

SOCIOLOGY 139F: SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF THE FOOD INDUSTRY Spring 2016

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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 11am-12:30pm
Sign-up: <https://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/xjanb>

CLASS MEETING Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:30-5pm
50 Birge

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores the social construction and material effects of social problems. We will begin with an examination of the social constructionist approach to social phenomena and will specifically explore how sociologists study social problems.

Unlike other social problems courses which tend to study a wide variety of social problems, this course will focus on one industry--the food industry--and some of the social problems associated with it. Thus, we will apply sociological theories to the study of various aspects of the food industry by examining the treatment and pay of workers, the impacts on health, governmental policies, and environmental issues.

One goal of this class is to help you gain a better understanding of the sociology of social problems and to understand how connected and systematic social problems can be. Sociology is the study of human social activity, organization, and interaction. Sociology is about the search for patterned behavior and social, rather than individual, explanations for this behavior. Sociologists look beyond the taken-for-granted notions of our social environment to examine the many layers of social meaning in the human experience. Thus, we will be discussing the *sociological perspective* in this class.

When it comes to issues of health and eating habits, many argue it is up to the individual to choose healthy foods and maintain good health. This argument is particularly relevant to current discussions of obesity. But in this class you find that matters of health are not as simple as individual choice. We will look at structural components of the food industry that constrain choice and actually impede good health.

This class will be **challenging** on a number of levels:

- ❖ You will be expected to keep up with a number of readings for each class meeting.
- ❖ These readings will be challenging not only in terms of their length and number, but also in terms of the subject matter presented and the complex theories proposed.
- ❖ We will be speaking frankly about issues of race, class, and gender.

Keep in mind that your personal experiences may not match the general sociological insights discussed in the course. This does not negate the insights. Ask yourself why this might be the case. You may not agree with everything we read and discuss, but I expect you to have an open mind and demonstrate your knowledge of the sociological perspective. Disagreements and debates are expected and welcome in this class, however, I will not tolerate personal attacks.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Pollan, Michael. 2006. *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. New York: Penguin Books.

Holmes, Seth. 2013. *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farmworkers in the United States*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Jayaraman, Saru. 2013. *Behind the Kitchen Door*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Guthman, Julie. 2011. *Weighing In: Obesity, Food Justice, and the Limits of Capitalism*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Course Reader: Available at Copy Central (on Bancroft) and on bCourses.

ASSIGNMENTS

Exams: Two take-home midterms and a final exam--all in essay format. You will be responsible for course readings, lectures, and any media presented in the class.

GRADE BREAKDOWN:

Midterm 1: 33.33%

Midterm 2: 33.33%

Final Exam: 33.33%

COURSE FORMAT AND POLICIES

Readings: Readings should be completed prior to class. You must keep up with the readings to participate in class discussions and complete assignments. Bring your reading materials to every class; you will likely need to refer to them in class discussions. All of your assigned readings (aside from the required book) are available on bCourses and as a reader from Copy Central on Bancroft.

Participation: This class will incorporate the use of lecture, films, music, visuals, and group discussions. I expect you to be an active participant in the course. Bring your questions and comments to class and don't be shy about bringing them up.

You can also participate by posting links to news stories or videos, as well as any relevant thoughts on issues related to sexuality in the chat room on bCourses. Be sure to contextualize any posts by connecting them to issues in the class.

If you have a question about the readings, lecture, etc., please post your question to the chat room on bCourses where both your questions and my answers will be visible to other students, rather than e-mailing me. Feel free to answer each other's questions as well.

If you miss a class, do not ask me if you missed anything. Of course you did!--but don't expect me to fill you in. I suggest sharing contact information with a classmate early on in the semester and getting the notes you missed.

I use course slides which often incorporate media. I post course slides after lecture, not before, but they will only contain the text. Keep in mind that these slides are meant to be a guide during lecture and are therefore not exhaustive or a substitute for attending class.

****ALL CELL PHONES MUST BE SILENCED AND PUT AWAY DURING CLASS**

Do not read, listen to music, browse the Internet, text, or sleep during class. If you want to do these things, don't bother coming to class.

GRADING POLICIES

NO LATE ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED WITHOUT PRIOR APPROVAL

TURNITIN: All of your assignments will be checked by TurnItIn for plagiarism. Keep in mind, this program keeps a database of previously turned in papers as well.

For assignments turned in via bCourses, your feedback can be there. Be sure to click the button to show feedback. This feedback is provided to help you improve on future assignments.

If you would like to request a re-grade or re-evaluation of an assignment, you must first, wait 24 hours after the assignment was returned and second, write up a statement detailing why you believe you deserve a higher grade. This statement should be about the substance of your work, not about effort. **You must request a re-grade within 7 days of the assignment being returned.** If you request that I re-grade your assignment rather than your reader, my assessment and grade of your work will be used, even if that means you get a lower score than originally given for that work.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

The University defines academic misconduct as “any action or attempted action that may result in creating an unfair academic advantage for oneself or an unfair academic advantage or disadvantage for any other member or members of the academic community” (UC Berkeley Code of Student Conduct).

Academic dishonesty includes cheating and plagiarism. Cheating is collaboration with other students on response papers or on exams or using notes during exams. Plagiarism includes turning in any work that is not your own as well as improper or missing citations of others' works. As a student of the University of California, you are bound by the Code of Academic Conduct. Any cases of cheating or plagiarism will result in a referral to The Center for Student Conduct and a zero for that assignment.

Plagiarism is most likely to occur because students are unaware of how to cite their sources or because they feel desperate. If you get to this point in your writing, contact me or your GSI immediately rather than doing something you'll very likely regret.

OFFICE HOURS

I will be holding **Sign-up** office hours from 11am-12:30pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Sign-up: <https://www.wejoinin.com/sheets/xjanb>

If you are having any difficulties with the material or assignments for the course or if you are having any personal problems that are affecting your ability to complete assignments on time, you should take advantage of office hours early in the semester. I will be much more amenable to granting extensions when I have been made aware of problems early on rather than at the last minute.

Remember that office hours are an important resource if for no other reason than getting to know your instructors could help you when you may need letters of recommendation.

Email: Clearly indicate to which class you are referring in your emails to me. I endeavor to respond to emails within 24 hours, but this is not always possible; please be patient.

SPECIAL NEEDS

Disability Accommodations

Please let me know early in the semester if you qualify for any disability accommodations.

Student Learning Center

“The primary academic support service for students at Berkeley, the SLC helps students transition to Cal; navigate the academic terrain; create networks of resources; and achieve academic, personal and professional goals.” Located in The Cesar Chavez Student Center on Lower Sproul Plaza. Front desk phone: 510 642 7332.

COURSE OUTLINE Readings are to be **completed** on the day listed below. Schedule is subject to change.

WEEK ONE: THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Tuesday, 1/19 **Introductions**

Thursday, 1/21 **The Social Construction of Social Problems**

Johnson, Allan G. 1997. "The Forest, the Trees, and the One Thing." Pp 7-35 in *The Forest and the Trees: Sociology as Life, Practice, and Promise*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Heiner, Robert. 2002. "An Introduction to the Sociology of Social Problems." Pp 1-19 in *Social Problems: An Introduction to Critical Constructionism*. New York: Oxford University Press.

WEEKS TWO-THREE: INDUSTRIALIZATION OF FOOD

Tuesday, 1/26 **The Rise of Corn**

Michael Pollan: "Introduction" in *The Omnivore's Dilemma*.

Michael Pollan: "Chapter One: The Plant: Corn's Conquest"

Michael Pollan: "Chapter Two: The Farm"

Thursday, 1/28 **Where Corn Ends Up**

Michael Pollan: "Chapter Three: The Elevator"

Michael Pollan: "Chapter Four: The Feedlot: Making Meat"

Michael Pollan: "Chapter Five: The Processing Plant: Making Complex Foods"

Tuesday, 2/2 **Consuming Corn**

Michael Pollan: "Chapter Six: The Consumer: A Republic of Fat"

Michael Pollan: "Chapter Seven: The Meal: Fast Food"

Thursday, 2/4 **Film Screening: *King Corn***

WEEKS FOUR-SEVEN: AGRICULTURAL WORKERS

Tuesday, 2/9 Working Conditions for Tomato Pickers

Estabrook, Barry. 2011. "Chemical Warfare" Pp 35-72 in *Tomatoland: How Modern Industrial Agriculture Destroyed Our Most Alluring Fruit*. Kansas City, MO: Andrews McMeel.

Estabrook, Barry. 2011. "From the Hands of a Slave" Pp 73-95 in *Tomatoland: How Modern Industrial Agriculture Destroyed Our Most Alluring Fruit*. Kansas City, MO: Andrews McMeel.

Thursday, 2/11 "We Are Fieldworkers"

Seth Holmes: "Chapter One: Introduction" in *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies*

Seth Holmes: "Chapter Two: 'We Are Fieldworkers'"

Tuesday, 2/16 Ethnic Segregation **MIDTERM 1 DUE**

Seth Holmes: "Chapter Three: Segregation of the Farm: Ethnic Hierarchies at Work"

Thursday, 2/18 The Structural Violence of Segregated Labor

Seth Holmes: "Chapter Four: 'How the Poor Suffer': Embodying the Violence Continuum"

Tuesday, 2/23 The Clinical Gaze

Seth Holmes: "Chapter Five: 'Doctors Don't Know Anything': The Clinical Gaze in Migrant Health"

Thursday, 2/25 Naturalizing Human Suffering

Seth Holmes: "Chapter Six: 'Because They're Lower to the Ground': Naturalizing Social Suffering"

Seth Holmes: "Chapter Seven: Conclusion: Change, Pragmatic Solidarity, and Beyond"

Tuesday, 3/1 Film Screening: *Rape in the Fields*

WEEKS EIGHT-NINE: RESTAURANT WORKERS

Thursday, 3/3 Sustainable Means Fair Working Conditions

Saru Jayaraman: "Chapter 1: The Hands on Your Plate" in *Behind the Kitchen Door*

Saru Jayaraman: "Chapter 2: *Real* Sustainability, Please!"

Tuesday, 3/8 Worker Health Conditions

Saru Jayaraman: "Chapter 3: Serving While Sick"

Thursday, 3/10 Wage Issues

Saru Jayaraman: "Chapter 4: \$2.13—The Tipping Point"

Tuesday, 3/15 Issues of Race

Saru Jayaraman: "Chapter 5: Race in the Kitchen"

Thursday, 3/17 Issues of Gender

Saru Jayaraman: "Chapter 6: Women Waiting on Equality"

Saru Jayaraman: "Chapter 7: Recipes for Change"

WEEK TEN: SPRING BREAK

Monday, 3/21- Friday, 3/25

WEEK ELEVEN: CORPORATE INFLUENCE PEDDLING

Tuesday, 3/29 Food Industry Pushers

Nestle, Marion. 2002. "Introduction: The Food Industry and 'Eat More.'" Pp 1-28 in *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Nestle, Marion. 2002. "Chapter 7: Playing Hardball: Legal or Not." Pp 159-174 in *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Thursday, 3/31 Corporate Influence on Government

Nestle, Marion. 2002. "Chapter 4: Influencing Government: Food Lobbies and Lobbyists." Pp 95-110 in *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Nestle, Marion. 2002. "Chapter 6: Winning Friends, Disarming Critics." Pp 137-158 in *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

WEEK TWELVE: FOOD SAFETY AND HEALTH

Tuesday, 4/5 What is Safe?
****MIDTERM 2 DUE****

Nestle, Marion. 2010. "Introduction: Food Safety is Political." Pp 1-26 in *Safe Food: The Politics of Food Safety*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Thursday, 4/7 What is Nutritious?

Pollan, Michael. 2007. "Unhappy Meals." *The New York Times Magazine*. January 28.

Michael Pollan: Chapter Nine: Big Organic in *The Omnivore's Dilemma*

WEEKS THIRTEEN-FIFTEEN: CONSTRUCTING OBESITY

Tuesday, 4/12 Constructing the Obesity Problem

Julie Guthman: "Chapter 1: Introduction: What's the Problem?" in *Weighing In*

Julie Guthman: "Chapter 2: How Do We Know Obesity is a Problem?"

Thursday, 4/14 Whose Problem is Obesity?

Julie Guthman: "Chapter 3: Whose Problem is Obesity?"

Tuesday, 4/19 What Makes Us Fat?

Julie Guthman: "Chapter 4: Does Your Neighborhood Make You Fat?"

Julie Guthman: "Chapter 5: Does Eating (Too Much) Make You Fat?"

Thursday, 4/21 The Role of Farm Policy

Julie Guthman: "Chapter 6: Does Farm Policy Make You Fat?"

Tuesday, 4/26 What are the Solutions?

Julie Guthman: "Chapter 7: Will Fresh, Local, Organic Food Make You Thin?"

Julie Guthman: "Chapter 8: What's Capitalism Got to Do With It?"

Thursday, 4/28 Catch up/Review

Julie Guthman: "Chapter 9: Conclusion: What's on the Menu"

WEEK SIXTEEN: READING, REVIEW, AND RECITATION

Monday, 5/2-Friday, 5/6

FINAL EXAM DUE: FRIDAY, MAY 13 at 7pm