

SOCIOLOGY 139F: SOCIAL PROBLEMS OF THE FOOD INDUSTRY Spring 2020

INSTRUCTOR

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Drop-in Office Hours: Tuesdays 9:45-10:45am
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479 Barrows

Sign-up: <http://www.wejoinin.com/JillBakehorn>

CLASS MEETING

Tuesdays and Thursdays 8:00-9:29am
105 North Gate

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. For instance, 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 will 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. We will deconstruct the very notion of "health."

Some questions about the food industry that will be addressed in this course are:

- ❖ What does it mean to say that social problems are constructed?
- ❖ What are the social problems associated with industrial food production?
- ❖ What social structures lead to the dehumanization and mistreatment of food workers?
- ❖ How do corporations influence governmental health policies and to what end?
- ❖ How is food safety political?
- ❖ How did obesity come to be a "social problem" and what are the "causes"?

Keep in mind this is a sociology course. Just to refresh your memory, 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.

This course challenges many taken-for-granted assumptions about the social world. 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.

COURSE GOALS

By the end of the semester you should be able to:

- ❖ Explain the social construction of social problems
- ❖ Articulate the various social problems associated with industrial food production
- ❖ Use an intersectional approach
- ❖ Critically analyze media/“common sense” understandings of food policies, practices, choices, and notions of health
- ❖ Write succinct papers where you effectively synthesize course materials and apply theory

REQUIRED TEXTS

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 Central Copy (2411 Telegraph) and on bCourses. Books are on reserve at Moffitt Library and are available online—check library website.

ASSIGNMENTS

Food Journal: You will be asked to keep a food journal throughout the semester where you will reflect on your consumption practices in light of the themes of the course. I will assign 5 specific journal entries/themes. Worth 15% of your final grade.

Reflection Papers: Critical examinations of your participation in the food system based on your food journals and applying course readings. You will complete two reflections; each is worth 20% of your final grade.

Final Exam: Take-home essay worth 35% of your final grade. You will be responsible for course readings, lectures, and any media presented in the class.

Due dates are listed under “Course Outline.”

All work must be original (you cannot recycle work from other courses).

Participation: Participation is 10% of your final grade. You can earn full participation points by asking and answering questions in class, completing random, unannounced writing assignments in class, completing short reflections, and posting questions/comments/content on bCourses in the Discussion board. **If you post a link, be sure to contextualize it and make a connection to issues related to the course.**

GRADE SCALE

Grade Range		Grade
100%	97%	A+
96%	93%	A
92%	90%	A-
89%	87%	B+
86%	83%	B
82%	80%	B-
79%	77%	C+
76%	73%	C
72%	70%	C-
69%	67%	D+
66%	63%	D
62%	60%	D-
59%	0%	F

GRADE BREAKDOWN:

Food Journal: 15%
Reflection Papers: 40%
Final Exam: 35%
Participation: 10%

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 books) are available on bCourses and as a reader at Copy Central on Telegraph.

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.

I will give unannounced writing assignments to be completed in class. These are an important component of your participation grade.

You can also participate by posting links to news stories or videos, as well as any relevant thoughts on issues related to gender in the discussion board on bCourses. Be sure to contextualize any posts by connecting them to issues in the class. Provide **content warnings** where appropriate.

If you have a question about the readings, lecture, etc., please post your question to the discussion board on bCourses where both your questions and my answers will be visible to other students. Feel free to answer each other's questions as well.

Course Slides: I use course slides which often incorporate media. I will post course slides, 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.

Course Notes and Recordings: Course notes should not be disseminated. That means you are forbidden from posting them online on forums like Course Hero. You must obtain permission from me to record lectures.

Course Etiquette: I expect you to be engaged and focused during class time. That means you should avoid distractions—the biggest is typically our phones. All phones must be silenced and put away during class.

Laptop Policy: I strongly encourage you to take notes without a computer if you are able. If you need to use a computer during class, I ask that you **sit in the back four rows of the classroom** so that you do not distract other students.

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.

Names and Pronouns: You have the right to be referred to by the name you prefer and the correct gender pronouns. Because the name listed in University records may not correspond to your preferred name, please inform me of your name (and pronunciation) and your pronouns so that I can ensure you are properly recognized and respected.

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.

Be sure to carefully consider assignment feedback; it is provided to help you improve on future assignments. For in-text feedback, **click on the link “View Feedback”** which may not be visible if you are not in full-screen mode.

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. Be sure to make specific reference to your work, don't simply say that you responded to the questions asked. Demonstrate how you did so.

You must request a re-grade within 7 days of the assignment being returned. 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. Email me your favorite animal gif by 2/11/20 for an extra participation point.

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 and 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 ASAP rather than doing something you'll very likely regret.

OFFICE HOURS

Please see Page 1 for information about my office hours.

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, please take advantage of office hours—I am here to help!

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

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Course Accessibility

This course is intended for all UC Berkeley students, including those with mental, emotional, physical, or cognitive disabilities, illnesses, injuries, impairments, or any other condition that can negatively impact equal access to education. If, at any point in the semester, you find yourself not able to fully access the space, content, and experience of this course, you are welcome (but not required) to contact me by email or during office hours to discuss your specific needs.

I also encourage you to contact the [Disabled Students' Program](#). If you have a diagnosis, DSP can help you document your needs and create an accommodation plan. By making a plan through DSP, you can ensure appropriate accommodations without disclosing your condition or diagnosis to course instructors.

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.” The [SLC](#) is located in The Cesar Chavez Student Center.

Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Services

To learn more about these issues, how to support survivors, or how to file a report and receive support services, start here: <http://survivorsupport.berkeley.edu>. **Please note that I am not a confidential advocate; I am a mandated reporter.** You can speak to a [Confidential Care Advocate](#).

Economic, Food, and Housing Support

If you are in need of economic, food, or housing support, you can find help at basicneeds.berkeley.edu. You may be eligible for money to buy groceries via [CalFresh](#) or our [Food Assistance Program](#). If you are in need of food immediately, please visit our UC Berkeley [Food Pantry](#).

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, 1/21 **Introductions**

Thursday, 1/23 **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, 1/28 **The Rise of Corn**

Pollan, Michael. 2006. "Chapter One: The Plant: Corn's Conquest." Pp 15-31 in *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. New York: Penguin.

——. "Chapter Two: The Farm." Pp 32-56 in *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. New York: Penguin.

Thursday, 1/30 **Where Corn Ends Up**
JOURNAL ENTRY 1 DUE

Pollan, Michael. 2006. "Chapter Three: The Elevator." Pp 57-64 in *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. New York: Penguin.

——. "Chapter Four: The Feedlot: Making Meat." Pp 65-84 in *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. New York: Penguin.

——. "Chapter Five: The Processing Plant: Making Complex Foods." Pp 85-99 in *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. New York: Penguin.

Tuesday, 2/4 **Consuming Corn**
Film Screening: *King Corn*

Pollan, Michael. 2006. "Chapter Six: The Consumer: A Republic of Fat." Pp 100-108 in *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. New York: Penguin.

Thursday, 2/6 Industrial Animal Agriculture

Leonard, Christopher. 2014. "Chapter 4: The Industrial Animal (1970-1995)." Pp 91-111 in *The Meat Racket: The Secret Takeover of America's Food Business*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

—. "Chapter 5: Cage Match (2004-2012)." Pp 113-146 in *The Meat Racket: The Secret Takeover of America's Food Business*. New York: Simon & Schuster.



<https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2019/08/08/748416223/to-slow-global-warming-u-n-warns-agriculture-must-change>



<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/04/30/dining/climate-change-food-eating-habits.html>

WEEKS FOUR-SIX: AGRICULTURAL WORKERS

Tuesday, 2/11 "We Are Fieldworkers"

Seth Holmes: Chapter One: Introduction in *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farmworkers in the United States*

Seth Holmes: Chapter Two: "We Are Fieldworkers"

Thursday, 2/13 Ethnic Segregation

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

Tuesday, 2/18 The Structural Violence of Segregated Labor

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

Thursday, 2/20 The Clinical Gaze

JOURNAL ENTRY 2 DUE

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

Tuesday, 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

Thursday, 2/27 **Film Screening: *Rape in the Fields***

WEEKS SEVEN-NINE: RESTAURANT WORKERS

Tuesday, 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!*

Thursday, 3/5 **Worker Health Conditions**
JOURNAL ENTRY 3 DUE

Saru Jayaraman: Chapter 3: Serving While Sick

Tuesday, 3/10 **Wage Issues**

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

Thursday, 3/12 **Issues of Race**

Saru Jayaraman: Chapter 5: Race in the Kitchen

Tuesday, 3/17 **Issues of Gender**

Saru Jayaraman: Chapter 6: Women Waiting on Equality

Saru Jayaraman: Chapter 7: Recipes for Change

Thursday, 3/19 **REFLECTION 1 DUE**
NO CLASS

WEEK TEN: SPRING BREAK

Tuesday, 3/24— Thursday, 3/26 **NO CLASS**

WEEK ELEVEN: CORPORATE INFLUENCE PEDDLING

Tuesday, 3/31 Food Industry Pushers

Nestle, Marion. 2013. "Chapter 7: Playing Hardball: Legal or Not" in *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health*. Berkeley: University of California Press. E-book.

Nestle, Marion. 2018. "Chapter 1: The Food Industry and Nutrition." Pp 1-12 in *Unsavory Truth: How Food Companies Skew the Science of What We Eat*. New York: Basic Books.

— —. "Chapter 7: Coca-Cola: A Case Study in Itself." Pp 91-105 in *Unsavory Truth: How Food Companies Skew the Science of What We Eat*. New York: Basic Books.

— —. "Chapter 9: Co-Opted? The American Society for Nutrition." Pp 125-140 in *Unsavory Truth: How Food Companies Skew the Science of What We Eat*. New York: Basic Books.

Thursday, 4/2 Corporate Influence on Government

Nestle, Marion. 2013. "Chapter 6: Winning Friends, Disarming Critics" in *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health*. Berkeley: University of California Press. E-book.

Nestle, Marion. 2018. "Chapter 5: Selling Meat and Dairy Foods." Pp 61-74 in *Unsavory Truth: How Food Companies Skew the Science of What We Eat*. New York: Basic Books.

WEEK TWELVE: FOOD SAFETY AND HEALTH

Tuesday, 4/7 What is Safe? Film Screening: *The Trouble with Chicken*

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, 4/9 Catch-up/Review JOURNAL ENTRY 4 DUE

WEEKS THIRTEEN-FIFTEEN: CONSTRUCTING OBESITY

Tuesday, 4/14 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, 4/16 **Whose Problem is Obesity?**

Julie Guthman: Chapter 3: Whose Problem is Obesity?

Tuesday, 4/21 **What Makes Us Fat?**
****REFLECTION PAPER DUE****

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

Thursday, 4/23 **The Role of Farm Policy**
REFLECTION 2 DUE

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

Tuesday, 4/28 **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, 4/30 **Catch up/Review**
JOURNAL ENTRY 5 DUE

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

WEEK SIXTEEN: READING, REVIEW, RECITATION WEEK

MONDAY, MAY 4-FRIDAY, MAY 8

TAKE HOME FINAL EXAM: DUE THURSDAY, MAY 14 at 10pm

What is a Lecturer?

You may not know it, but this class is taught by a Lecturer. Currently, there are over 6,500 Lecturers across the UC system who teach over 30% of student credit hours. Lecturers are faculty dedicated to teaching and student success. Right now, our union is negotiating with the university for livable wages, reasonable workload, and fair and transparent hiring and reappointment practices so that we can better serve our students.

How you can support us: **1.** Invite us to talk to your student group. **2.** Sign this petition in support of better job security for lecturers *and* share it with friends and groups you're involved with: <http://chnng.it/7ncnMZ6YVp>. **3.** Join us at our rally on February 3 @ 12pm [LOCATION TBA] to demand a fair contract for #FacultyEquity and #StudentSuccess. **4.** Follow our campaign on social media: @ucaft (Facebook), @uc_aft (Instagram), and @UCAFT (Twitter).