

## EVST 315: Food and Sustainable Societies

### *A Course on History, Environment, and Justice*

“Eating is an agricultural act.... How we eat determines, to a considerable extent, how the world is used.”  
W. Berry



### Overview and General Information

<i>Instructor</i>	Benjamin Cohen
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<i>Phone</i>	610.330.3058
<i>E-mail</i>	<a href="mailto:cohenb@lafayette.edu">cohenb@lafayette.edu</a>
<i>Office Hours</i>	T/W/Th, 1:00-2:00pm, and by appointment
<i>Farmer in Residence</i>	Lisa Miskelly office in RISC (2 <sup>nd</sup> floor Office of Sustainability) and at LaFarm (Forks Township) <a href="mailto:miskelll@lafayette.edu">miskelll@lafayette.edu</a>
<i>Readings</i>	Required readings available as *.pdf or hyperlinks via Moodle, plus these books: M. Pollan, <i>The Omnivore's Dilemma</i> (Penguin, 2006) M. White, <i>Freedom Farmers</i> (UNC Press, 2018) A. Reese, <i>Black Food Geographies</i> (UNC Press, 2019) E. Contois, <i>Diners, Dudes, and Diets</i> (UNC Press, 2020)

*All EVST courses work towards actively building and sustaining an inclusive community of learners and contributors. This class fully subscribes to Lafayette College's commitment to promoting diversity including (but not limited to) race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, disability, and place of origin.*

### PRINCIPAL SOFTWARE FOR CLASS MANAGEMENT

Moodle, Zoom, and Slack ([evst315sp21.slack.com](https://evst315sp21.slack.com))

### CLASS TIMES AND LOCATIONS

T/Th, 11:00am—12:15pm, OCGE 107, *plus select 4<sup>th</sup> Hour activities tba*

Also Zoom: <https://lafayette.zoom.us/j/93319601271>

### COURSE OVERVIEW

This course examines the contours of modern food systems, with an emphasis on historical, environmental, and justice-based contexts. We want to understand the interconnections between how people grow, distribute, and consume food so that we can consider what it would take to build a more just and sustainable food system. The course proceeds in four parts. It begins by developing a common vocabulary, so that students are prepared to engage in food

systems analysis. It then drops back to ensure students recognize the historical decisions that led to the current system, since restructuring structural inequities means understanding how those structures got built in the first place. The third part of the course examines how others have sought that restructuring, while the final part (which accounts for the second half of the course) has students deliberating on twenty-first century efforts to enact food system reform.

#### OUTLINE OF SYLLABUS

- Part I:* Introduction: What is “the” food system?
- Part II:* How did we get here?
- Part III:* How have people responded to its problems and opportunities?
- Part IV:* What are we doing now? Where to?

#### GRADES

- 28% Class participation: *Attendance, preparation, discussion participation and leading, in-class writings, interest, and attention*
- 35% HW + Media responses/recaps: *composed in response to readings and media pieces (films, podcasts, TV series’) about food, ag, and the environment*
- 30% Profiles: *as larger class projects, students produce two multi-media profiles about subjects chosen from a range of sustainable food and ag advocates, books, and/or organizations; the first is for mid-term, the other a final project*
- 7% LaFarm volunteering: *students will contribute six hours of work at LaFarm over the course of the semester*

#### SPECIFIC STUDENT OUTCOMES:

- 1) Understand the historical basis from which food systems have derived.
- 2) Conduct analyses of the environmental contexts of food systems.
- 3) Conduct analyses of the justice-based contexts of food systems.
- 4) Assess arguments and projects by practitioners in current efforts to reform food systems.
- 5) Identify the social, ethical, and economic issues surrounding your projects.
- 6) Demonstrate proficiency with a variety of communications skills.

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#### More about course expectations

**Written assignments:** For all submitted written work, I expect grammatical accuracy, mechanical soundness, and professional presentation. Sloppy and hurried writings reflect sloppy and hurried thinking. Students must always thoroughly proofread their work before submitting it. Writing assignments act in part as a check on your reading comprehension, as brief composition opportunities, and as a place to work through questions and observations brought out by course readings and discussions.

**Class participation:** Class participation includes active attentiveness, interest, curiosity, discussion contributions, and other assorted assignments. Mere attendance, which is required, will not be sufficient to receive an outstanding participation grade. More than two classes of *unexcused* absences will result in a grade drop, but always discuss with me any attendance issues you may have so we can accommodate any difficult circumstances. Come to class with curiosity, intellectual ambition, an open mind, some healthy skepticism, and the willingness to engage our topics. If you do that, the rest will take care of itself. To help this cause, prepare to participate by completing assigned readings and problems **prior** to the class period and spending time **critically analyzing** them. Excellence in written work will not make up for delinquency in attendance or lack of preparation for class discussion. Reading alone is insufficient. Students must read *and* analyze texts. Granted, participation is a different beast when we are meeting over Zoom. I will rely on students to help navigate the differences and nuances of Zoom participation when we have to meet

virtually instead of in-person. One thing that is not different online, though, is that the more prepared you are for class—the more you are in it, present, ready to go, having gotten yourself in the right headspace as we begin—the better class will be. The challenge we face is digital distraction, so I will encourage us to be present for the 75 minutes of our class as fully as possible, every day, every class.

**Class projects:** Students will play a role in defining the shape of the two course projects, though both will in some way be multi-media profiles of sustainable food and ag advocates, books, and/or organizations. Expect that these take the shape of audio projects (like a podcast), website creation (to include graphics, text, video, and/or audio), or standard written profiles, but with more aesthetic charm.

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### **ACCOMMODATIONS**

Should you have a learning disability that requires accommodation, I would be grateful if you would advise me privately of your situation at the beginning of the semester. I am open to any necessary and formal accommodations. I appreciate that you bring them to my attention in due time.

### **HONOR AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Student-teacher relationships require trust. For example, students trust that teachers make responsible decisions about the structure and content of their courses; teachers trust that the assignments students turn in are theirs. Acts that violate this trust undermine the educational process. Lafayette College maintains a community of trust by promoting a culture of honor, principle, and integrity. As a College of students, faculty, administrators, and staff, we work *as* a community to create such a culture. Therefore, when it comes to written and oral assignments, the words must be your own and you must cite those whose ideas you use. Please note that for group projects, where some of these terms and issues are muddled, we will discuss further the boundaries of ethical behavior and academic integrity.

### **CELL PHONE POLICY**

Out of respect for your classmates, all cell phones must be silenced and stored away. This will be particularly important when we meet on Zoom. It is difficult with so many of our digital systems intertwined. We will collaborate to establish best digital learning practices. Keeping cell phones away is a first step, allowing the chance to be fully present if we are meeting on Zoom or in person.

### **SOME ZOOM-SPECIFIC GUIDANCE**

1. Close unneeded applications on your computer to keep the video optimally functioning.
2. You might want to use a headset with an external mic for best hearing and speaking capabilities.
3. When speaking, let others know you have finished by saying “That’s all” or “I’m done” or “Thank you,” so everyone knows you have finished your comments.
4. If you want to speak, physically raise your hand or use the Zoom “raise hand” feature.
5. You can ask questions and make comments silently if desired using the “Chat” feature.
6. Be mindful of your background lighting. If you are in front of a window, you may be completely darkened by the light coming through the window. Overhead light might need to be turned off or dimmed as well.

### **Grading Schema**

	A (93+)	A- (90-92)
B+ (87-89)	B (83-86)	B- (80-82)
C+ (77-79)	C (73-76)	C- (70-72)
D+ (67-69)	D (63-66)	D- (60-62)

*The student work in this course is in full compliance with the federal definition of a four-credit hour course. Please see the Lafayette College Compliance webpage (<http://registrar.lafayette.edu/additional-resources/cep-course-proposal/>) for the full policy and practice statement.*

**Course syllabus sketch, ver. 2.0 (21Mar2021)** *[though see Moodle for most assignment dates]*

	Tuesday	Thursday	Misc.
Week 1 <i>Introduction/ Part I</i>	Feb 9 Discuss Pollan	Feb 11 ...Pollan continued + discuss syllabus	<b>Due</b> Friday (2/12): Assignment #1
Week 2	Feb 16 <b>Read:</b> Thompson (food ethics) <b>Watch:</b> Penniman (food justice)	Feb 13 <b>Read:</b> Thompson (social injustice); Pollan (on Covid)	<b>Due</b> Sunday: recap
Week 3 <i>History/Part II</i>	Feb 23 <b>Read:</b> Cronon (meat); Carroll (meals)	Feb 25 <b>Read:</b> Finger (on Tulare); Mitchell (People's Grocery)	
Week 4	March 2 <b>Read:</b> PBS (Poison Squad); Ludington (subsidies)	March 4 <b>Read:</b> Ferrell (on Carver); McGrath (on Rodale)	<b>Due</b> Sunday: recap
Week 5 <i>Reform/Part III</i>	March 9 <b>Read:</b> From Benson to Butz; Lappe; Waters	March 11 Guest speaker <b>Read:</b> Berry; Jackson; Hightower	
Week 6	March 16 <b>Read:</b> White, <i>Freedom Farmers</i>	March 18 <b>Read:</b> White, <i>Freedom Farmers</i>	<b>Due</b> Sunday: recap
Week 7 <i>Onward/ Part IV</i>	March 23 <b>Read:</b> Kloppenberg, et al.	March 25 <b>Read:</b> Cultural Ecology; Slow Food; FMs; CSAs; Gardens; etc.	
Week 8	March 30 —SPRING BREAK—	April 1 <b>Due:</b> Profile #1 Guest speaker	
Week 9	April 6 <i>Justice and race</i> <b>Read:</b> A justice agenda; 1619 episodes	April 8 <b>Read:</b> Penniman; Washington; Finley	<b>Due</b> Sunday: recap
Week 10	April 13 <b>Read:</b> Reese, <i>BFG</i>	April 15 <b>Read:</b> Reese, <i>BFG</i>	
Week 11	April 20 <i>Gender</i> <b>Read:</b> Contois, <i>DDD</i>	April 22 <b>Read:</b> Contois, <i>DDD</i>	<b>Due</b> Sunday: recap
Week 12	April 27 <i>Global environments</i> <b>Read:</b> tba	April 29 <b>Read:</b> tba	
Week 13	May 4 <i>Regional environments</i> <b>Read:</b> tba	May 6 <b>Read:</b> tba	<b>Due</b> Sunday: recap
Week 14	May 11 <i>Local environments</i>	May 13 Concluding material	
Week 15	May 18 <i>Last day of class</i> Closing comments	<b>Due:</b> Profile #2	

See Moodle for full bibliography of course material

*Full list of readings:*

## **Week 1 [Feb 9 and 11]**

### **PART I: Introduction**

Introduction to class.

*Omnivore's Dilemma* debrief

*Thursday*

...cont. with Pollan

- Bonus (not required): T. Philpott, "[Joel Salatin's Unsustainable Myth](#)"
- Bonus (not required): [More Salatin critique in WaPo](#)
- Bonus (not required): J. Guthman, "[How Michael Pollan et al. Made Me Want to Eat Cheetos](#)"

## **Week 2 [Feb 16 and 18]**

*Tuesday*

P. Thompson, "[You are NOT what you eat](#)" [on food ethics]

L. Penniman, "[Interviewed on Bite Podcast](#)" [on food justice]

*Thursday*

P. Thompson, "[Food Ethics and Social Injustice](#)"

M. Pollan, "[The Sickness in Our Food Supply](#)"

- Bonus (not required; on the theme of pandemic food systems): "[Feeding the City, Pandemic and Beyond](#)" [podcast]
- Bonus (not required; on the theme of pandemic food systems): "[Dismantling and rebuilding the food system after COVID-19](#)" [journal article]
- Bonus (not required; on the theme of pandemic food systems): "[The Effect of COVID-19 on the Food System](#)" [brief commentary]

## **Week 3 [Feb 23 and 25]**

### **PART II: History**

Cronon, "[Annihilating Space: Meat](#)"

Carroll, "[How Dinner Became Special](#)"

- Bonus (not required): Carroll, "[How Dinner Became American](#)"

*Thursday* Indigenous dispossession and early food justice

Finger, "[Tulare Lake and the Past Future of Food](#)"

Mitchell, "[People's Grocery](#)"

- Bonus (not required): Levesque, "[Eat the Rich: Radical Food Justice in Memphis and Chicago](#)"
- Please note this other extra bonus opportunity: Online panel, "Black Food Matters: Racial Justice in the Wake of Food Justice," on the occasion of the new book *Black Food Matters*, 6-7:30pm tonight. [RSVP here for access](#).

#### **Week 4 [March 2 and 4]**

*Tuesday* Policy history

Ludington, "[US Farm and Food Subsidies](#)"

Watch: "[The Poison Squad](#)," *PBS American Experience* (plus, as a bonus, you should check out the great article about fake sugar at that website)

*Thursday* Origins of a new organic ideal

Ferrell, [G.W. Carver](#) (pp. 11-21)

McGrath, [On J.I. Rodale](#)

- Bonus (not required): A. Case, [Rodale and Pennsylvania Farming](#)
- Bonus: Hersey, [Carver and Environmentalism](#)

#### **Week 5 [March 9 and 11]**

#### **PART III: Reform**

*Tuesday* Post-war developments in ag policy and food culture

Lecture: From Benson to Butz

M. McGrath, "[Recipes for a New World](#)"

G. Raz, "[Interview of Alice Waters](#)," *How I Built This*

- Bonus (not required): "[Betty Crocker's Atomic Age Creations](#)," *NYT*
- Bonus (not required): "[Interview of Frances Moore Lappe](#)," *Evolutionaries* Podcast

*Thursday* Critiques of industrialization

1. Class guests: Katy and Dan Hunter of [Hunter Hill CSA](#)

2 Readings:

W. Berry, "[The Pleasures of Eating](#)" (1977/1989)

W. Jackson, "[New Roots for Agriculture](#)" (1980) -- "[Farm as Hearth--Farm as Food Factory](#)" (the correct reading)

- Bonus (not required): J. Hightower, "[Hard Tomatoes, Hard Times](#)" (1972)
- Bonus (not required): Farm Crisis in the 1980s short PBS clip
- Bonus: Willie Nelson and Farm Aid news clip
- [Farm to Table Portlandia URL](#)

## **Week 6 [March 16 and 18]**

*Tuesday*

Read: M. White, *Freedom Farmers*: Introduction (pp. 3-27), Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 (pp. 65-96)

- Bonus (not required): Chapter 1 (pp. 28-62) [good stuff on Booker, Carver, and DuBois that you'd appreciate and learn from, but since we have some of that background already it's okay to skip this part and use it for reference if needed]

*Thursday*

...cont. with *Freedom Farmers*, Chapters 4 and 5 and Conclusion (97-147)

Watch: [Kamal Bell TED Talk on Sankofa farming](#)

- Additional link: [The Detroit Black Community Food Security Network](#)
- Additional link: [The Detroit People's Food Co-op](#)
- Additional link: [an interview with Cornelius Blanding, the current Executive Director of the Federation of Southern Coops](#)

## **Week 7 [March 23 and 25]**

### **PART IV: The Modern Local Food Movement, on up**

*Tuesday*

Read: Kloppenberg, et al., "[Coming into the Foodshed](#)"

Return to W. Berry's "The Pleasures of Eating" and Farm Aid from two weeks ago

*Thursday*

Short readings on the following (though don't worry: these are divided up so you only read a subset, as indicated next by last names):

1. A movement: Slow Food: [The one page Slow Food Manifesto](#) (1986/1989) [read if your last name begins with B-H]

2. A movement: Local Food: [Excerpts from a longer USDA report](#) (2010) [read if your last name begins with B-H]
3. New foodways: [Farmers' Markets and Community Gardens](#) (2018): read pages 187-193, 196-198, and 202 [read if your last name begins with K-M]
4. New foodways: CSAs, [a brief history](#) (and [the first paragraphs of this one](#), to see a slightly different take) [read if your last name begins with K-M]
5. An organizing concept: Food Miles [primer by the person who coined the term](#) (1992/2006) [read if your last name begins with N-W]
6. An organizing concept: [Food deserts report from the USDA](#) (2012): read pp. iii-iv and 1-6 [read if your last name begins with N-W]

Then everyone reads: Cohen, "[Don't Monocrop the Movement](#): Towards a Cultural Ecology of Local Food"

- Bonus (not required): [Commentary on Food Miles and its use or possible misuse](#)
- Bonus (not required): [Another commentary by a guy \(me again\) frustrated with people reducing the complexity of environmental issues](#)
- Bonus (not required): BFBL, [Lehigh Valley Local Food Assessment Report](#) (2013) [we'll likely read from this later in the course, but here it is now too]
- Bonus (not required): USDA, [Trends in U.S. Local and Regional Food Systems](#) (2015) [this too we'll likely read from later in the course, but here it is now too]

## **Week 8 [April 1]**

*Tuesday*

No class--rest up, sleep in, do nothing

*Thursday* More on "the local"

- Guest: Farmer Anton Shannon of [Good Work Farm](#) [be sure to click "Meet the Farmers"]
- Also bring: Your choice of an article from our quartet of media sources higher up this page (as noted in a Slack message)
- Also! Let's do this: [listen to this interview with Farmer Lisa](#), though if you want, I *guess* you can skip to minute ~10 where the interview actually starts, though you'd miss the farmersonly.com pre-chatter. And you know? If you peel off somewhere into the quiz during the 30 minutes part you'd be ok.
- Continue discussing the various features of the local food movement

## **Week 9 [April 6 and 8]**

*Tuesday* What was not prominent enough in the early local food movement? Race and justice.

Read: Mares and Alkon (2011), "[Mapping the Food Movement](#)"

Watch: Ron Finley (2013) [TED Talk](#)



Thursday ..cont.

Alkon and Agyeman (2011), "[The Food Movement as Polyculture](#)"

Brones (2018), "[Interview of Karen Washington](#)"

- Bonus (for the week, and likely to be drawn from in subsequent weeks): "[An Annotated Bibliography on Structural Racism Present in the U.S. Food System \(8th edition, January 2021\)](#)"

## **Week 10 [April 13 and 15]**

Tuesday

Reese, *Black Food Geographies*, pp. 1-68

Thursday

Reese, *Black Food Geographies*, pp. 91-139

## **Week 11 [April 20 and 22]**

*Monday, April 19 12:30pm*: Film screening of *Right to Harm*, about rural communities and factory farming. [Go here for registration and info.](#)

*Also April 19, 3:45-5:45pm* (optional forum to attend): A round-table on "Feeding Family and Community: African American Women Farmers and the Long Fight for Environmental Justice in the Midwest" (Note: Monica White, author of *Freedom Farmers*, is in this). [Go here for registration and info.](#)

*Tuesday* What's another thing characterizing our age's food movement? Media. Which is still gendered (among other things).

Contois, *Diners, Dudes, and Diets*, pp. xi-63

- Bonus: The famous [Pete Wells review of Guy Fieri's Time Square restaurant](#)
- Bonus: Watch [an episode of Diners, Drive-ins, and Dives](#) on whatever streaming platform you can find

Thursday

Contois, *Diners, Dudes, and Diets*, pp. 89-130

Note: the author will be joining us today

- [Shane Torres Defends Guy Fieri URL](#)
- [SNL's "Man Stain" URL](#)

## **Week 12 [April 27 and 29]**

*Tuesday*

Class does not meet. Weekly Recap (from last week) due at the end of the day.

*Thursday*

No reading for today. We'll discuss the final profile project and pursue our ongoing questions, What does a future food system look like in ways we think are better? How would we get there?

## **Week 13 [May 4 and 6]**

*Tuesday*

Excerpts from "[A New England Food Vision](#)" (pp. 2-3, 10-12, 28-37--and "familiarize" yourself with the rest)

Excerpts from "[A Long Food Movement](#)" (pp. 4-14 [the Exec Summary]--and skim through other sections, "familiarize" yourself with them)

Excerpts from "[Actionable Frameworks for Food Systems Transformation](#)" (pp. 1-14)

## **Week 14 [May 11 and 13]**

...continue "Lehigh Valley 2050/75 Food and Farm" project

## **Week 15 [May 18]**

Finalize "Lehigh Valley 2050/75" project