



Fall 2016 – MW 2:30-3:45
Ag Hall 10
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Office: 312 Ag Hall
Office hours: W 12-2:30

Community & Environmental Sociology 375

Food Commodity Chains in a Global Economy

In our global economy, much of our food travels thousands of miles from farm to plate and undergoes extensive processing. Because of the distance and complexity of the connections between producers and consumers, it is hard for most of us to answer basic questions about who grows the crop, under what labor conditions, and with what ecological impacts. A commodity chain is a way of visualizing and studying all of the activities, from conception to end use and disposal, involved in bringing a product to market. It provides a novel way of studying globalization and a methodology for uncovering the social relationships and transactions that make up markets.

In this course we will learn how to develop models of food commodity chains and analyze the social relationships that structure those chains. In the process, we will learn about the state of our current food system and how new technologies and globalization are reshaping it. We will choose several products found in UW dining halls and students will do their own hands-on analysis of the commodity chains for these foods. We will also learn about the ways that social movements are working to reshape commodity chains by promoting local production, fair trade, and labor justice.

Learning Objectives for the Course:

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Identify sources of information appropriate for commodity chain analysis
- Construct models and descriptive accounts of food commodity chains
- Analyze how institutions govern commodity chains
- Describe the kinds of labor involved at various nodes of the commodity chain
- Map the spatial dimensions of commodity chains
- Engage in ethical reasoning about more just food system conditions

Course Materials:

Reader: Online, through Learn@UW. I have posted the PDFs of most readings but there are links to a few of them.

Assignments:

Reading Work Sheets:

For each class session, there will be a Reading Worksheet Dropbox set up on Learn@UW. The sheet is meant to help you focus on the important points in the readings for that day. It will help you be more prepared to participate in class discussions. Each worksheet has two questions. After completing the readings, answer each of the questions in one paragraph (3-5 sentences) and upload your answers to the Dropbox. Each completed worksheet is worth 5 points credit. You will receive 3 points for turning it in and 1 point for each question that you answer correctly. There will be worksheets for 23 class sessions and you will be required to complete 20 of them over the course of the semester. In other words, you will have 3 “free days” when you do not have to turn one in.

Final Commodity Chain Research Project and Paper

For this assignment we will divide into groups of 3-4 students each. Each group will choose a food item that is available in a local dining hall and will research its commodity chain. The group will collectively develop: 1) a graphic representation of the chain and its nodes; 2) a brief history (timeline) of the chain, and 3) a map of key food chain actors. At the end of the semester, each member of the group will turn in their own 8-10 page (double-spaced) paper that focuses on a particular labor process in the chain (the kind of work done at one “node” of the chain). I will evaluate the written papers individually. The group will also present an overview of their findings to the class. The final grade for this assignment will consider both the written work and participation in the group presentation.

(See detailed instructions at end of syllabus).

10 responses/discussion facilitation – 5 points each	100 points
Final paper	70 points
Final presentation	30 points

Plagiarism: All of the work that you submit for this class must be your own work, and you are required to quote and cite all references properly. Whenever you are unsure about quoting and citing, please come to see me to figure out the best strategy. But in general, if you are in doubt, cite! If you use a web-based source, you can always cite the URL. For information about plagiarism policy:

<http://www.wisc.edu/students/saja/misconduct/UWS14.html#points>

More information on source citation:

www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/Acknowledging_Sources.pdf.

Accommodations: I wish to include fully any students with special needs in this course. The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students

with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Faculty and students share responsibility for reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. Students should inform me of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. I will work either directly with you, or in coordination with the McBurney Center, to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA.

Grade disagreements: If you have questions about a grade, speak to me first. If the question is not resolved, speak with the Chair of Community and Environmental Sociology, Gary Green, who will attempt to resolve the issue and inform you of the appeals procedure if no resolution is reached informally.

Writing Center. Because a substantial part of your grade depends on the final paper, I encourage you to make use of the resources available at the UW Writing Center (<http://www.writing.wisc.edu>). They have terrific online resources about planning and writing a research paper, thesis v. purpose statements, writing introductions, organizing paragraphs, organizing the paper using reverse outlines, citing sources, proofreading for common grammar errors, and improving your writing style. You can also make appointments for individual consultations.

Diversity at CALS

Message from the Dean:

"Diversity is a core value of CALS. We take pride in the many backgrounds present in our college, and are deeply committed to ensuring its continued diversity. Working with people from a variety of social groups broadens and deepens the educational experience, preparing students and faculty to participate in an increasingly diverse society."

--Kathryn VandenBosch, Dean of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences

COURSE SCHEDULE

Sep 7 **Introduction to Course**

Unit 1. Commodity Chain Histories

Objectives:

1. Describe the power and governance of commodity chains in the colonial period.
2. Provide examples of how these relationships continue to shape present-day commodity exchanges.

Sep 12 **Food and Global Connections Pt. 1**

Harriet Friedmann, "Remaking Traditions: How We Eat, What We Eat, and the Changing Political Economy of Food"

Matthew Hockenberry, "Elements of Food Infrastructure"
<http://limn.it/elements-of-food-infrastructure/>

Sep 14 **Food and Global Connections Pt. 2**

Sidney Mintz, "Time, Sugar, Sweetness"

Sep 19 **History of Commodity Exchange**

Eric Wolf, "The Movement of Commodities"

Unit 2. Commodity Chain Structure and Characteristics

Objectives:

1. Identify common nodes in conventional food commodity chains.
2. Identify distinguishing features of conventional food commodity chains.
3. Compare governance relationships in buyer-driven and producer-driven commodity chains.
4. Identify the various kinds of labor involved in each node of food commodity chains.
5. Illustrate how cultural tastes and preferences shape commodity chains.

Sep 21 **What is a Commodity Chain?**

Terence Hopkins and Immanuel Wallerstein, "Commodity Chains: Construct and Research"

Gary Gereffi, Joonkoo Lee, and Michelle Christian, "U.S.-Based Food and Agricultural Value Chains and Their Relevance to Healthy Diets"

- Sep 26 **Special Characteristics of Food Commodity Chains Pt 1**
Susanne Freidburg, “Freshness from Afar”
Christopher Otter, “Scale, Evolution, and Emergence in Food Systems”
<http://limn.it/scale-evolution-and-emergence-in-food-systems/>
- Sep 28 **Special Characteristics of Food Commodity Chains Pt 2**
Gary Gereffi, “The Organization of Buyer-Driven Commodity Chains: How U.S. Retailers Shape Overseas Production Networks”
- Oct 3 **Labor in Commodity Chains**
Sarah Besky and Sandy Brown, “Looking For Work: Placing Labor in Food Studies”
Jane Collins, “Tracing Social Relations in Commodity Chains: The Case of Brazilian Grapes”
- Oct 4 **Optional Class on Research Sources**
Steenbock librarian Karen Dunn will meet with us in 105 Steenbock Library from 9:30-10:30 am.
- Oct 5 **Food Commodity Chains and Culture**
Ted Bestor, “How Sushi Went Global”
John Soluri, “Banana Cultures: Linking the Production and Consumption of Bananas: 1800-1980”
- Oct 10 **Planning Day for Final Projects**

Unit 3. Producing and Processing Food

Objectives:

1. Compare labor relations on plantations and in contract farming from an economic efficiency perspective.
2. Compare working conditions on plantations and in contract farming from a social justice perspective.
3. Illustrate the global relationships involved in structuring plantation labor, smallholder production and processing labor for a particular food item.

- Oct 12 **Plantations vs. Smallholder Production**
- Laura Reynolds, “Global Banana Trade”
- Catherine Tucker, “Harvesting, Processing, and Inequality”
- Oct 17 **Working Conditions and Worker Organizing among Smallholders**
- Lawrence Grossman, “The St. Vincent’s Banana Growers’ Association, Contract Farming, and the Peasantry”
- Oct 19 **Working Conditions on Large Farms**
- Barry Estabrook, *Tomatoland*, p. 73-96
- Oct 24 **Worker Organizing on Large Farms**
- Barry Estabrook, *Tomatoland*, pp. 97-138
- Film: *Food Chains*
- Oct 26 **Discussion of Estabrook and film**
- Oct 31 **Food Processing Workers**
- Steve Striffler, “Inside a Poultry Processing Plant: An Ethnographic Portrait”
- David Bacon, “How U.S. Policies Fueled Mexico’s ‘Great Migration’”
<https://www.thenation.com/article/how-us-policies-fueled-mexicos-great-migration/>

Unit 4. Governance of Global Commodity Chains

Objectives:

1. Identify institutions and processes key to governance of food commodity chains.
2. Compare alternative ways of assessing power relations in food commodity chains.

- Nov 2 **Power and Profits along the Chain**
- John Talbot, “Where Does Your Coffee Dollar Go?”
- Nov 7 **The Role of Government and International Organizations**
- John Talbot, “Struggles Over Regulation of the Chain”

FINAL PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE

Unit 7. Serving Food

Objectives:

1. Identify the economic forces that shape food retail and food service work.
2. Compare social justice issues in food service work with those in food production work.
3. Identify institutions that play a role in governance of food service work.

Nov 9 **Food Retail**

Ester Reiter, "Serving the McCustomer: Fast Food is Not About Food"

Saru Jayaraman, "The Hands That Feed Us"

<http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/the-hands-that-feed-us/>

Nov 14 **Working Conditions in Food Services**

Food Chain Workers Alliance, "Food Insecurity of Restaurant Workers"

<https://foodfirst.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/2014-07-Food-Insecurity-of-Restaurant-Workers-report-1.pdf>

Nov 16 **Who Serves Food?**

Teófilo Reyes, Chriss Benner and Saru Jayaraman, "Ending Jim Crow in America's Restaurants: Racial and Gender Occupational Segregation in the Restaurant Industry: Executive Summary"

<http://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/ending-jim-crow-in-americas-restaurants-racial-and-gender-occupational-segregation-in-the-restaurant-industry/>

Carol Stack, "Coming of Age in Oakland"

Nov 21 **Food Service Worker Activism**

William Finnegan, "Dignity: Fast Food Workers and a New Form of Labor Activism"

<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/09/15/dignity-4>

Steven Greenhouse, "Advocates for Workers Raise the Ire of Business"

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/17/business/as-worker-advocacy-groups-gain-momentum-businesses-fight-back.html?_r=0

Unit 8. Constructing Alternative Food Commodity Chains

Objectives:

1. Compare fair trade commodity chains to conventional commodity chains.
2. Take a position on the value of fair trade practices and defend that position.
3. Develop an argument for an alternative supply chain arrangement.

- Nov 23 **Fair Trade Pt 1**
- Douglas Murray and Laura Reynolds, “Alternative Trade in Bananas”
- Dan Jaffee, “Corporate Cooptation of Organic and Fair Trade Standards”
- Nov 28 **Fair Trade Pt 2**
- Sarah Besky, “Colonial Pasts and Fair Trade Futures”
- Nov 30 **Reimagining Local and Global Commodity Chain Relationships**
- Fran Ansley, “Putting the Pieces Together: Tennessee Women Find the Global Economy in their Own Backyards”
- Lauren Baker, “A Different Tomato: Creating Vernacular Foodscapes”

Unit 9. Sharing Our Work

- Dec 5 Planning for presentations
- Dec 7 Presentations
- Dec 12 Presentations
- Dec 14 Presentations

FINAL COMMODITY RESEARCH PAPERS DUE



Commodity Chain Paper and Presentation

For this assignment we will divide into groups of 3-4 students. Each group will research a food item that can be found in a local dining hall.

The group will collectively develop:

- 1) a graphic representation of the commodity chain;
- 2) a brief history (timeline) of the chain, and
- 3) a map of key actors and any social movements involved.

You will receive additional handouts on the group presentation, including a grading rubric, later in the semester.

Each member of the group will turn in their own 8-10 page (double-spaced) paper that focuses on a particular labor process in the chain, such as: production through waged field labor, contract farming or some other arrangement; processing; distribution; or food service. This paper should have a clear thesis statement or argument. You will receive

additional handouts on the group presentation, including a grading rubric, later in the semester.

Phase I: Team Formation. (October 3)

We will spend a class session forming 3-4 person teams for the reports. You should come to class with ideas for a project and each team should adopt a preliminary idea. We will talk about the project in more detail.

Phase II: Project Proposals. (due October 19) - 10% of Final Paper Grade.

Each person will turn a proposal of 1-2 double-spaced pages, addressing the following issues:

- 1) Which team are you part of?
- 2) What is your special focus for the paper?
- 3) What do you think your argument will be?
- 4) What sources will you use?

Phase III: Team Meetings with Prof. Collins (Week of November 7).

Each team will sign up for a meeting time to discuss how their project is progressing.

Phase IV: Class presentations (December 5-14)

Each team will have approximately 20 minutes of class time: 15 minutes for the presentation and 5 minutes for questions and discussion. You should divide up speaking responsibilities so that each team member speaks for roughly the same amount of time. You may use Power Point slides or other audio-visual aids. Your audience is your fellow students. You need to educate and engage them, realizing they know far less than you do about this topic. Presentations will be evaluated based on three criteria:

- Graphic representation of the chain. 10 points
- Presentation of historical background. 10 points
- Presentation of actors and institutions. 10 points

Phase V: Individual Final Report (Due December 14).

Each report should be 8-10 double-spaced pages. It must include the following sections:

- Introduction: lays out your goals in the paper, including an overview of your argument.
- Background and Context: enough to enable an intelligent reader to understand the labor process you are documenting. This section should include some basic information on the supply chain, its key components, its history and key actors. No more than 2 pages.
- Body of the paper:
 1. Description of the labor process, identifying your research question. For example, your question could be about the gender or age or ethnic composition of the work force (why is it all women, why does child labor persist, or why does immigrant labor predominate)? It could be the cost-price squeeze experienced by contract farmers (what is causing this?), or a discussion of changing wage rates and living conditions of field laborers

working for piece rate (what accounts for the changes?). It could be the occupational health and safety hazards in processing work (how is this work regulated and where does regulation fall short?).

2. This is also where you should present your argument, which should represent your attempt to explain how some aspect of the commodity chain affects the labor issue you identified. This requires identifying actors in the chain who have the power to shape the conditions you are looking at and explaining how they do so. You should use specific evidence from sources (properly cited) to support and build your arguments. The organization of this central section is essential, so think carefully about the points you wish to raise and the clearest order for these points.

- Conclusion: brings together your biggest “take home messages” and explains the relevance of your paper’s argument.
- Bibliography: You should use and cite at least 4 scholarly sources that are not on the class syllabus (you may also use class sources). Wikipedia is not a source. We will discuss what “counts” as a scholarly source in class.

The **grading rubric** for the paper will be:

Introduction (see above): 10 points

Background and context (see above): 10 points

Identification and description of labor process: 10 points

Finding and citing appropriate sources: 10 points

Use of evidence to develop an argument about how labor process is influenced by other aspects of commodity chain: 20 points

Organization of paper and logistics (grammar, bibliography, etc.): 10 points