useful), rate the utility the following assignments/ in helping you to understand the material. Please include a brief note on why you chose that rating!

Definition paper (first paper) 1 2 3 4 5

good jump start - didn't learn as much from this as other assignments & Readings.

Notecards 1 2 3 4 5

Loved them! Helped Me pick out and remember big picture ideas.

In-class discussions 1 2 3 4 5

Made me think a lot! Sometimes felt like we could have discussed readings a little deeper... but.

Guest speakers 1 2 3 4 5

Loved em! Nice to get some new voices & perspectives. Side discussions were also interesting.

Perspectives project 1 2 3 4 5

was fun & way more memorable than a paper or test.

Redefinition paper 1 2 3 4 5

was very hard for me to incorporate whole prompt into a cohesive paper. Spent a lot of time realizing

Food System Map 1 2 3 4 5

good way to connect the dots between Readings - Fun - easy - a good Review!

Did you enjoy the mindfulness practice? Was it helpful in integrating/dealing with the information conveyed in class? Why/why not?

good way to connect the dots between Readings

yes! Only time I remembered to meditate all week... helped to stay present & not think about other things going on in life.

I have a lot of uncertainty about justice - how to create it, how it fits into food, etc.



What is one (or more!) important idea or concept you took away from this class?

① Fixing injustice in the food system will not happen over night in one way...

~~not happen over night in one way...~~

② Money & Power Control/

How do you wish to carry what you've learned in this class into your daily life?

Think Critically about Everything & come to your own conclusions & ~~know~~ know/research about contravenient anything.

contribute to injustice in food system.

Did you feel comfortable speaking up and participating in class? Why/why not?

Yes, although sometimes I felt that certain people were so quick to jump in I couldn't speak fast enough to get my thoughts in.

Did you feel that grading was fair, accurate and timely?

yes

Any other comments, questions, or concerns?

good luck guys! You are so motivated, passionate & balanced!

Final Course Evaluation  
ENVS 197: Envisioning a Just Food System

On a scale of 1-5 (5 being the most useful), rate the utility the following assignments/ in helping you to understand the material. *Please include a brief note on why you chose that rating!*

Definition paper (first paper) 1 2 3 4 (5)

Good intro + fun to look back on...

Notecards 1 2 3 4 (5)

Helped me do the readings well. Probably better than I would have otherwise...

In-class discussions 1 2 3 4 (5)

Very comfortable space to talk about super heavy material...

Guest speakers 1 2 3 4 (5)

Love 'em. keep 'em coming.

Perspectives project 1 2 3 4 (5)

Felt like a good way to apply critical thinking...

Redefinition paper (1) 2 (3) 4 5

The prompt was way open; I think I took it too seriously... couldn't organize my thoughts from the course in a paper

Food System Map 1 2 3 (4) 5

Beautiful...

w/ very few guidelines // few

Did you enjoy the mindfulness practice? Was it helpful in integrating/dealing with the information conveyed in class? Why/why not?

**YES!** Brought intention to the room.

Prompting questions  
Probably just me, but could have used more guidance.



What is one (or more!) important idea or concept you took away from this class?

The Afm is exquising... to more culture and food  
Capitalism sucks... I need to take a Poly-Sci class?

How do you wish to carry what you've learned in this class into your daily life?

Remind myself of my positionality when faced  
with claims about the state of the food system.

Did you feel comfortable speaking up and participating in class? Why/why not?

Yes, but I felt hesitant to share my ideas sometimes  
bc. I didn't know if the points I had were  
necessary to share in class. Could be more comfortable  
w/ more prompting/leading questions.

Did you feel that grading was fair, accurate and timely?

Yes!

Any other comments, questions, or concerns?

You are 3 great ladies.  
Big Love ♡

Final Course Evaluation  
ENVS 197: Envisioning a Just Food System

On a scale of 1-5 (5 being the most useful), rate the utility the following assignments/ in helping you to understand the material. Please include a brief note on why you chose that rating!

Definition paper (first paper) 1 2 3 4 5

It was less helpful because my perspective was limited and didn't really deepen because of it.

Notecards 1 2 3 4 5

Great for working through readings

In-class discussions 1 2 3 4 5

hard when tired, no reason not to do it... got so much out of them

Guest speakers 1 2 3 4 5

Loved Gail Meyers & course... Really memorable, all of them

Perspectives project 1 2 3 4 5

really great to do. I'm grateful

Redefinition paper 1 2 3 4 5

loved having this opportunity.

Food System Map 1 2 3 4 5

Got easier towards the end. Great to connect things together...

Did you enjoy the mindfulness practice? Was it helpful in integrating/dealing with the information conveyed in class? Why/why not?

Yes. Yes. And it was just helpful

It was just good.



What is one (or more!) important idea or concept you took away from this class?

Capitalism ~~and~~ can affect everything  
but nothing is actually based in capitalism  
except ... capitalism ... ???? MORE TO LEARN

How do you wish to carry what you've learned in this class into your daily life?

to Daily life via in myself - deconstructing  
myself. Uhh and my work in general

Did you feel comfortable speaking up and participating in class? Why/why not?

yes.

Because sometimes I had something to say,  
and respected everyone, and everyone was respectful

Did you feel that grading was fair, accurate and timely?

yes

Any other comments, questions, or concerns?

You are awesome

Final Course Evaluation  
ENVS 197: Envisioning a Just Food System

On a scale of 1-5 (5 being the most useful), rate the utility the following assignments/ in helping you to understand the material. *Please include a brief note on why you chose that rating!*

Definition paper (first paper) 1 2 3 4 5

Notecards 1 2 3 4 5

In-class discussions 1 2 3 4 5

Guest speakers 1 2 3 4 5

Perspectives project 1 2 3 4 5

Redefinition paper 1 2 3 4 5

Food System Map 1 2 3 4 5

Did you enjoy the mindfulness practice? Was it helpful in integrating/dealing with the information conveyed in class? Why/why not?

Yes, I enjoyed the mindfulness practice. It was helpful to bring me into this space and be present with my classmates and the discussions



beyond the intellectual terms of the MANY

What is one (or more!) important idea or concept you took away from this class?

I think that the biggest point I took from this course is that ~~the solution~~ there is not one solution or one right answer. There are many solutions or alternatives, and many of them already exist - the biggest one being the basic goodness of human beings and the power that is created when we share this.

How do you wish to carry what you've learned in this class into your daily life?

Critical think Always, remember positivity,

Use my compassion to drive change

"Bring joy to the struggle"

Did you feel comfortable speaking up and participating in class? Why/why not?

More here than in every other class I've taken. I think it had to do with the space created by the teachers and the respect ~~for~~ my classmates had for this space and one another.

Did you feel that grading was fair, accurate and timely?

Yes yes and yes

Any other comments, questions, or concerns?

Top 3 classes of my college career

I will be forever influenced by the people and discussions that took place here