

AGRICULTURE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN WESTERN HISTORY

Community and Environmental Sociology 230 / History of Science 230
Fall 2013

Professor: Jess Gilbert
340B Agriculture Hall
Email: gilbert@ssc.wisc.edu
Office Hours: Tues, 4:30-5:30, & by app't

Teaching Assistant: Rob Chiles
308 Agriculture Hall, Office H
Email: rob.ces230@gmail.com
Office Hours: Wed, 3:30-4:30, & by
app't

This course introduces you to some core features of the social, cultural, and political history of agriculture, mainly in the United States. First, though, we begin with the *agrarian* origins of Western civilization, glancing at classical Greece and Rome, ancient Israel/Palestine, medieval peasant protests in Europe, and the rise of capitalism in early-modern rural England. The rest of the course focuses on the U. S. We shall compare and contrast several key episodes in its agricultural history, including the American Revolution, Civil War, radical-reformist farmer movements, agricultural policy debates (for example, Populism, Socialism, Progressivism, and the New Deal), the farm crisis of the 1970s – 1980s, and contemporary alternatives to mainstream agriculture. Three interrelated themes will guide us through all this history: agrarianism/agrarian democracy, agricultural policy (the role of government in agriculture), and peasant/farmer protest movements in relation to larger social changes.

A major emphasis of this course is on the texts—reading, rereading, questioning, comprehending, and criticizing them. Class format will be largely lecture, with the addition of a film or two and a bit of music. Lectures will highlight the most important parts of the readings and also introduce additional material. Discussion sections will focus on your questions, comments, and criticisms of the readings; this is your chance to really understand them. Since ours is an introductory course, you are not expected to know much at all about agricultural history, rural society, or sociology at the beginning. By semester's end, however, you will know quite a lot!

TEXTS--We shall read and discuss in detail the following three books, which will be available for purchase at Rainbow Bookstore Cooperative (426 W. Gilman, phone 257-6050):

Bissett, Jim. *Agrarian Socialism in America: Marx, Jefferson, and Jesus in the Oklahoma Countryside, 1904-1920*. Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1999.

Danbom, David B. *Born in the Country: A History of Rural America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2006 (2nd edition).

Hagenstein, Edwin C., Sara M. Gregg, and Brian Donahue, editors. *American Georgics: Writings on Farming, Culture, and the Land*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 2011.

In addition, there is a packet of required readings for sale at Bob's Copy Shop (616 University Ave.; phone 257-4536). This packet contains the readings for the first few weeks, so **buy it now!**

The books and the reading packet will be on Reserve at Steenbock Library.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:

1. **Exams:** There will be two exams taken in class, the first on Oct. 28, the second, Dec. 11 (the last day of class). Each will include a combination of true/false, short-answer, and essay questions. It is to your advantage not to miss exams. Make-ups will consist of a single (different, more difficult) essay question.
2. **Paper:** You will write a paper of 5 - 6 pages (double-spaced, 12-point font), due on Nov. 25. We'll say much more about the paper assignment in class and in section.
3. **Participation:** Participation is essential. We expect you to attend every lecture, which will cover much material that will be on the exams but is not in the readings. In order to do well in this course, you must practice "active listening" during the lectures. Come to lecture prepared, having read the assignment in advance. In lecture, I will often cite and read from the assigned texts, so bring them to class the day they'll be treated.

Attendance in discussion sections is mandatory. In sections, you need to be able and willing to discuss the readings, raise questions about them, and bring up issues from the lectures that you don't fully understand. Your grade for "participation" will be based on your performance in section.

Grades will be determined as follows:

Exam #1	25%
Exam #2	35%
Paper	25%
Participation	<u>15%</u> (5% section attendance, 10% discussion)
Total	100%

We will not review your exam or paper results with you, or discuss your score, until 24 hours after the results have been returned.

Tips on Close Reading—Ask yourself these questions:

1. What is the author saying? What does the text mean?
2. How does the author know what s/he asserts? What are the claims based on?
3. So what? Who cares? Do you? Why?

Other Important Suggestions:

1. Keep up with the readings. Do the assigned readings *before* the class/section session during which they will be discussed.
2. I will give you a few “questions to read for” for almost every reading. Use them!
3. Take notes when you do the readings. What are the main points? Write down any questions you have about the readings or other course material, and bring them to class/section.
4. Attend lecture and section. Be prepared to raise questions and offer comments on the material.
5. Take notes in class. They will be a key basis for your study for the exams.
6. If you miss class, get notes from another student. This is your responsibility; we will not repeat lectures for students who miss class.
7. Come to office hours. Both your professor and your Teaching Assistant are glad to meet with you. Take advantage of us!

Good Citizenship: This is a large lecture class, so please behave in a way that shows respect for other students and the rest of us. Please be settled in and ready to go at 2:24 p.m. every class meeting, and be on time for your section sessions. Late arrivals and early departures disturb everyone; if you have to arrive late or leave early, sit in the back on an aisle—quietly. Please *do not* start packing up before I finish lecturing; I will finish by 3:15. Please do not bring food to class, or talk with other students during it. Turn off cell phones. Don’t surf, text, chat, tweet, watch video, play computer (or other) games etc. Enjoy the class!

COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS

I. Old World Agrarian Legacies, Ancient and Early-Modern

- 9/4 Overview
- 9/9 V. D. Hanson, “Epilogue: World Beneath Our Feet.” Pp. 405-33 in *The Other Greeks: The Family Farm and the Agrarian Roots of Western Civilization* (NY: Free Press, 1995).
- 9/11 N. C. Habel, “Land as Sabbath Bound: An Agrarian Ideology.” Pp. 97-114 in *The Land Is Mine: Six Biblical Land Ideologies* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), **and:**
- Reading #3 – *Document*: Leviticus, Chap. 25 (1 page).
- 9/16 M. B. Tauger, “Rome and the First Struggle for Land Reform.” Pp. 20-27 in *Agriculture in World History* (London: Routledge, 2011).

- 9/18 R. A. Horsley and J. S. Hanson, "Ancient Jewish Social Banditry." Pp. 48-87 in *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus* (NY: HarperCollins, 1988), **and:**

Reading #6: Ancient Jewish and Roman Dates; Map of Palestine (1 page).

- 9/23 R. H. Hilton, "Peasant Society, Peasant Movements, and Feudalism in Medieval Europe." Pp. 67-94 in H. A. Landsberger, ed., *Rural Protest: Peasant Movements and Social Change* (London: Macmillan, 1974).
- 9/25 B. Moore, Jr., "England and the Contributions of Violence to Gradualism." Pp. 3-39 in *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon, 1966).

II. New World Invasion, Revolution, Civil War, Settlement, and Populism, 1492-1896

- 9/30 Danbom, *Born in the Country*, *Prefaces*, Chaps. 1 and 3 [skip Chap. 2].
- 10/2 *American Georgics*, Foreword, Introduction (pp. 1-6),
Chap. 1 Introduction (8-15),
de Crevecoeur (15-27).
- 10/7 Danbom, Chaps. 4-5.
- 10/9 *American Georgics*, Chap. 2 Introduction (56-63),
Marsh (72-81),
Evans (86-89),
Ruffin (96-103).

Reading #9—*Document*: A. Lincoln, "Free Labor Gives Hope to All," Speech in Milwaukee, 1859 (1 page).

- 10/14 *American Georgics*, Chap. 3 Introduction (104-11),
Brisbane (111-18),
Thoreau (140-47).
- 10/16 Danbom, Chap. 6.

Guest Lecture: Brian Hamilton, "Varieties of Black Agrarianism after the Civil War."

- 10/21 Danbom, Chap. 7, **and:**

Reading #10: M. Isserman, "The Wizard of Oz" (1 page).

10/23 *American Georgics*, Chap. 4 Introduction (148-55),
Polk (179-86),
Donnelly (187-91),
Kellie (192-97).

10/28 *Exam #1*.

**III. U. S. Agriculture, Government, and Society, 1900 - Present:
Progressives, Socialists, Capitalists, New Dealers, and Agrarians**

10/30 Danbom, Chap. 8; Bascom Hall Plaque.

11/4 *American Georgics*, Chap. 5 Introduction (198-206),
Bailey (206-15),
Nourse (222-26).

11/6 Bissett, *Agrarian Socialism in America*, Preface, Introduction, and Chaps. 1-2.

11/11 Bissett, Chaps. 3-5.

11/13 Bissett, Chaps. 6-8.

11/18 Danbom, Chaps. 9-10.

11/20 *American Georgics*, Wallace (226-30),
Borsodi (230-36),
Rawe and Ligutti (236-43),
Leopold (305-11).

11/25 More New Deal lecture;
View *The Plow That Broke the Plains* (in-class film).

Paper due.

11/27 *American Georgics*, Chap. 6 Introduction (250-57),
Twelve Southerners (257-61),
Tate (277-82),
Cobb (287-97).

- 12/2 Danbom, Chap. 11.
- 12/4 *American Geographics*, Chap. 7 Introduction (298-305),
Butz (322-26),
Hanson (326-40).
- 12/9 *American Geographics*, Jackson (346-58),
Berry (358-67),
Conclusion (368-76).

Wrap-Up.

- 12/11 *Exam #2*.

“We locate ourselves in society and thus recognize our own positions as we hang from its subtle strings. For a moment we see ourselves as puppets indeed. But then we grasp a decisive difference between the puppet theater and our own drama. Unlike the puppets, we have the possibility of stopping our movements, looking up and perceiving the machinery by which we have been moved. In this act lies the first step toward freedom.”--P. L. Berger, *Invitation to Sociology*.

“The assumption of inertia, that cultural and social continuity do not require explanation, obliterates the fact that both have to be recreated anew in each generation, often with great pain and suffering. To maintain and transmit a value system, human beings are punched, bullied, sent to jail, thrown into concentration camps, cajoled, bribed, made into heroes, encouraged to read newspapers, stood up against a wall and shot, and sometimes even taught sociology.”--B. Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*.

“Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

“Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

“But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate -- we can not consecrate -- we can not hallow -- this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us -- that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion -- that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain -- that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom -- and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”

--A. Lincoln, Gettysburg Address, Nov. 19, 1863.