

PSSC 390 Food Forever

Course Description:

Are you concerned about the quality of your food, where it comes from, and how it is produced? Are you concerned about your impact on this planet and how you can maintain a healthier and more sustainable lifestyle? Are you interested in understanding more about the science underlying lifestyle choices? Then, get geared up for a stimulating experience!

By the end of the semester, you will have read, heard, and discussed critical challenges facing food producers and consumers. You will learn about how societies have adapted food production systems to environments around the world, and you will understand how agriculture has evolved into the intensive, mechanized production systems of the United States. **Most importantly, you will be better able to evaluate choices in your life and make informed decisions affecting your own resource use and food supply that promote a sustainable society.**

PSSC 390 is an upper division course and approved General Education course in theme C, *Cross-Cultural Exploration*. The course is in the area B (Natural Science) and fulfills the Non-Western course requirement. This GE course will have an aggregate student writing requirement of 1500 words minimum over multiple class meetings and assignments.

Term

Spring 2012

Instructor

Lee Altier

Instructional Student Assistant

Handsel Meese

Office Hours and Contact Information

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Information on contacting the instructors:

The easiest way to communicate is to give us a **phone call** during office hours. If you call at other times, we may be in our offices, or please leave a message. You may also email to our addresses above. Note that the course mail is mostly for contacting other students. The TA will monitor it and the discussion board; however, you may send email directly to us. If you do not get a reply, send your message **again**--there is a lot of spam! Identify your email by including the course and section number

in the subject line, e.g., PSSC 390-72 --Exam 1 question.

Notes:

Responses to requests for grade calculations or explanations about assignment scores are very time consuming. Please first look at your posted scores, use the grade calculator, and for reports, read the comments.

For technical assistance contact Student Computing, not the instructor!

With online courses, I often get inundated with email from students asking the same questions. With general questions, rather than responding individually to numerous inquiries, I may post a note on the course website

Course Goals:

1. Explore how to live in a manner that sustains the resources and ecological systems upon which all life depends.
2. Explore the dynamics of natural ecosystems and the influence of humans on their characteristics.
3. Compare the cultural and environmental context of agricultural systems in different parts of the world.
4. Gain an appreciation for how societies have adapted and evolved in relationship to the environment and resources available to them.
5. Explore factors that influence the viability and sustainability of agricultural production systems.
6. Provide a forum for the sharing of ideas and information about challenges of human survival and maintaining a healthy planet.
7. Improve ability to think critically about ecological issues as they relate to food production and life style decisions.

Course Outcomes

If you are creating or maintaining a *Professional Development Portfolio*, you can expect to enhance your credentials in several important areas. With diligence, each student can acquire the following long-term benefits from this course:

1. An understanding of the ecological basis of food production and consumption.
2. An understanding of the relationship and role of humans in the ecosystems in which they live.
3. An understanding of sustainability as it applies to one's own life choices and the local, national, and global impacts of those choices.
4. Knowledge and sensitivity to a wide range of environmental issues and problems.
5. Effective written communication skills.

6. Skills in group dynamics.
7. Skills in decision making, problem solving, and critical thinking.

Texts & Equipment

All readings are available online this semester. Check out the [Readings](#) page. You may read them online or print them out as you like.

Some of the audio clips require the free Real Player add-in. Get it from <http://www.real.com/realplayer>.

Many of the readings are PDF files that require the Adobe Acrobat Reader. If you do not already have this on your computer, it is freely available from: <http://get.adobe.com/reader/>

Other Recommended Reading:

- *Plan B: Rescuing a Planet under Stress and a Civilization in Trouble* by Lester Brown
- *Fast Food Nation* by Eric Schlosser
- *Collapse* by Jared Diamond
- *The Omnivore's Dilemma* by Michael Pollan

Grading

Exams and reports (farm interview and case studies) are recorded as a percentage score. The assignments are recorded on a 0-200 scale. A **"200"** indicates that you received full credit; **"100"** indicates that something was deficient or incomplete; (and **"300,"** in rare circumstances, is given if your assignment was way above the norm).

Item	Percent of Total Grade
Midterm Exam 1	10
Midterm Exam 2	10
Final Exam	15
Assignments and group work*	25
Case Report 1	15
Case Report 2	25
TOTAL	100

* Includes discussion assignments, drafts, consensus statements, and other homework.

Letter Grade	Range
A	92-100
A-	90-91
B+	88-89
B	82-87
B-	80-81
C+	78-79
C	72-77
C-	70-71
D+	68-69
D	60-67
F	< 60

Course Management/Policies

The course is divided up into six modules, comprising the major topics of the course. Each module consists of several activities that you will complete in sequence. Activities include reading, listening to videos and sound clips, and writing assignments.

Quizzes: Before some modules can be started (e.g., Module 1) and before some assignments can be submitted (e.g., Case 1), a quiz must be taken. *Generally, these must be passed with a score of 100%, and they may be repeated until passed.*

Assignments: Assignments are planned according to the calendar. Go through each module and complete the reading according to the deadline. If the module requires you to submit an assignment, then you post your assignment under the correct “Topic” folder. Some assignments need to be posted on group and main boards. This will be indicated in the modules. For a complete list of assignments and deadlines go to the [Assignment Schedule](#). For the two reports that you will do for the class, take a look at the [report protocol](#).

Important:

- *Before the semester gets rolling be sure you are ready to take an online course!*
 - Can you allocate 6 to 8 hours every week for the course?
 - Are you able to participate and communicate with a group of students regularly?*If not, drop it now!*
Otherwise, welcome, have fun, and enjoy the course!

- For assignments requiring a group consensus, you will not receive credit unless you participate in discussion by responding to and commenting on other group members' postings (so that the instructor can see your contributions)!
- Your membership in a group will be assigned and will be indicated in the *Discussions* Board during the first week of class. It will be the only group in which you will have membership. It will be indicated by something like "Group1" or "Group 12," etc. Your group number is also indicated in your "Assignment Scores" inside the "Course Tools." \
- It is your responsibility to post assignments in the proper place as shown in the *Assignment Schedule*. *If you post them somewhere else, you may not receive credit.*
- For any assignment, each person is responsible for submitting the results of her/his **own** work. Each person is also responsible to see that her/his work is not used or submitted by another unless expressly permitted (by the instructor) and is appropriately acknowledged.
- It is recommended that students keep a copy of all submitted assignments.

Case Reports:

These will involve answering preliminary questions, turning in a draft, critiquing other students' drafts, and then submitting the final version. Turn-around time for getting back the graded reports is usually **three weeks** from the due date. If you have a complaint or concern about how your paper was graded, you should put it in writing in an email to the instructor within **two weeks** of receiving back your graded paper.

Exams:

Will be available for about five days during the scheduled weeks. **Because of occasional technical problems, do not wait until the end of the period to take your exam.** Allocated time for exams are 90 minutes for each midterm and 2 hours for the final. There are three types of exam questions: multiple choice, true-false, and short answer questions. The final will mostly be multiple choice and true-false questions. It will be cumulative, so it will be helpful to review study guides in the modules and the previous exams.

Group work and participation:

Students are expected to participate in group discussion. Contribution of individuals to the group effort is very important.

NOTE: If you have not passed the first quiz and begun Module 1 by the end of the second week of class, *you will be dropped from the course.*

Response to study guide questions:

These are not required to be turned in, however students are strongly urged to answer the study guide questions to focus their attention on key concepts and to prepare for exams!

Late work:

Late work will not be accepted. Talk to the instructor **before the due date** if you have a problem.

Readings:

Assigned as in the modules. Readings for which there are study guide questions are the most

important for exam study. The other readings are to help you with gaining a general understanding of course concepts.

Blog spots:

At the end of some of the activities, you will see a place for you to share comments and ideas about the topic with other students. You must use your Wildcat Gmail account info to [login](#) for posting comments.

Students with Disabilities

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please email, make an appointment, or see us during office hours as soon as possible. Students with disabilities requesting accommodations must register with the DSS Office (Disability Support Services) (<http://www.csuchico.edu/dss/index.shtml>) on the campus (tel: 530 898-5959) to establish a record of their disability.

Extra credit:

There are extra credit assignments available. However, they are not intended as substitutes for the regular assignments. **You will not be eligible for extra credit if you have missed more than two assignments or reports.** All extra credit is due before the end of the semester as indicated in the assignment schedule.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

Be certain that you understand the [Academic Honesty Policy](#) at Chico State. The policy applies to all work done for this class - including homework, exams, and reports. California State University, Chico is committed to a campus culture that takes pride in fostering an environment of academic integrity, academic freedom, and high-quality learning environments. These efforts are guided by the following statement from the university president:

“The students, faculty, administrators, and staff of CSU, Chico are committed to a culture of honesty in which members of the community accept responsibility to uphold academic integrity in all they say, write, and create.”

For any assignment, even if you work with a partner or a study group, each person is responsible for submitting the results of her/his own work. Each person is also responsible to see that her/his work is not used or submitted by another unless expressly permitted (by the instructor) and is appropriately acknowledged. For more information, see the [Executive Memorandum 04-36](#) and [page 51 in the current CSUC catalog](#).

If there is evidence that you have been involved in any form of academic dishonesty, you will receive an "F" grade for the course, and a report will be provided to Student Judicial Affairs for further action.

NOTE: You will submit your two case reports to the Turnitin website. It will provide reports indicating any text from other sources that may be improperly used or referenced. If you submit your papers before the due date, you will have the opportunity to revise and resubmit your paper before your paper is graded.

Course Topics and Schedule

WEEK	TOPIC	READING (tentative)
1	Module 1 Food Production Challenges in the 21st Century Foundations of a Sustainable Society	<i>Beyond the Limits</i> <i>Food Security, Biodiversity Threatened by Pop. Growth</i> <i>Climate Change, Env. Degradation and Armed Conflict</i>
2-3	Module 2 Natural Ecosystems Energy Flow Biogeochemical Cycles Ecosystem Structure & Biodiversity	Readings from the <i>Bangkok Post</i> (for Case 1) <i>Ecosystems: What Are They and How Do They Work?</i> <i>Biodiversity is Critical to Future Health of California</i> <i>Climate Change in California</i> <i>Helping California Prepare for Climate Change</i>
4-6	Module 3 Agricultural Ecosystems Efficiency, stability, & sustainability Nutritional Concepts and Consequences What is food? Food Webs & Trophic Efficiency Competitive and non-competitive animals Population Growth & Sustainable Development Climate and food production Soil Management	<i>Accounting for Environmental Assets</i> <i>Global Climate Change Effects in California</i> <i>Soil Resources</i>
7	Module 4 From Subsistence to Intensive Food Production Subsistence Agriculture Agricultural Efficiency The Impetus for Intensification	<i>The Flow of Energy in an Agriculture Society</i> <i>Trees of Sogolonbougou</i> <i>Soil Fertility and Hunger in Africa</i> <i>Long-Term Changes in Serengeti Wildebeest & Land Cover</i> <i>In Zambia, Tiny Farms Grow More With Less</i> <i>Real Dirt on Rainforest Fertility</i>
8-13	Module 5 Characteristics of Intensive Agriculture Water issues Erosion Pest Management Offsite Impacts	<i>Can China Feed Itself?</i> <i>Economy China: Flirting with Land Tenure Reforms</i> <i>The Real Cost of Energy</i> <i>Hydraulic Sustainability of California</i> <i>Water in the Middle East</i> <i>Salvador's River of Poison</i> <i>Soil Salinity Challenges</i> <i>Tetracycline Resistance Genes in Lagoon and Groundwater</i> <i>Ecological Impacts of Arable Intensification in Europe</i> <i>The Real Nature of Agriculture Pest Problems</i> <i>California Agriculture: Pest Mgmt. Articles</i> <i>Exploring Sustainability in Agriculture</i> <i>Agricultural Sustainability & Intensive Production Practices</i>
14-15	Module 6 Assessing Your Ecological Footprint The Footprint Concept Food Forever—Some Final Thoughts	<i>Adjusting Attitudes</i> <i>Consumption</i>

Suggestions on Harmonizing with the Flow of the Course:

1. ***Here is an observation from my experience as an instructor:*** taking an online course requires more self-discipline than participating in a classroom course. You won't see me two or three times a week haranguing you in a classroom about homework and due dates for reports! Within the first two weeks of the start of the semester, you need to assess whether you can fully participate and complete the course requirements. If not, it is your responsibility to drop the course, so that your grade point average is not negatively affected.
2. As mentioned earlier, the course is divided up into six modules, each one consisting of several activities. As you start a new module, take a look at the introduction, objectives and activities list. Plan your time so that you systematically work through completion of the activities.
3. There is a deadline for each activity and each section. In order for you to get credit for your efforts and for you to successfully complete the course, it is essential that you keep up the course schedule! For due dates, go to the [Assignment Schedule](#).
4. There is a study guide for each section of the course. Each one contains vocabulary and review questions that will help you to focus on key concepts. I strongly suggest that as you begin a section, you print out a copy of the study guide and keep it next to you as you do each activity.
5. You and your classmates will be assigned **study groups**. You can access your study group through the *Discussions* board (in Communication Tools). Besides the place where you will post some of your assignments, your group is your **learning community** for sharing assistance, ideas, and preparing for assignments and exams! Take advantage of this learning community to support your mutual progress in the class!
6. As you complete the activities of each module, be sure that you can answer all of the questions in the study guide. If you are unsure about your answers, you have a couple options: --share ideas with your study group; and/or --phone or send me email or stop by my office!
7. **Information about online etiquette**
[Online Conduct](#)
8. **More suggestions for thriving in an online course!!!!**
[Rules of the Road](#)
9. **Your questions and comments are always welcome!!!**

Besides email to the instructor, as you complete each module, we would appreciate your responses to the online surveys. They are short, anonymous, and give us important feedback on how you are getting along!

College of Agriculture Course Policies

All faculty in the College of Agriculture adhere to the policies listed or referenced below:

University Policies

(Including Student Rights, Academic Honesty, Student with Disabilities, and Use of Computing and Communications Technology)

See: <http://www.csuchico.edu/catalog/cat07/08EndMaterials/02UniversityPolicies.html>

Academic integrity

Students are expected to be familiar with the University's Academic Integrity Policy. Your own commitment to learning, as evidenced by your enrollment at California State University, Chico, and the University's Academic Integrity Policy requires you to be honest in all your academic course work. *Faculty members are required to report all infractions to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs.* The policy on academic integrity and other resources related to student conduct can be found at: <http://www.csuchico.edu/sjd/sja.shtml>

Academic Rigor

Academic rigor means the consistent expectation of excellence and the aspiration to significant achievement. It should pervade the entire atmosphere of the University--teaching and learning, curriculum, evaluation of student and faculty, outreach, admissions, advising, and student life.

Rigorous Learning

Rigorous students are part of the equation of rigorous teaching and learning. A rigorous education is vigorous, difficult, deeply satisfying work, and it requires a lifestyle conducive to achieving excellence. College is not a temporary diversion or a period of entertainment, but a fundamental piece of student character, citizenship, and employment future. A diploma and good grades from a demanding institution count for something. Rigorous students

- Set high personal standards, develop a strong sense of purpose, come to class well-prepared, and complete assignments on time.
- Develop an effective relationship with the instructor, in and outside of class, and make the most of University advising and other services.
- Treat fellow students and the classroom environment with complete respect. Give each class full attention and participation. Do not miss class, arrive late, or leave early.
- Accept continuing responsibility for learning and for grades earned.
- Approach each class in a professional manner, as if the class were real employment. Treat a full-course load as full-time work and spend no less time on it. Determine exactly what is expected.
- Experiment with all teaching and learning strategies used in classes, and also determine which work best for them.
- Demonstrate complete honesty and integrity.

Rigorous Teaching

Rigorous faculty are role models for the behaviors and accomplishments the University seeks to promote. They demonstrate a high level of professionalism and commitment to the University and to their discipline and inspire in students an excitement about learning. Guiding students toward excellence, they

- Communicate high expectations and demonstrate them through a demanding syllabus and well-prepared classes.
- Encourage student-faculty contact in and out of class and offer conscientious advising and consistent availability.
- Encourage collaboration and active learning, fully involving students in the learning experience.
- Provide students early, prompt, and frequent feedback and develop appropriate assessment strategies.
- Emphasize time on task, clearly communicate time required for learning, make it clear that full-time study is full-time work, and design learning experiences so that homework matters.
- Develop approaches and strategies geared to diverse talents and ways of learning, while maintaining high standards of accountability.
- Reduce opportunities to engage in academic dishonesty and challenge its occurrence.

Policies Regarding Personal Conduct

- It is the student's responsibility to meet all appropriate deadlines for adding, withdrawing, etc. These deadlines can be found on the University web site at: <http://www.csuchico.edu/schedule/>
- All class participants are expected to exhibit respectful behavior to other students and the instructor.
- All students have the right and privilege to learn in the class, free from harassment and disruption.
- Inappropriate or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated, nor will lewd or foul language.

Student Computing

Computer labs for student use are available <http://www.csuchico.edu/stcp> located on the 1st floor of the Meriam Library Rm 116 and 450, Tehama Hall Rm.131 and the BMU Rm 301. Additional labs that may be available to students in your department/college.

Student Services

Student services are designed to assist students in the development of their full academic potential and to motivate them to become self-directed learners. Students can find support for services such as skills assessment, individual or group tutorials, subject advising, learning assistance, summer academic preparation and basic skills development. Student services information can be found at: <http://www.csuchico.edu/5.-studentservices.html>.

University Writing Center

The CSU, Chico writing center is staffed by professional instructors and upper-division or graduate-level writing specialists from each of the University Writing Center. Our writing specialists have met a rigorous GPA requirement, and they are well trained to assist all students at all levels within all disciplines to become better writers. The Writing Center information can be found online at <http://www.csuchico.edu/uwc>.

Student Learning Center

The mission of the Student Learning Center (SLC) is to provide services that will assist CSU, Chico students to become independent learners. The SLC prepares and supports students in their college course work by offering a variety of programs and resources to meet student needs. The SLC facilitates the academic transition and retention of students from high schools and community colleges by providing study strategy information, content subject tutoring, and supplemental instruction. The SLC is online at <http://www.csuchico.edu/slc/>.