

Health Consequences of Global Trade in Food Commodities

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Course Description

Close to one billion people suffer from malnutrition and many more from food deprivation in the 21st century. As neoliberal trade policies have restructured national economies, new speculation in global commodities markets has limited access to food by the poor. This course investigates shifting modes of food production as local practices of subsistence agriculture have been replaced by export agriculture and global commodities markets. The course compares the consequences of these changes for women as consumers in the global North as well as for women as producers of subsistence in the global South. Examining impacts of global commodities markets on food distribution, diet, and health, the course also analyzes the health effects of the creation of consumer markets for processed foods.

Course Requirements

Participation. Students are required to complete and think seriously about all assigned course materials. To demonstrate that they have done so, students must do 2 things each week:

- 1) On Tuesday before midnight, send the instructor 2 thoughtful questions, each about a different reading of those assigned for that week. Students may use the opportunity to ask for clarification of a point in a reading. If the instructor finds widespread confusion on a particular point, she will respond on the discussion board. She will also post selected questions to generate discussion. The best questions will invite consideration of a particular point in relation to multiple texts or the course as a whole. Questions that show no familiarity with assigned readings will not receive credit. 14 sets of questions are required; that is, each student will be allowed to miss a set of questions for any single week during the semester. *Questions will count for 10% of the final grade.*
- 2) Participate actively in online discussion by posting comments that engage the week's assigned materials on the discussion board. Substantive and sustained class participation is crucial for a productive online course experience, and such participation depends on students completing the assignments. At times, topics discussed may be personal and/or politically charged. Students may express their opinions on the discussion board and openly disagree with anything said without concern that their grade will be negatively affected, *but they must do so respectfully*. Hostile, overly personal, or insensitive remarks will be removed from the discussion board and affect the writer's discussion participation grade. The grade will be based on the number, volume, and quality of student comments. *Discussion participation will count for 20% of the final grade.*

Papers. Course requirements include 2 formal essays, each 4-5 pages in length. Specific instructions will be posted at least 4 weeks in advance of essay deadlines. Each essay will be graded according to the conventions of formal English essay writing. That is, each essay should have a thesis that addresses the assigned question, make a coherent, persuasive argument in support of that thesis, be composed of coherent, fully developed paragraphs, and cite sources

(including course texts) consistently according to APA or MLA conventions. It should also be largely grammatical. Some grammar errors will be overlooked, particularly when English is not the writer's first language, but the meaning must be easily intelligible to an experienced reader. *Each essay will count for 15% of the final grade.*

Examinations. There will be a midterm and a final, both open-book written exams. Students will receive instructions one week prior to the due dates and may use *only* assigned course materials to complete the exams. *Each exam counts for 20% of the final grade.*

Plagiarism in any form will not be tolerated and will result in serious consequences. If you are unsure of the meaning of plagiarism or whether you may be plagiarizing, you should discuss the issue directly with the instructor. You may also address your inquiries on line at <http://teachx.rutgers.edu/integrity/policy.html>. Failure to avoid plagiarism may, and most likely will, result in severe punishment.

Reading Materials

Required texts. The following books are required for this class. They are available at the Rutgers University Bookstore (One Penn Plaza, Ferren Mall, New Brunswick, NJ 08901). ISBN numbers are included in case students prefer to purchase books elsewhere.

- Akram-Lodhi, A. Haroon, and Cristóbal Kay. 2009. *Peasants and Globalization: Political Economy, Rural Transformation and the Agrarian Question* [PG]. New York: Routledge. ISBN-10: 0415588758; ISBN-13: 978-0415588751.
- Arnold, David. 1988. *Famine: Social Crisis and Historical Change*. New York: Basil Blackwell. ISBN-10: 0631151192; ISBN-13: 978-0631151197.
- Barndt, Deborah, ed. 1999. *Women Working the NAFTA Food Chain: Women, Food and Globalization* [WW]. Toronto: Sumach. ISBN-10: 189454935X; ISBN-13: 978-1894549356. **Note:** *This book is out of print. Used copies may be available, and chapters will be uploaded with other assigned sources.*
- Davis, Mike. 2001. *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World*. New York: Verso. ISBN-10: 1859843824; ISBN-13: 978-1859843826.
- Holt-Giménez, Eric, and Raj Patel. 2009. *Food Rebellions! Crisis and the Hunger for Justice*. Cape Town: Pambazuka. ISBN-10: 093502834X; ISBN-13: 978-0935028348.
- Razavi, Shahra, ed. 2002. *Shifting Burdens: Gender and Agrarian Change under Neoliberalism* [SB]. Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian. ISBN-10: 1565491432; ISBN-13: 978-1565491434.
- Shiva, Vandana. 1988. *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development*. Brooklyn: South End. ISBN-10: 089608793X; ISBN-13: 978-0896087934.

Supplemental readings will be posted on line.

Course Schedule

Week 1: What does food mean?

Bad taste & over-consumption

- Stuart, Introduction, *Waste: Uncovering the Global Food Scandal* (2009), pp xiii-xxii
- Gunders, “Wasted: how America is losing up to 40% of its food from farm to fork to landfill,” NRDC Issue Paper (2012)
- Pollan, Chapters 6-7, *The Omnivore’s Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* (2006), pp 100-19

Eating morally?

- Guthman, “Whose problem is obesity?,” *Weighing In: Obesity, Food Justice, and the Limits of Capitalism* (2011), pp 46-65
- Baker, “A different tomato” (ch 14 in WW, pp 249-60)
- Guthman, “Will fresh, local, organic food make you thin?,” *Weighing In: Obesity, Food Justice, and the Limits of Capitalism* (2011), pp 140-62
- Bobrow-Strain, “The staff of death,” *White Bread: A Social History of the Store-Bought Loaf* (2012), pp 73-103
- Crawford, “Health as a meaningful social practice,” *Health 10* (2006): 401-20
- *Fast Food Nation* (2006, dramatic film)

Week 2: What does food mean? / Labor in the Global Food System

What does food mean? First world fat

- Gill, “Social reproduction of affluence and human in/security” in Bakker/Gill, eds, *Power, Production and Social Reproduction* (2003), pp 190-207
- Bordo, “Whose body is this?,” *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (1993), pp 45-69
- Bordo, “Reading the slender body,” *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (1993), pp 185-212
- Campos, “Anorexia nervosa and the spirit of capitalism,” *The Obesity Myth* (2004), pp 218-37
- Guthman, “What’s capitalism got to do with it?,” *Weighing In: Obesity, Food Justice, and the Limits of Capitalism* (2011), pp 163-84

Labor in the Global Food System: Introduction to the political ecology of food

- Robbins, “Political versus apolitical ecologies,” *Political Ecology*, 2nd edition (2012), pp 11-24
- Friedmann, “International regimes of food and agriculture since 1870” in Shanin, ed, *Peasants and Peasant Societies* (1987), pp 258–76
- Friedmann/McMichael, “Agriculture and the state system,” *Sociologia Ruralis* 29 (1989): 93-117
- Friedmann, “The political economy of food,” *New Left Review* 197 (1993): 29-57

Week 3: Labor in the Global Food System

Introduction to the political ecology of food (cont.)

- Shiva, Introduction to the 2010 edition, *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development* (1988), pp xi-xxviii
- Akram-Lodhi/Kay, “The agrarian question” (ch 1 in PG, pp 3-34)
- Wood, “Peasants and the market imperative” (ch 2 in PG, pp 37-56)
- Watts, “The Southern question” (ch 11 in PG, pp 262-87)
- McMichael, “Food sovereignty, social reproduction and the agrarian question” (ch 12 in PG, pp 288-312)
- Bernstein, Chapters 1-2, *Class Dynamics of Agrarian Change* (2010), pp 13-38

The feminization of agriculture

- Robbins, “Breaking open the household,” *Political Ecology*, 2nd edition (2012), pp 63-5
- Deere, “The feminization of agriculture?” in Razavi, ed, *The Gendered Impacts of Liberalization: Toward Embedded Liberalism?* (2011), pp 99-127
- Appendini, “From where have all the flowers come?” (ch 4 in SB, pp 1-34)
- Barrón, “Mexican women on the move” (ch 5 in WW, pp 113-26)

Week 4: Labor in the Global Food System

Other impacts of trade liberalization on women workers

- Friedmann, “Remaking ‘traditions’” (ch 1 in WW, pp 35-60)
- Boserup, “Women’s role in economic development” in Visvanathan et al, eds, *The Women, Gender and Development Reader* (2011), pp 38-40
- Elson/Warnecke, “IMF policies and gender orders” in Young et al, eds, *Questioning Financial Governance from a Feminist Perspective* (2011), pp 110-31
- Martinez-Salazar, “The ‘poisoning’ of indigenous migrant women workers and children” (ch 4 in WW, pp 99-111)
- Barndt, “‘Flexible’ women workers in the tomato food chain” (ch 2 in WW, pp 61-80)
- Reiter, “Serving the McCustomer” (ch 3 in WW, pp 81-96)
- Kainer, “Not quite what they bargained for” (ch 9 in WW, pp 176-89)

Land use & ownership

- Araghi “The invisible hand and the visible foot” (ch 5 in PG, pp 111-47)
- Teubal, “Peasant struggles for land and agrarian reform in Latin America” (ch 6 in PG, pp 148-66)
- O’Laughlin, “Gender justice, land and the agrarian question in southern Africa” (ch 8 in PG, pp 190-213)
- Akram-Lodhi et al, “The political economy of land and the agrarian question in the era of neoliberal globalization” (ch 9 in PG, pp 213-38)
- Walker, “Land reform and the empowerment of rural women in postapartheid South Africa” (ch 3 in SB, pp 67-92)

Week 5: Global Finance and Food Crises

Paper #1 due on Thursday before midnight

Intellectual property: constructing scarcity

- May, “On institutions and (intellectual) property” *The Global Political Economy of Intellectual Property Rights: The New Enclosures*, 2nd edition (2010), 16-48
- Shiva, Chapters 3-5, *Protect or Plunder? Understanding Intellectual Property Rights* (2001), pp 40-85
- Shiva, “Stolen harvest” in Fort et al, eds, *Sickness and Wealth: The Corporate Assault on Global Health* (2004), pp 107-117
- Fitting, “Importing corn, exporting labor,” *Agriculture and Human Values* 23 (2010): 15-26

Market impacts of U.S. agricultural subsidies

- Holt-Gimenez/Patel, Chapters 4-5, *Food Rebellions!* (2009), pp 60-80

Week 6: Global Finance and Food Crises

Food insecurity after the 2008 financial crisis

- Banerjee, “From agrarian crisis to global economic crisis” in Utting et al, eds, *The Global Crisis and Transformative Social Change* (2012), pp 177-98
- McNally, “Slump, austerity and resistance” in Panitch et al, eds, *Socialist Register 2012: The Crisis and the Left*, pp 36-63
- Ghosh, “Financial crisis and the impact on women” in Visvanathan et al, eds, *The Women, Gender and Development Reader* (2011), pp 22-7
- Oxfam, “Land and power: The growing scandal surrounding the new wave of

Commodities speculation

- Toussaint/Millet, Question 11, *Debt, the IMF, and the World Bank: Sixty Questions, Sixty Answers* (2010), pp 73-5
- Toussaint/Millet, Question 19, *Debt, the IMF, and the World Bank: Sixty Questions, Sixty Answers* (2010), pp 119-24
- World Bank, Selections TBA, *Global Economic Prospects: Commodities at the Crossroads* (2009)
- Collins “Hot commodities, stuffed markets, and empty bellies” in Dollars and Sense, eds, *The Wealth Inequality Reader*, 3rd ed, (2009), pp 62-8
- Kaufman, “The food bubble,” *Harpers Magazine* (July 2010): 27-34
- Knaup et al, “Speculating with lives: how global investors make money out of hunger,” Parts 1-4, *Der Spiegel* (September 2011)
- Taibbi, “Blowout,” *Griftopia: A Story of Bankers, Politicians, and the Most Audacious Power Grab in American History* (2011), pp 124-55

Week 7: Global Finance and Food Crises

Commodities speculation (cont.)

- Taibbi, “The great American bubble machine,” *Griftopia: A Story of Bankers, Politicians, and the Most Audacious Power Grab in American History* (2011), pp 206-40
- Sheppard et al, “Trading Primary Commodities,” *A World of Difference: Encountering and Contesting Development*, 2nd edition (2009), pp 393-417
- Lines, “Speculation in food commodity markets,” WDM report (2010)
- Ghosh, “The unnatural coupling: food and global finance,” *Journal of Agrarian Change* 10.1 (2010): 72-86
- Ghosh, “Commodity speculation and the food crisis,” WDM report (2011)
- Wray, “The commodities market bubble,” Levy Economics Institute public policy brief 92 (2008)

Week 8: Nutrition, Hunger, & Famine

Midterm exam due on Thursday before midnight

The history of famine

- Holt-Gimenez/Patel, Chapters 1-2, *Food Rebellions!* (2009), pp 1-22
- Arnold, Introduction – Chapter 4, *Famine* (1991), pp 1-95

Week 9: Nutrition, Hunger, & Famine

The history of famine (cont.)

- Arnold, Chapters 5-6, *Famine* (1991) , 96-142
- Davis, Preface, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World* (2001), pp 1-16
- Davis, “Part IV: The Political Ecology of Famine,” *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World* (2001), pp 277-393
- Dias, “Famine and disease in the history of Angola, c. 1830-1930,” *Journal of African History* 22 (1981): 349-78

Week 10: Nutrition, Hunger, & Famine

Marginalization

- Robbins, “Degradation and marginalization,” *Political Ecology*, 2nd edition (2012), pp 157-75
- Watts, Selections TBA, *Silent Violence: Food, Famine, and Peasantry in Northern Nigeria* (1983)

The Green Revolution & structural adjustment

- Holt-Gimenez/Patel, Chapter 3, *Food Rebellions!* (2009), pp 23-59
- Cullather, Introduction, *The Hungry World: America's Cold War Battle Against Poverty in Asia* (2010), pp 1-10
- Cullather, “The conquest of hunger,” *The Hungry World: America's Cold War Battle Against Poverty in Asia* (2010), pp 232-62
- Bobrow-Strain, “White bread imperialism” *White Bread: A Social History of the Store-Bought Loaf* (2012), pp 133-61

Week 11: Nutrition, Hunger, & Famine

Women in environmental conflict

- Robbins, “Environmental conflict,” *Political Ecology*, 2nd edition (2012), pp 199-214
- Shiva, “Women in the food chain,” *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development* (1988), pp 96-178

Food crises

- Watts, “On the poverty of theory” in Hewitt, ed, *Interpretations of Calamity* (1983), pp 231-62
- McMichael, “Food security and social reproduction” in Bakker/Gill, eds, *Power, Production and Social Reproduction* (2003), pp 169-89
- Sen, “Famines and other crises,” *Development as Freedom* (1999), pp 160-88

Week 12: Nutrition, Hunger, & Famine

Food crises (cont.)

- Bush, “Food riots: poverty, power and protest,” *Journal of Agrarian Change* 10.1 (2010): 119-29
- Lang, “Crisis? What crisis? The normality of the current food crisis,” *Journal of Agrarian Change* 10.1 (2010): 87-97
- Swan, “The crisis behind closed doors: global food crisis and local hunger,” *Journal of Agrarian Change* 10.1 (2010): 107-18
- Van der Ploeg, “The food crisis, industrialized farming and the imperial regime,” *Journal of Agrarian Change* 10.1 (2010): 98-106
- Turshen, “Food crisis: the impact on African women and children” in Howard/Hassan, eds, *Gendered Insecurities, Health and Development in Africa* (2012), pp 117-30
- Wise/Murphy, “Resolving the food crisis: assessing global policy reforms since 2007,” GDAE-IATP Policy Report (2012)

Food insecurity & the political ecology of health

- Birn et al, “Health under crisis,” excerpts, *Textbook of International Health* (2009), pp 373-80, 406-7
- Robertson et al, “Food is a political issue” in Marmot/Wilkinson, eds, *Social Determinants of Health* (2005), ch 9
- Scheopf et al, “Theoretical therapies, remote remedies” in Kim et al, eds, *Dying for Growth: Global Inequality and the Health of the Poor* (2000), pp 91-125
- Navarro, “The world health situation” in Navarro, ed, *Neoliberalism, Globalization, and Inequalities: Consequences for Health and Quality of Life* (2007), pp 203-12
- King, “Political ecologies of health,” *Progress in Human Geography* 34.1 (2010): pp 38–55

Week 13: Nutrition, Hunger, & Famine / The Right to Eat

Nutrition, Hunger, & Famine: Food insecurity & the political ecology of health (cont.)

- Farmer, Introduction, *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor* (2004), pp 1-22
- Farmer, “On suffering and structural violence,” *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor* (2004), pp 29-50
- Sen/Ostlin, “Gender as a social determinant of health” in Visvanathan et al, eds, *The Women, Gender and Development Reader* (2011), pp 64-73

The Right to Eat: Food & Freedom

- Farmer, “Making human rights substantial” in Saussy, ed, *Partner to the Poor: A Paul Farmer Reader* (2010), pp 545-59
- Sen, “Introduction: Development as freedom,” *Development as Freedom* (1999), pp 3-11
- Sen, “Population, food and freedom,” *Development as Freedom* (1999), pp 204-26

The Right to Eat: Action

- Cullather, “Present at the re-creation,” *The Hungry World: America's Cold War Battle Against Poverty in Asia* (2010), pp 263-71
- Stuart, “Redistribute: the gleaners,” *Waste: Uncovering the Global Food Scandal* (2009), pp 220-31
- Stuart, “Action plan: a path to utrophia,” *Waste: Uncovering the Global Food Scandal* (2009), pp 286-93
- Holt-Gimenez/Patel, Chapter 7, *Food Rebellions!* (2009), pp 84-129

Week 14: The Right to Eat

Paper #2 due on Thursday before midnight

Action (cont.)

- Holt-Gimenez/Patel, Chapters 8-10, *Food Rebellions!* (2009), pp 130-84
- Holt-Gimenez/Patel, Appendices 1-8, *Food Rebellions!* (2009), pp 185-217
- Field, “Putting food first” (ch 10 in WW, pp 193-208)
- Villagomez, “Grassroots responses to globalization” (ch 11 in WW, pp 209-19)
- Razavi, Introduction (in SB, pp 1-34)

Week 15: The Right to Eat

Action (cont.)

- Kabeer/Tran, “Leaving the rice fields, but not the countryside” (ch 5 in SB, pp 109-50)
- Cornwall, “Making a difference?” (ch 7 in SB, pp 197-232)
- Gupta, S, “Women in India’s national rural employment guarantee scheme” in Razavi, ed, *The Gendered Impacts of Liberalization: Toward Embedded Liberalism?* (2011), pp 327-56

Sustainability as a political project

- Redclift, “Sustainability and theory” in Goodman/Watts, eds, *Globalising Food: Agrarian Questions and Global Restructuring* (1997), pp 333-43

- Buttel, “Some observations on agro-food change and the future of agricultural sustainability movements” in Goodman/Watts, eds, *Globalising Food: Agrarian Questions and Global Restructuring* (1997), pp 344-65
- Le Heron / Roche, “Commentary on Part VI” in Goodman/Watts, eds, *Globalising Food: Agrarian Questions and Global Restructuring* (1997), pp 366-74
- Foster et al, “The ecology of consumption,” *The Ecological Rift: Capitalism’s War on the Earth* (2010), pp 377-99

Final exam due on [date] before midnight