

ENVS-294: COMMUNITY FOOD DEVELOPMENT
Class Syllabus

Taught by:

Brad Masi, Visiting Instructor of Environmental Studies at Oberlin College

Course Logistics:

Class Meeting Time: 1:30-2:50pm Fridays

Class Location: Hallock Auditorium, Environmental Studies Center, 122 Elm Street

Office Hours: 3:00-5:00pm Fridays (or by appointment)

Office Hour Location: Office hours will be held in ESIC, Lewis Center

Phone #: 440-935-3106

Course Overview:

Class Description: This course will examine the the local foods movement nationally and locally. The course will examine collaboration across boundaries of urban/rural, ethnic backgrounds, and income levels. The course will emphasize the role of urban centers in local food economies. Topics to include public health, environment, community development, economics, and food policy. The course will include discussion with grassroots activists, academics, and government officials and will focus on developing an initial food policy prospectus for Oberlin.

This course will span seven weeks or one module. It is intended to provide a survey of contemporary agrarian and food system issues. The course is complemented by the ENVS-295 Practicum on Organic Farming which provides an overview of sustainable farm design and management at the George Jones Farm and Nature Preserve during the second module of the spring and first module of the fall. A course on Regenerative Design will be offered during the second module of the Fall semester which will focus on creating community-scale regenerative systems that integrate concerns of sustainable food, energy, and shelter.

Course Goal: To provide a basic understanding of how to formulate effective long-term solutions to the complex health, environmental, and economic problems confronting our food system and to direct this understanding toward change in the community.

Course Objectives: The course will seek to:

- a) Expand **awareness and general knowledge** of the inter-linked facets that make up a sustainable food system through engagement with actual models from Northeast Ohio.
- b) Understand four aspects that comprise systemic food system change in Northeast Ohio: **grassroots invention, collaborative process, social enterprise, and food policy.**
- c) **Apply a systems framework** to the development of comprehensive food policy for Oberlin focused on transitioning the college and community toward a food system that runs on sunlight.

Course Structure:

The course will include three primary areas of focus:

- Processes of Change: how a combination of grassroots invention, social enterprise, collaboration, and food policy can lead to systemic changes in local foods systems.
- Determining the Nodal Points in the System: what are the key points of intersection between disparate organizations, issues, and social networks that come together to make critical change.
- Getting the Work Done: How would we define a comprehensive community approach to food systems?

Each class meeting will include three sections:

- Multi-Media/Documentary Film: The first will include a brief (10-15 minute) clip from the film *PolyCultures* to provide some larger context about food system issues in Northeast Ohio as they relate to health, environment, community, and local economy.
- Lecture: The second section will focus on a lecture that provides more detailed background on a topic related to community food system development. Several lectures will be provided by community partners of the New Agrarian Center who are working through a variety of levels (grassroots to policy) to develop a more just and sustainable regional food system in Northeast Ohio.
- Q&A/Discussion: The third section will include question and answers about the film and lectures and discussion about some of the themes that are addressed.

Readings/Multi-media

Masi, Brad, David Pearl, and Tom Kondilas. *PolyCultures: Food Where We Live*. Feature length documentary film about local food systems development highlighting issues, innovations, and approaches in Northeast Ohio. To be featured documentary film in the 2009 Cleveland International Film Festival and viewed in seven segments throughout the course of the class.

Jones, Van. *The Green Collar Economy*. HarperOne Publishers. © 2008

Masi, Brad. *Proceedings of the First Annual Food Congress*. Published 2003 for the Northeast Ohio Foodshed Network which evolved into City Fresh in 2005.

Masi, Brad. *Food, Community, Health, and the New Economy*. Report for the Cleveland/Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition. Produced January of 2009.

Masi, Brad. *Full Circle Learning: Compost Growing Communities*. Report to the Ohio Environmental Education Fund, Ohio EPA. Produced in May of 2008.

Roberts, Joan. *Alliances, Coalitions, and Partnerships: Building Collaborative Organizations*. New Society Publishers. Gabriola Island, Canada ©2004

Shiva, Vandana. *Soil Not Oil: Environmental Justice in an Age of Climate Crisis*. South End Press. © 2008

Winne, Mark. *Closing the Food Gap- Resetting the Table in the Land of Plenty*. Beacon Press, Boston. © 2008

Course Expectations:

Success in the course will be based on:

- a) Consistent attendance at all class meetings.
- b) Preparation of discussion questions based on readings to be brought to class meetings.
- c) Timely completions of assignments that successfully integrate content from the readings, film presentations, lectures, and discussions with the perspectives and insights of each class participant.

Course Assignments:

The overall goal of the course is to develop a preliminary food system plan for Oberlin that will enable the Oberlin community to transition toward a food system that runs on sunlight.

This plan will be developed through the formation of working groups, each with four people, who will explore and develop a plan to address an aspect of transitioning Oberlin's food system. Topic areas include local food purchasing, waste recovery, urban agriculture, young farmer training, permaculture guilds, youth programs, alternative fuels, community food processing, appropriate technology, and healthy food access. A smaller group of less than four people will be charged with the responsibility of compiling a food charter that will include a compilation of activities for the groups.

This larger class project will be sub-divided into several smaller, sequential assignments, including:

Assignment 1: Define Your Personal Policy on Food Due February 13 One page

Define your own individual policy on food. What criteria will use to determine your own policy on what food you would eat? How would you fully enact your policy?

PERCENT OF GRADE:

Assignment 2: Statement of Purpose and Action Plan Due February 20 1-2 pages

PERCENT OF GRADE: 15%

Your group needs to define its statement of purpose. This should be a succinct statement that summarizes the overall target for your group. It should be described in terms that are measurable and focus on long-term change. Each individual should also prepare a brief action plan that outlines how you will complete your part of the policy brief.

Assignment 3: Policy Brief Draft

Due March 6th 3-4 pages

PERCENT OF GRADE: 20% of grade

The overall class project will simulate the process of the Cleveland/Cuyahoga County Food Policy Council. Each group will be expected to generate a policy brief. Each policy brief will a) outline the problem with supporting evidence, b) formulate a comprehensive solution with action steps, c) identify case studies of at least three other examples in the community, region, nation, or world, and d) interview summaries from at least two individuals outside of the class with a perspective to offer on the work-group topic. Each group member will take responsibility for one of the four above sections. Each group will need to write its collective statement of purpose and then lay out its recommendations for the first three steps to take. Final grades will be based on a combination of evaluations of individual sections of each policy brief and then the policy brief as a whole.

Assignment 4: Final Policy Brief & Presentation

Due March 20th, 3-4pgs

PERCENT OF GRADE: Presentation (10%) and Final Policy Brief (40%)

This will be the finalization of your policy brief as a succinct, comprehensive presentation that clearly outlines the work of your working group and recommendations to the community. Each group will be asked to do a brief presentation (3-5 minutes) summarizing your policy brief.

Final policy briefs and executive summary will be published on the New Agrarian Center web-site where interested community members will have an opportunity to learn from and react to what the class generates.

The intent is to use these projects as a way to organize a larger and more community-wide engagement with local food systems work.

Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

PART I: Processes of Change

FEBRUARY 6- SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

PolyCultures film clip: *City Fresh: Connecting City and Country*

FEBRUARY 13- FOOD POLICY

PolyCultures film clip: *Access to Healthy Food- Nourishing Urban Neighborhoods*

Guest Speakers: Jennifer Scofield, Cleveland Department of Public Health
Matt Russell, Case Western Healthy Corner Store Initiative

Readings:

Closing the Food Gap, Mark Winne, xxi-xxii, pgs 85-148

Masi, Brad. *Food, Community, Health, and the New Economy*. Summary documents for the Cleveland/Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition.

Roberts, Jane. *Alliances, Coalitions, and Partnerships*. Pgs 11-36

PART II: The Nodal Points

FEBRUARY 20 – The Intersection of Policy, Environment, and Health

PolyCultures film clip: *Conventional Agriculture- Farming with Oil*

Readings: *Closing the Food Gap*, pgs. 3-34 & pgs. 69-81

Soil Not Oil, Vandana Shiva, pgs. 95-102

Full-Circle Learning- Report on distributed composting systems

Guest Speakers: Casey Hoy, Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center

FEBRUARY 27- Cities as Drivers for Regional Food Systems

PolyCultures film clip: *Ecological Agriculture- Farming with Nature*

Readings: *Cities Growing Smaller*. Kent State University. Pgs. 1-16; 47-64; 73-101

Closing the Food Gap, pgs. 50-68

Guest Speakers: Morgan Taggart, Ohio State University Extension- Cuyahoga County
Maurice Small, City Fresh Organizer

MARCH 6- Local Foods in Hard Times- Green Jobs and Food Infrastructure

PolyCultures film clip: *Sustainable Business- Investing in Community*

Guest Speakers: Tracie Haynes, Community Food Animator

Readings: Van Jones, the *Green Collar Economy* pgs. 35-77

Feasibility study for Missler's Grocery Store Conversion

PART III: Systemic Change

MARCH 13- Nature's Economy and the Human Economy

PolyCultures film clip: *Economics and Innovation: Valuing Local Farmers*

Readings:

Masi, Brad. *Proceedings of First Annual Food Congress of 2003*

Winne, Mark. *Closing the Food Gap*, pgs. 149-193

MARCH 20

Community and the Renewal of Place

PolyCultures film clip: *Urban Agriculture: Growing Where We Live*

Organization of Community Food Congress for presentation of policy briefs.

Readings: No readings assigned for last day