

The Urban Food Chain

Urban Studies 248-301

Fall 2021

Monday 1:45-4:45pm (**Please see notes in the syllabus about later start times; where no time is listed, we will meet promptly at 1:45.*)

Locations: *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 Monday morning and early afternoon, Tuesday afternoon, and by phone or Zoom on Wednesday morning, Thursday and Friday.

Description and Goals:

This class explores the social, ecological, economic, and cultural dynamics of metropolitan and community food systems in U.S. cities. 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, restaurants, neighborhoods, food cultures, food justice, and community food security.

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; 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 are intended to introduce students to a variety of 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. All readings, videos/movies, and web sites to explore are posted on or linked from the course **Canvas** site – see: canvas.upenn.edu

In preparation for our discussions during class meetings, on most weeks you are expected to spend **roughly 2 hours reading, browsing, and watching** the assigned articles, book chapters, web sites, and/or videos.

Assignments and Grading:

5 lunches paper	10 points	(3-5 pages, due Sept. 20)
Part 2 reflection paper	15 points	(5-7 pages, due Oct. 22)
Part 3 reflection paper	15 points	(5-7 pages, due Nov. 12)
Part 4 reflection paper	15 points	(5-7 pages, due Dec. 10)
Class participation	45 points	

Class participation grades will be posted on Canvas after parts 2 and 4 of the course.

For each of the four papers, you are expected to spend roughly 3-to-4 hours preparing and writing (this will vary per individual writing styles/speeds). Keeping up with readings will help this go faster; and most weeks when papers are due have less reading assigned.

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.

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. Most class activities take place during our class meetings, though several will take out-of-class time – they are listed as (mostly) ungraded assignments, though your participation and critical reflection on them will count toward your class participation grade.

*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.

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

Trips: Most weeks this class will meet entirely or partly outdoors, usually within walking distance from campus in West or Southwest Philadelphia. For our three farther trips, students are expected to purchase a SEPTA Key Card and stock/fund it with at least 6 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.

Schedule – overview

Part 1 Global and Metropolitan Systems

- September 13 Introductions and Histories (meet at: Penn Park farm)
- September 20 Global and Comparative Food Systems (Penn Park farm)
Assignment due: 5 lunches paper, presentation, and meal(s)
- September 27 Cities, Regions, and Foodsheds (Penn Park farm)
Assignment (ungraded): city food policy and strategy case studies

Part 2 Urban Agriculture

- October 4 Agro- and Civic Ecology (Sankofa Farm at Bartram’s Garden @2:15)
- October 11 Community Gardening and Urban Farming (43rd & Chester @2:00)
- October 18 Edible Cities: Harvesting, Gleaning and Foraging (The Woodlands)
- Friday, Oct. 22 Assignment due: Part 2 reflection paper

Part 3 Processing, Distribution, Access

- October 25 Preservation, Processing, and Community Kitchens (34th & Spruce)
Assignment (ungraded): processing / preserving
- November 1 Grocery, Food Environments and Access (40th & Locust)
- November 8 Food Assistance and School Food (40th & Locust)
- Friday, Nov. 12 Assignment due: Part 3 reflection paper

Part 4 Cooking, Eating, Waste

- November 15 Restaurants (34th & Market)
- November 22 Thanksgiving (Hour 1 on Zoom, then visiting Reading Terminal Market)
- November 29 Cookbooks and Food Shows – Heritage and Cultures (LGBT Center)
Assignment (ungraded): cookbook/recipe/cooking
- December 6 Waste (location TBD)
- Friday, Dec. 10 Assignment due: Part 4 reflection paper

Part 1: Global and Metropolitan Systems

September 13 **Introductions and Histories**

Meet at: Penn Park farm (southern end of Penn Park, walk past the tennis courts)
* Come prepared (dressed) to take a walk during part of our meeting.

Reading and Watching:

- Watch: Carolyn Steele, “How Food Shapes Our Cities” (2009) – 15 minutes.
- Anne Mendelson, “The Lenapes” (2009).
- Domenic Vitiello and Catherine 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 20 **Global and Comparative Food Systems**

Meet at: Penn Park farm ...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).
- Deutsche Bank, “Agricultural investments” (2019).
- Sandor Katz, *The Revolution Will Not Be Microwaved* (2003), chapter 1.
- E. Holt-Gimenez, Zoe Brent, Annie Shattuck, “Food Workers - Food Justice” (2010).
- Continue reading news and reports on Canvas.
- Also spend at least 30 minutes reading supplemental material for today’s assignment.

Assignment due: Five lunches exercise and paper (discussed Sept. 13)

September 27 **Cities, Regions and Foodsheds**

Meet at: Penn Park farm ...to present and discuss city and regional food strategies.

Reading:

- Kevin Morgan, “Nourishing the City” (2015).
- U.S. regions’ foodshed studies, plans, and visions.
- Continue reading news and reports on Canvas.

Assignment (ungraded): city food policy case studies – see instructions on Canvas

* Bring a notebook to draw on during class.

Part 2: Urban Agriculture

October 4 **Agro- and Civic Ecology**

Meet at: Sankofa Farm at Bartram’s Garden, 5400 Lindbergh Blvd @2:15pm
...for our meeting with Sankofa co-founder Chris Bolden-Newsome.

Reading, watching, and listening:

- Watch: *Seed: The Untold Story* (2016), 95 minutes – watch at least the first 60.
- Watch: “The Soil Food Web” (2017), 7 minutes.
- Watch: Miguel Altieri, “A Live Lesson on Urban Agroecology” (2016), 10 minutes.
- Masanobu Fukuoka, *The One-Straw Revolution* (1978), xi-xv (by Wendell Berry) and 33-46.
- Marianne Krasny and Keith Tidball, *Civic Ecology* (2015), xi-xxiii.
- Listen: choose 1 episode of *Seeds & Their People*.

October 11 **Community Gardening and Urban Farming**

Meet at: 43rd & Chester Av. @2:00pm ...for our walking tour of gardens and
farms, meeting with people at Warrington, Chester Ave., and Farm 51.

Reading and watching:

- Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Paradise Transplanted* (2014), 116-160.
- Leah Penniman, “Radical farmers use fresh food to fight racial injustice...” (2015).
- Domenic Vitiello, “Urban Agriculture as a Public Good” (2021).
- Watch: PBS, *Urban Farming* (2012), 24 minutes.

October 18 **Edible Cities: Harvest, Gleaning and Foraging**

Meet at: POP Learning Orchard at The Woodlands, 4000 Woodland Av. @2:00pm
...to talk, forage and glean with Phil Forsyth and Michael Muehlbauer.

Reading and watching:

- Watch: Ron Finley, “Food Forest” (2012), 12 minutes.
- Jenny Cunningham, “Hungry for Change” (2018).
- Philadelphia Orchard Project, “Wild Edibles” posts (since 2015).
- Spend at least 20 minutes browsing other links on Canvas.

* Friday, October 22, 5pm Assignment due: Part 2 reflection paper.

Part 3: Processing, Distribution and Access

October 25 Preservation, Processing, and Community Kitchens

Meet at: 34th & Spruce Streets to take the route 40 bus to 9th & South Streets
...to visit the 9th Street Market and People's Kitchen with Tonii Hicks.

Reading, listening, and watching:

- Shaun Chavis, "Food Preservation" (2019).
- Watch: "Sandorkraut: A Pickle Maker" (2015), 12 minutes.
- Sarah Berry and Carrie Draper, "Community Kitchens" (2014).
- Listen: "Beyond Charity: Turning the Soup Kitchen Upside Down" (2014).
- Hannah Sobel and Julian Agyeman, "From Loncheras to Lobsta Love" (2013).
- Watch: Chef's Table, "Cristina Martinez" (Netflix, 2019), 51 minutes.
- Spend at least 20 minutes browsing other links on Canvas.

Assignment (ungraded): processing / preserving

November 1 Food Environments, Grocery and Access

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

Reading:

- Corby Kummer, "The Great Grocery Smackdown" (2010).
- Mary Story et al., "Creating Healthy Food and Eating Environments" (2008).
- Julie Guthman, "If they only knew" (2011).
- Food deserts, swamps, and apartheid articles – see instructions on Canvas.

November 8 Food Assistance and School Food

Meet at: 40th & Locust ...for our activity and talk with Sarah Hill, University City Hospitality Coalition.

Reading:

- Patricia Allen, "Reweaving the Food Security Safety Net" (1999).
- Janet Poppendieck, *Sweet Charity?* (1998), 201-229.
- Janet Poppendieck, "The ABC's of School Lunch" (2013).

* Friday, November 12, 5pm Assignment due: Part 3 reflection paper.

Part 4: Cooking, Eating, Waste

November 15 **Restaurants**

Meet at: 34th & Market ...to take the SEPTA MFL to visit Chinatown
...meeting with Andrew Hu at Philly Poké.

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 22 **Thanksgiving**

Meet: First hour on Zoom...
...then visiting Reading Terminal Market, hosted by Layla El Tannir.

Reading and listening:

- 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).

November 29 **Cookbooks and Food Shows, Heritage and Cultures**

Meet at: Penn LGBT Center ...to discuss cookbooks, food shows, 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).
- Watch a food TV show – see Canvas for instructions and guidelines.

Assignment (ungraded): cookbook/recipe/cooking

December 6 **Waste**

Meet at: Meyerson Hall B6 ...for our discussion with Prof. Jonathan Deutsch,
director of Drexel University’s Food Lab

Reading and watching:

- Watch: *Wasted! The Story of Food Waste* (2017), 67 minutes.
- Katie Flanagan et al, “Reducing Food Loss and Waste” (2019).
- Stephanie Strom, “New Crop of Companies Reaping Profits from Wasted...” (2016).

* Friday, December 10, 5pm Assignment due: Part 4 reflection paper.