

HIST374: Food Security: History of an Idea

Prof. Courtney Fullilove

cfullilove@wesleyan.edu

+19176046154 (WhatsApp)

Student/Office hours: MW 12-1 PM @110 Mt Vernon, and by appointment, via Zoom:

<https://wesleyan.zoom.us/j/8079060719>

<https://calendly.com/cfullilove/office-hours>

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (UN-FAO) has held that "food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life." This course is a history of *food security* as a geopolitical concept for explaining uneven access to provisions, focusing on the post-World War II period with the inception of the United Nations and an associated international development complex for managing food access. While ostensibly concerned with access to food at a global level, the UN initially defined food security in terms of stocks of staple grains for nation states. Arguably this framing is as old as settled agriculture, in which grain allowed emergent states to tax farmers. But as the UN's more capacious contemporary definition suggests, *food access* requires more than stocks of grain, encompassing myriad issues of political economy, cultural preference, human health, and ecological stability.

As a group, we will consider how *food security* can function as a form of capital as well as individual and communal subsistence. We will

- (1) study the history of security concepts rooted in the competition of nation states, and
- (2) destabilize the vocabulary of security by exploring alternative ways of organizing access to food.

Topics discussed will include why human beings share food, the emergence of agriculture, transportation and trade, food aid, agricultural research and development, poverty, conflict, and famine. We will consider how dominant categories for describing food availability may inhibit alternative foodways and economies. And we will explore some alternatives that flourish within the existing infrastructures (forage, seed saving, diaspora, local markets). For a case study of rain-fed agriculture, we will partner with Environmental Studies students at Al-Quds Bard College in Abu Dis, Palestine.

Participation and Expectations

Students are expected to attend all meetings. If there are particular obstacles to your full participation in the course, please schedule a meeting with me to discuss workarounds. If at all possible, any Zoom sessions should be attended with video on. If this is not possible, you should speak with me individually.

Grading

Assignments are graded according to the Wesleyan University grade scale:

https://www.wesleyan.edu/registrar/general_information/GPA_calculation.html

"A" grades are reserved for exceptional work. An "A-" indicates very good work. "B+" grades indicate good work with room for development in argumentation, style, or grammar. "B" and "B-" grades indicate adequate work with room for significant development one or more of the

foregoing categories. “C” and “D” range grades are reserved for passing work, which nevertheless demonstrate significant flaws in content and argumentation, as well as grammar and style. “F” marks failing work. Compliance/non-compliance with the formal requirements of the assignment also factor into the overall grade.

Assignments

Toward imagining alternative categories of food access, assignments for this class will be organized around stewardship of food objects representing practices of forage, seed saving, diaspora, and/or local markets. In week 3, in consultation with the professor, students should select a food object to root their pathway through the course material.

Deliverables (full assignments to be distributed in class):

- (1) **Commodity history (20%)**: A 1,500-word essay analyzing the commodification of a food object of the student’s choice.
- (2) **Oral history (20%)**: A transcribed interview and 1,000-word analysis focused on the chosen object and adjacent issues of production, circulation, consumption, etc.
- (3) **Final project (25%)**: 3,000-5,000-word essay on food object. Students are encouraged to explore alternative formats for the final project, including (but not limited to) storymaps and podcasts.
- (4) **Take-home final essay (25%)** asking students to reflect on the themes, readings, and discussions from the course, distributed in the final class and due the last day of final exams.
- (5) **Class participation (10%)**, including attendance and informed participation in online and in-person discussion (course blog). The course blog is available at <https://isfoodsecure.wordpress.com/>. Students are encouraged to post links to recent articles, reports, and other resources relevant to the course and are expected to read and contribute on a regular basis.

Covid-19 Code of Conduct

To protect your health and safety, the health and safety of instructors and staff, and the health and safety of your peers, all students must understand and adhere to the University’s Covid-19 Code of Conduct. Students are encouraged to review the code of conduct regularly to stay up to date on the current code.

Time Commitment

While the exact time commitment for the class will vary individually and over the course of the semester, I recommend that you budget approximately three out-of-class hours for every class hour to complete the reading, assignments, homework, and project. I have designed the class so that it should be feasible to satisfactorily complete the requirements with approximately twelve hours per week of time commitment. If you are spending more time than this on a regular basis I encourage you to check in with me.

Accommodation Statement

Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a disability as defined by the ADA. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible.

If you have a disability, or think that you might have a disability, please contact Accessibility Services in order to arrange an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. Accessibility Services is located in North College, rooms 021/218, or can be reached by email (accessibility@wesleyan.edu) or phone (860-685-2332).

Religious Observances

Faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments, or required assignments/attendance. If this applies to you, please speak with me directly as soon as possible at the beginning of the term.

Classroom Behavior

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, color, culture, religion, creed, politics, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and gender expression, age, ability, and nationality. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. For more information, see the policies on the student code.

Discrimination and Harassment

Wesleyan University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment. Wesleyan will not tolerate acts of discrimination or harassment based upon Protected Classes or related retaliation against or by any employee or student. For purposes of this Wesleyan policy, "Protected Classes" refers to race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. Individuals who believe they have been discriminated against should contact the Office for Equity and Inclusion at 860-685-4771. The responsibility of the University Members has more information.

Honor Code

All students of Wesleyan University are responsible for knowing and adhering to the Honor Code of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council – Office of Student Affairs. Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). The Office of Student Affairs has more information.

Course Readings:

All course readings are accessible on moodle or e-reserve. (Any unlinked reading on moodle is on e-reserve, accessible from the top of the course moodle page.)

CLASS SCHEDULE

NB: The complete, up-to-date course schedule is on moodle and takes precedence over this syllabus.

PART I: CONCEPTS

Week 1: Introduction: Food Access: Crisis, Concept, Genealogy

M 1/30: Orientation: What do we mean when we talk about food security?

W 2/1: Vocabularies: Security, Sovereignty, Justice

- Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation*
- Raj Patel, "What Would Food Sovereignty Look Like?" *Journal of Peasant Studies* 36(3) (2009), 663-706

Week 2: Deep Time

M 2/6: Domestication, States, and Taxation

- James C. Scott, *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Earliest States* [selections]

W 2/8: Is the Emergence of Agriculture the Original Food Security Crisis?

- Martin Jones, *Why Humans Share Food*, Chapter 1 (pp. 1-22) and Chapter 6 (pp. 127-152)

Week 3: Commodity Capitalism

M 2/13: Trade and the Globalization of Food Production

- Francesca Bray, Barbara Hahn, John Bosco Lourdusamy and Tiago Saraiva, *Moving Crops and the Scales of History* (selections)
- Ludovic Coupaye, "Ways of Enchanting, *Chaînes Opératoires* and Yam Cultivation in Nyamikum Village, Maprik, Papua New Guinea"

W 2/15: Futures Markets

- William Cronon, "Pricing the Grain," in *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*
- **[Select food object for in-class discussion.]**

PART II: CULTIVATION AND CRISIS

Week 4: Industrial Agriculture

M 2/20: US Agricultural Development

- Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s*
- Film [class]: *The Plow that Broke the Plains*

W 2/22: International Organization (World War II, Hot Springs, United Nations)

- Mark Mazower, *Governing the World: The History of an Idea*, Part II: Governing the World the American Way, Chapter 7: "The League is Dead: Long Live the United Nations" (pp. 191-213)
- "United Nations Conference on Food and Agriculture, Hot Springs, Virginia, May 18-June 3 1943, Establishment of the Interim Commission on Food and Agriculture"

Week 5: "Green Revolution?"

M 2/27: Exporting Agriculture USA

- Nick Cullather, *The Hungry World: America's Cold War Battle Against Poverty in Asia* [selections]
- Film [class]: *Agriculture USA*

W 3/1: Revisions

- Benjamin Siegel, "Whither Agriculture? The 'Green Revolution' @50," *Public Books* (blog), 14 Jan. 2019, <https://www.publicbooks.org/whither-agriculture-the-green-revolution-50/>.

- Gabriela Soto Laveaga, "Beyond Borlaug's Shadow: Octavio Paz, Indian Farmers, and the Challenge of Narrating the Green Revolution"
- **[Commodity history due.]**

Week 6: Global Food Crisis

M 3/6: "The Bet" (1974)

- Paul Sabin, *The Bet: Paul Ehrlich, Julian Simon, and Our Gamble over Earth's Future*, Introduction and Chapters 1-3

W 3/8: "The Development Imperative"

- James Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine: "Development," Depoliticization and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (pp. xiii-166, "The Bovine Mystique")

Part III: THE WAY WE LIVE NOW

Week 7: Diaspora and Localism

M 3/27: Case study: Maize and repatriation movements

- Elizabeth Hoover, "Protecting Our Living Relatives: Environmental Reproductive Justice and Seed Repatriation"
- Helen Curry, *Endangered Maize* [selections]

W 3/29: **[Oral History due. Come prepared to discuss.]**

Week 8: Community Food Security

M 4/3: Amazing Grace Food Pantry

W 4/5: Permaculture, urban farming, school gardens (discussion with Jennifer Roach of Summer of Solutions, Hartford)

Week 9: Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs)

M 4/10: Rachel Schurman and William Munro, *Fighting for the Future of Food: Activists Vs. Agribusiness in the Struggle Over Biotechnology* (Intro and Chapters 5 and 6)

W 4/12: Helen Curry, "Hybrid Seeds in History and Historiography"

Part IV: ALTERNATIVES AND FUTURES. CASE STUDY: PALESTINE

Week 10: Waste and Salvage (Palestine)

M 4/17: Waste:

- Sophia Stamatopolou-Robbins, *Waste Siege: The Life of Infrastructure in Palestine* (selections)
- Philipp Salzmann, "A Food Regime's Perspective on Palestine: Neoliberalism and the Question of Land and Food Sovereignty within the Context of Occupation," *Journal für Entwicklungspolitik*, 2018, 34:14–34.

W 4/19: Forage:

- Courtney Fullilove, "'Famine Foods' and the Values of Biodiversity in Israel-Palestine"

Week 11: Rainfed Agriculture and Perennial Agro-Ecosystems

M 4/24: Cultivating Dependence

- Caroline Abu-Sada, "Cultivating Dependence: Palestinian Agriculture under the Israeli Occupation," in *The Power of Inclusive Exclusion: Anatomy of Israeli Rule in the Occupied Palestinian Territories*, ed. Adi Ophir, Michal Givoni, and Sari Hanafi

W 4/26: **Workshop with Environmental Studies students, Al-Quds Bard College, Abu Dis**

- Omar Tesdell et al, "Envisioning perennial agroecosystems in Palestine"

Week 12: Seed Saving**M 5/1: International Seed Banks**

- Tiago Saraiva, "Breeding Europe: Crop Diversity, Gene Banks, and Commoners"

W 5/3: Community Seed Banks

- Linda Tabar, "People's Power: Lessons from the First *Intifada*," unpublished manuscript, 2013, <https://www.rosalux.ps/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Linda-Tabar.pdf>.
- Courtney Fullilove and Abdallah Alimari, "Baladi Seeds in the oPt: Populations as Objects of Preservation and Units of Analysis"

Week 13 (M 5/8 and W 5/10): Workshop of Final Projects

Assignment: Submit a tentative abstract [max. 150 words] of your final project, along with **one** (1) image to be used as a talking point for a 10-minute in-class presentation of your research.