

The Urban Food Chain

Urban Studies 0248

Fall 2024

Monday 10:15-1:15pm (*Please see notes in the syllabus about later start times; where no time is listed, we will meet promptly at 10:15.)

Locations: We will meet in our assigned classroom, Cohen Hall 337, only some weeks. Please see notes in the syllabus indicating where we will meet each week.

Prof. Domenic Vitiello

vitiello@upenn.edu

215-898-5226

Office hours: By appointment. Please email me. I am most available to talk on campus Monday 9:00-10:00 and 1:15-2:45; also sometimes on Tuesday and Wednesday. I am also glad to talk by phone or Zoom.

Description and Goals:

This class explores the social, ecological, economic, and cultural dynamics of metropolitan and community food systems in U.S. cities, with a central focus on food justice. Activities and assignments immerse students in various forms of experiential learning – including harvesting, cooking, eating, and more. After a broad introduction to global, regional, and urban food systems, across most of the semester we follow the food chain (or cycle), from production to processing, distribution, cooking, consumption, and waste. Specific topics include urban agriculture, community kitchens, grocery, hunger and food relief, food access, food apartheid, restaurants, neighborhoods, food cultures, food sovereignty, and community food security. Some weeks, in selected readings and videos, we will also consider how food systems in U.S. cities compare to other parts of the world.

Students will gain broad literacies in: metropolitan and neighborhood food environments; ecological systems; social and economic dimensions of regional and community food systems; value chains; food poverty and inequality; issues and practices of food justice; and the relationships between food, culture, and society. Students taking this class should be open to trying new things, getting hands dirty, and exploring various settings.

Preparation for Weekly Class Meetings:

Course **readings** (and videos and listening) and assigned activities provide the foundations for class discussion and activities. They are intended to introduce students to various perspectives, tools, and experiences to understand community and metropolitan food systems. All students are expected to come to our weekly meetings having thoroughly explored the material and engaged in assigned activities, and well prepared to share/present and discuss all that in detail.

In preparation for our discussions during class meetings, on most weeks you are expected to spend roughly **2 hours reading** (occasionally less or more), browsing, and watching the assigned articles, book chapters, podcasts/radio shows, web sites, and/or videos. Most weeks, you are also expected to spend additional time completing an **activity assignment** or **paper assignment** – *please plan ahead!*

Our **class meetings** will consist mainly of discussion and a variety of activities that allow us to collectively experience, observe, and reflect critically on issues discussed in our assigned readings. We will follow the format of a “**flipped classroom**,” in which the foundational ideas and background / context for our discussions are presented in the readings, not in lectures by the professor. Therefore, one of **your main responsibilities** in this class – in your participation in our discussions and activities and in your written assignments – is to **make connections** between what you read (and watch and listen to...) and what we do and discuss.

Assignments and Grading:

5 lunches paper	10 points	(3-5 pages, due Sept. 16 before class)
Part 2 reflection paper	15 points	(5-7 pages, due Oct. 25 5pm)
Part 3 reflection paper	15 points	(5-7 pages, due Nov. 15 5pm)
Part 4 reflection paper	15 points	(5-7 pages, due Dec. 13 5pm)
Activity assignments	10 points	(9/23, 30; 10/7, 14, 21, 28; 11/4; 12/2)
Class participation	35 points	

All papers should be **double-spaced, 12-point font, Times New Roman** or similar font. All paper assignments are described in further detail on Canvas. **No AI-generated prose** is permitted in any written work for this class (including papers and activity assignments).

Points for activity assignments are given for satisfactory completion (usually full points unless an activity is only partly completed). For some activity assignments you will bring something to class to share your results; for others, you will upload a photo and brief narrative to Canvas.

Grading for class participation is based on your willingness to participate in our weekly activities and discussions, speaking up with substantive comments and questions, and critically engaging with our assigned readings/videos in both small and large group discussions.

In **evaluating the content of your participation** as well as **written assignments**, I weigh: especially **criticality** (the **depth** and **nuance** of your analysis when explaining/assessing); and also **precision** (the **clarity** and **specificity** of your descriptions/statements); **creativity** (of your ideas); **synthesis** (the ways you engage and relate different things we read, see, hear, do); **struggle** (to learn things that are new to you); and **cooperation** (the quality of your efforts to create an **inclusive, respectful, serious intellectual community**, particularly in our class meetings and group activities).

Humanities and Social Sciences Sector:

This course counts for the undergraduate curriculum's General Education Sector of Knowledge in the Humanities and Social Sciences.* Per the College, courses in this sector seek a "depth of experience... gained by bringing to bear several humanistic and social scientific perspectives upon a single issue or topic." Like other courses in this sector, this class takes an "integrative approach" that "combine[s] disciplinary study with" experiential learning, "constructively and reflectively connect[ing] the theoretical with the actual."

We accomplish these things through weekly reading and watching, combined with active engagement to experience something of the topics we explore. We synthesize and reflect on these things 1) in our weekly discussions, including more and less formal presentations to one another, and 2) in short papers in each of the four parts of the course. Our readings come from a variety of humanities and social science fields including anthropology, Asian American and Latinx studies, critical food studies, economics, environmental and social history, sociology, as well as ecology and environmental science, public health, and urban planning.

(*Note: this course also covers ecological topics/literacies related to the Living World sector.)

Trips: Most weeks this class will meet outside of the classroom, sometimes within walking distance from campus in West or Southwest Philadelphia. For our farther trips, students are expected to purchase a SEPTA Key Card and stock/fund it with at least 8 one-way fares by subway, bus, or trolley (though you may wish to walk or bike for some of these). If this represents a pinch or hardship for your budget, please talk with the instructor, and the Urban Studies Program can provide the fares. On all trips, students will be expected to discuss assigned readings and relate them to the places we visit and things we do. Please pay attention to the location to meet for the start of each week's class (listed in the syllabus), and wear appropriate clothes, shoes, and rain gear if necessary.

Academic Integrity: All students are responsible for following the policies (in particular, regarding academic integrity, plagiarism, and original work) contained in the College of Arts and Sciences' General Policies and the University of Pennsylvania's Code of Academic Integrity.

Late Work, Extensions, and Absences: Everyone is expected to attend all class meetings. Please do your best to plan ahead and ask for an extension on any paper well in advance if you need one. I am very accommodating about extensions, and do not mark grades down for late work if you ask for an extension before the due date (or if you have a last-minute personal emergency, health or otherwise). If you do not ask for an extension before the due date (or have a last-minute emergency), late work will be marked down one full grade (e.g., A to B). Similarly, please inform me (the instructor) of any anticipated absences from class meetings well in advance. If you do not, or do not have a last-minute emergency, this will be considered an unexcused absence. People with more than two unexcused absences will not pass this class.

Laptops, Tablets, and Smart Phones: Students may not use laptops, tablets, smart phones, or other screens in class (unless approved by Penn student services), except to take pictures of sites we visit or when specifically asked to use other devices. Uninvited use of phones or other devices will negatively affect people's class participation grade.

SCHEDULE – Overview:

Part 1 Global and Metropolitan Systems

- September 9 Introductions and Histories (meet @ our classroom – Cohen Hall 337)
- September 16 Global and Comparative Food Systems (meet @ Penn LGBT Center)
Assignment due: 5 lunches paper, presentation, and meal(s) (10 pts.)
- September 23 Cities, Regions, and Foodsheds (meet @ our classroom – Cohen Hall 337)
Activity Assignment: city and region case studies (1 pt.)

Part 2 Urban Agriculture

- September 30 Community Gardening and Urban Farming (34th & Market)
Activity assignment: volunteer at a community garden/farm/orchard (2 pts.)
- October 7 Agroecology and Ethnobotany (Penn Park Farm @ 10:30)
Activity Assignment: seed saving and seed story (1 pt.)
- October 14 Edible Cities: Harvesting, Gleaning, Foraging (The Woodlands @10:30)
Activity assignment: foraging (1 pt.)
- Friday, Oct. 18 Assignment due: Part 2 reflection paper (15 pts.)

Part 3 Processing, Distribution, Access

- October 21 Preservation, Processing, and Community Kitchens (34th & Spruce)
Activity assignment: processing / preserving (1 pt.)
- October 28 Grocery, Food Environments, and Access (40th & Locust)
- November 4 Food Poverty and Assistance (meet @ 40th & Locust)
Activity Assignment: food assistance (3 pts.)
- November 11 Public Markets (34th & Market)
- Friday, Nov. 15 Assignment due: Part 3 reflection paper (15 pts.)

Part 4 Cooking, Eating, Waste

- November 18 Restaurants and Food Service (34th & Market)
- November 25 Thanksgiving (meet @ LGBT Center)
- December 2 Cookbooks (and blogs) – Heritage and Cultures (meet @ LGBT Ctr.)
Activity Assignment: cookbook/recipe/cooking (1 pt.)
- December 9 Waste (meet @ our classroom – Cohen Hall 337)
- Wednesday, Dec. 11 Assignment due: Part 4 reflection paper (15 pts.)

September 9 Introductions and Histories

Meet at: Our classroom – Cohen Hall 337.
* Come prepared (dressed) to take a walk during part of our meeting.

Watching and reading:

- Watch: Carolyn Steele, “How Food Shapes Our Cities” (2009) – 15 minutes.
- Anne Mendelson, “The Lenapes: In Search of Pre-European Foodways in the Greater New York Region” (2009).
- Vitiello and Brinkley, “The Hidden History of Food System Planning” (2014).
- Gene Demby, interview with Marcia Chatelain, “When McDonald’s Was a Road to Black Liberation” (2020).
- News and reports on food systems – links on Canvas.

September 16 Global and Comparative Food Systems

Meet at: Penn LGBT Center, 3907 Spruce Street (the carriage house behind this address) ...to present our dishes and eat together.

Reading:

- Bernice Lee et al., “The Global Food Value Chain: A Snapshot” (2019).
- Alexis Madrigal, “A Journey... Refrigerated Warehouse Archipelago” (2013).
- Sandor Katz, *The Revolution Will Not Be Microwaved* (2003), chapter 1.
- E. Holt-Gimenez, Zoe Brent, Annie Shattuck, “Food Workers - Food Justice” (2010).
- Also spend at least 30 minutes reading supplemental material for today’s assignment.

Assignment due: Five lunches exercise and paper (discussed Sept. 9)

September 23 Cities, Regions and Foodsheds

Meet at: Our classroom – Cohen Hall 337.

Reading:

- Kevin Morgan, “Nourishing the City” (2015).
- DVRPC, Greater Philadelphia Food System Study and Plan (2010, 2011).
- Continue reading news and reports on Canvas.

Activity assignment due: city and region case studies – see instructions on Canvas

Part 2: Urban Agriculture

September 30 Community Gardening and Urban Farming

Meet at: 34th & Market, taking SEPTA's Market-Frankford Line with URBS Prof. Michael Nairn... to visit the Norris Square gardens with Iris Brown.

Reading and watching:

- Domenic Vitiello, "The highest and best use of land in the city" (2022).
- Watch: PBS, *Urban Farming* (2012), 24 minutes.
- Lesli Hoey, "The Urgent Role of Urban Agriculture... in the Global South (2024).

Activity assignment (any time by Oct. 18): volunteer at community garden/farm/orchard

October 7 Agroecology and Ethnobotany

Meet at: Penn Park Farm @ 10:30am
...for a lesson with farmers Lila Bhide and Em Fleshman.

Watching and listening:

- Watch: Seed: The Untold Story (2016), 95 minutes.
- Watch: "The Soil Food Web" (2017), 7 minutes.
- Watch: Miguel Altieri, "A Live Lesson on Urban Agroecology" (2016), 10 minutes.
- Listen: *Seeds and their People* (TrueLove Seeds) – choose one podcast episode.

Activity assignment due: seed saving and seed story

October 14 Edible Cities: Harvest, Gleaning and Foraging

Meet at: POP Learning Orchard at The Woodlands @ 10:30am
...to talk, forage and glean with the Philadelphia Orchard Project.

Watching and reading:

- Watch: Ron Finley, "Food Forest" (2012), 3 minutes.
- Paul Glover, "Los Angeles: A History of the Future" (1982).
- Baylen Linnekin, "Food Law Gone Wild" (2018).
- Michael Coren, "You can forage a delicious meal almost anywhere" (2024).
- Spend at least 15 minutes reading and browsing POP Wild Edibles posts.
- Spend at least 15 minutes browsing other links on Canvas.

Activity assignment due: foraging

* Friday, October 18, 5pm Assignment due: Part 2 reflection paper.

Part 3: Processing, Distribution and Access

October 21 Preservation, Processing, and Community Kitchens

Meet at: 34th & Spruce Streets to take the route 40 bus to 9th & South Streets
...to visit Masa Coop and The People's Kitchen.

Reading and listening:

- Shaun Chavis, "Food Preservation" (2019).
- Daniel Sidorick, "Food Processing" (2013).
- Sarah Berry and Carrie Draper, "Community Kitchens" (2014).
- Listen: "Beyond Charity: Turning the Soup Kitchen Upside Down" (2014).
- Spend at least 20 minutes browsing other links on Canvas.

Activity assignment due: processing / preserving

October 28 Food Environments, Access, and Grocery

Meet at: 40th & Locust ...for our food environment observation exercise.

Reading:

- Mary Story et al., "Creating Healthy Food and Eating Environments" (2008).
- Food "deserts," "swamps," and apartheid articles – see instructions on Canvas.
- Corby Kummer, "The Great Grocery Smackdown" (2010).
- Priya Krishna, "Don't Call It an 'Ethnic' Grocery Store" (2024).

November 4 Food Poverty and Assistance

Meet at: Our classroom – Cohen Hall 337... to talk with Sarah Hill, UCHC.

Reading:

- Janet Poppendieck and JC Dwyer, "Hungry City" (2008).
- Janet Poppendieck, *Sweet Charity?* (1998), 201-229.

Activity assignment due (sign up ahead!): volunteer at least twice with UCHC

November 11 Public Markets

Meet at: 34th & Market, taking the MFL... to visit the Reading Terminal Market.

Reading:

- Helen Tangires, "Public Markets" (2016).
- Project for Public Spaces, "Public Markets: The Seeds of a New Economy" (2022).
- Hannah Sobel and Julian Agyeman, "From Loncheras to Lobsta Love" (2013).
- Pascale Joassart-Marcelli, "How Farmers Markets and Food Trucks..." (2021).
- Ori and Moss, "As They Mature, Food Halls Go to College and... Suburbs" (2023).

* Friday, November 15, 5pm Assignment due: Part 3 reflection paper.

Part 4: Cooking, Eating, Waste

November 18 Restaurants and Food Service

Meet at: 34th & Market, taking SEPTA's MFL... to visit Chinatown.

Reading:

- Ramona Lee Perez and Babette Audant, "Livin' la Vida Sabrosa" (2009).
- Valerie Imbruce, *From Farm to Canal Street* (2015), 120-140.
- Jennifer 8. Lee, "Waiters, Cooks to Go" (2005).
- Craig LaBan, "The New Chinatown: Delectably Diverse" (2014).
- Patric Kuh, "Striving Toward Purpose" (2020).

November 25 Thanksgiving

Meet: LGBT Center ...to prepare food, eat together, and discuss Thanksgiving with Penn anthropologist Katherine Moore.

Listening and reading:

- Listen: "Indigenous Chef Sean Sherman Wants You to Know..." (2018), 6 minutes.
- Philip Deloria, "The Invention of Thanksgiving" (2019).
- Garin Pirnia, "This Thanksgiving, Make These Native Recipes..." (2018).

December 2 Cookbooks (and blogs) – Heritage and Cultures

Meet at: LGBT Center ...to discuss cookbooks and eat together.

Reading and watching:

- Donna Gabaccia, *We Are What We Eat* (1998), 175-201.
- J. Egerton, B. Haber, and T. Tipton-Martin, *The Jemima Code* (2015), x-9.
- T.M. Padoongpatt, "Too Hot to Handle: Food, Empire, & Race in Thai L.A." (2010).

Activity assignment due: cookbook/recipe/cooking

December 9 Waste

Meet at: Our classroom – Cohen Hall 337.

Watching and reading:

- Watch: *Wasted! The Story of Food Waste* (2017), 67 minutes.
- Spend at least 20 minutes browsing World Resources Institute and/or ReFED sites.
- Stephanie Strom, "New Crop of Companies Reaping Profits from Wasted..." (2016).

* Wednesday, December 11, 5pm Assignment due: Part 4 reflection paper.