



# World Agriculture and Food Systems

Geo 3445G

Winter 2016

**times & location:** Wednesdays 12:30-2:20 pm (SSC 3028)

Thursdays 1:30-2:20 pm (SSC 2036)

**instructor:** Dr. Tony Weis

**office:** SSC 1403

**office hours:** Thursdays 2.30-3.30, or by appointment

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**phone:** 519-661-2111 x. 87472

**prerequisites:** Third or fourth year status at the University. Two full courses in Geography or equivalent; enrollment in the Minor in Environment and Culture; or special permission.

## Overview

Agriculture and food starkly reflect global inequalities: nearly 1 billion people are chronically hungry or food insecure, many of them small farmers, while roughly 2 billion people are obese or overweight. World markets in agricultural inputs and food products are increasingly dominated by a small number of very large transnational corporations, and world food security has become ever more tied to industrialized agriculture, much of which is heavily subsidized and entails large resource budgets and pollution loads. Meanwhile, the vast majority of the world's farming population lives in the Global South, constrained by marginal land access, limited capital and technology, and almost no state support. Almost everywhere, small farm livelihoods are becoming more and more precarious.

This course focuses on key dynamics and institutions which have shaped agriculture and food systems, and how these have been increasingly industrialized and globalized over time, in very uneven ways. The first half of the course focuses more on changing social relations with respect to agriculture and food, giving particular attention to the vulnerability of small producers on one side, and the increasing control of transnational corporations over production, processing, distribution, marketing, and consumption patterns on the other. The second half of the course focuses centrally on the environmental impacts of agriculture and food systems and the precarious biophysical conditions of the current trajectory; in short, why the cheap food we take for granted is not so cheap. The ultimate aim is to provide a framework for understanding both contemporary problems and possibilities, and struggles to build more socially just and sustainable systems.

## Objectives

In general, this course seeks to:

- promote critical thinking with respect to debates, conflicts, and policy issues surrounding agriculture, development, and sustainability
- enhance analytical and communication skills
- help build a theoretical basis for further studies in food and agrarian studies, political ecology, and environmental change
- inspire ongoing thinking about your relationship to food, farmers, land, and animals.

## Format

This course is based upon lectures and readings, and there is an expectation of regular attendance, participation, and keeping up with assigned weekly readings. There is a major research paper, which can be written individually or in pairs, and two tests. The course will follow the thematic and reading outline on page 4, (subject to some flexibility).

## Course Materials

Sage, C. (2012): *Environment and Food*. New York: Routledge.

Weis, T. (2007): *The Global Food Economy: The Battle for the Future of Farming*. London and New York: Zed.

## Evaluation

Memos, attendance, and class participation		10%
Midterm test	(Thursday, February 11)	15%
Research paper	(Thursday, March 31)	40%
Final exam	(in exam period: April 9-30)	35%

### Memos, attendance, and participation (10%)

To encourage you to keep up with the assigned readings, you are expected to come to:

- each Wednesday class with a list of 3 important points or questions you have identified from the week's assigned readings
- each Thursday class with a list of 3 important points or questions either from the preceding day's lecture or the readings

These will be collected after each class.

### Research paper (40%)

The final paper will be evaluated based on the quality of the introduction, clarity of the thesis, support for the argument, analysis, overall style (organization, grammar, and concision of writing), and conclusions. *Length: no more than 2500 words for individual, 4500 words for pairs (not counting references)*. DETAILS ON PAGES 5-7.

### Midterm test (15%) and Final Exam (35%)

The mid-term test is a combination of multiple choice and short answer questions, and the final combines multiple choice, short answers, and an essay question. Both cover the content in course lectures and readings, and more detailed instructions will be given as the exams approach.

If you fail to write the exam on the scheduled date and time, you will be given zero, unless you communicate with me *prior* to the exam, in which case you will require a note from your physician (see note on special examination policy below).

## Thematic and Reading Schedule

Classes	TOPICS	Readings
Jan. 6 Jan. 7	<i>Introduction: Global agricultural and food inequalities</i>	Sage Ch. 1
Jan. 13 Jan. 14	<i>Conceptualizing modern agro-food systems</i>	Sage Ch. 2 Weis Ch. 1 (up to 28)
Jan. 20 Jan. 21	<i>Historicizing modern agro-food systems – PART 1 Long foundations</i>	posted in OWL
Jan. 27 Jan. 28	<i>Historicizing modern agro-food systems – PART 2 The temperate world</i>	Weis Ch. 2
Feb. 3 Feb. 4	<i>Historicizing modern agro-food systems – PART 3 The tropics and semi-tropics</i>	Weis Ch. 3
Feb. 10 Feb. 11	<i>The uneven playing field of global market integration and the agrarian question of the 21<sup>st</sup> century</i>	Weis Ch. 4 <b>Midterm Feb. 11 (15%)</b>
Feb. 15-19	<b>*CONFERENCE WEEK*</b>	
Feb. 24 Feb. 25	<i>Environmental dimensions of agro-food systems</i>	Sage Ch. 3 Weis Ch. 1 (28-46)
Mar. 2 Mar. 3	<i>Intensifying environmental challenges: agriculture</i>	Sage Ch. 4
Mar. 9 Mar. 10	<i>Intensifying environmental challenges: food consumption</i>	Sage Ch. 5
Mar. 16 Mar. 17	<i>Global food security in a world of 9+ billion</i>	Sage Ch. 6
Mar. 23 Mar. 24	<i>Dimensions of sustainable food systems</i>	Sage Ch. 7
Mar. 30 Mar. 31	<i>Food sovereignty and contemporary agro-food movements</i>	<b>Final paper due Mar. 31 (40%)</b>
Apr. 6	<i>Summary and review</i>	
Apr. 9-30	<b>FINAL EXAM (35%)</b>	

**NOTE: schedule subject to some flexibility**

April 7-8 study days

## **Additional Information**

### **Support Services**

- Registrarial Services: <http://www3.registrar.uwo.ca/index.cfm>
- Social Science Academic Counselling: <http://www.counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/>
- Student Development Services: <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

### **Geography Counselling**

- Angelica Lucaci: [alucaci@uwo.ca](mailto:alucaci@uwo.ca)

### **Mental Health**

If you or someone you know is experiencing distress, there are several resources here at Western to assist you. Please visit the site below for more information on mental health resources:

<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/>.

### **Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness:**

- [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf)
- for a downloadable Student Medical Certificate (SMC) see <https://studentservices.uwo.ca> under the Medical Documentation heading.

### **Statement on Use of Electronic Devices**

No electronic devices will be allowed during tests and examinations.

### **Special Examinations**

A special examination is any examination other than the regularly scheduled exam. Special exams will be allowed only on receipt of medical documentation verifying a serious illness that kept the student from writing the exam as originally scheduled. Such documentation is strictly confidential and kept in the student's file. In the case of missing a final exam for documented medical reasons, a special exam will be set within 30 days. Special exams will not be granted for occasions such as employment interviews, weddings, bar mitzvahs, family reunions, vacations, misreading an exam timetable, or oversleeping. Neither will special exams be granted in order to facilitate transportation arrangements, such as booking flights for home for holidays. It is the policy to discourage informal arrangements by faculty which circumvent this regulation.

### **Western's Commitment to Accessibility**

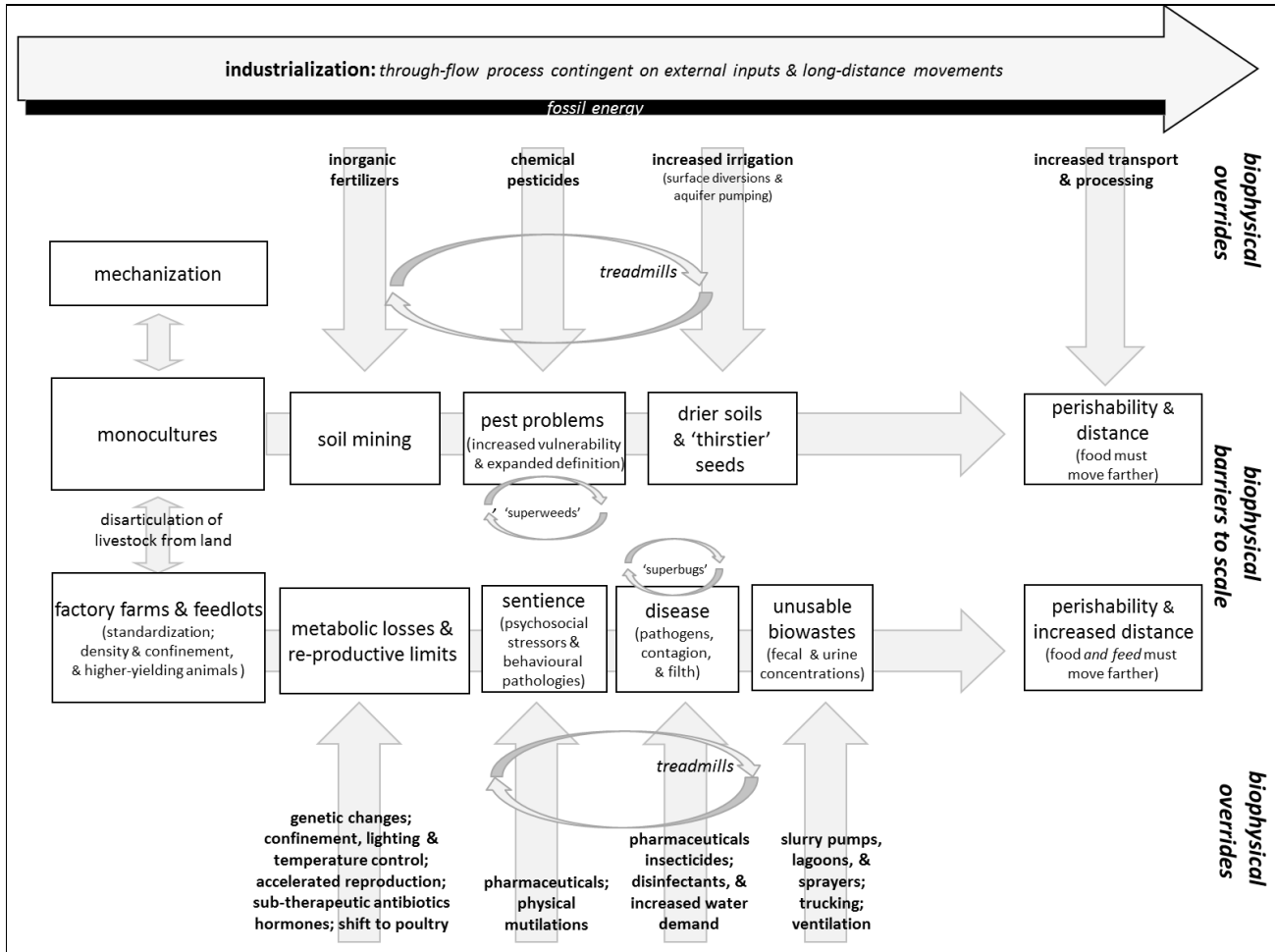
The University of Western Ontario is committed to achieving barrier free accessibility for persons studying, visiting and working at Western. Please contact Dr. Weis as soon as possible if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you, and to facilitate a positive learning environment. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.

### **Prerequisite checking: your responsibility**

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

**RESEARCH PAPER – 2 broad ways in**

**OPTION 1:** This conceptual framework will form an important part of the discussion in the second half of the course focusing on the environmental challenges associated with industrial agriculture and food systems.



For option 1, your paper should:

- focus on 1 core aspect of this diagram, examining a biophysical problem and the way that it is overridden (including the resource budgets and pollution loads it entails)
- develop an argument that relates to the cost-vs.-benefits of this aspect of industrial agriculture, including the long-term viability of this dynamic

**OPTION 2:** This is a slide we will look at both the beginning and the end of the course, which indicates a spectrum of contemporary struggles to reorganize agriculture and food systems – some are closely interrelated, while some have little bearing on one another. Your task for this paper is to identify one struggle/movement (or at most 2, if they are either closely interrelated or in some degree of tension with one another) and pursue a research paper that analyzes it in relation to some aspect of the course material.



For option 2, your paper should:

- briefly assess the nature of the problem that the movement is confronting
- develop an argument that relates to the strengths, weaknesses, limitations, or tensions in the movement (this can involve considering how it relates to other agrarian/food movements)

For either approach:

- connect your discussion to relevant issues raised in class lectures and readings
- draw on at least 8 academic sources (both course readers can be included in this). Academic sources are refereed journal articles, book chapters, or books – not non-scholarly short articles found on the Internet.
- length: ~2500 words max. (not including references)

This project can be approached individually or in pairs. If you choose to work in pairs, obviously the expectations are higher, in terms of length and the level of research (4000 word max. + 12-15 sources). Grades will be given evenly to group partners, so it is your responsibility to ensure that it is a shared and even endeavour.

### Style Guidelines

Format Use 12 pt. font, 1 inch margins, number pages, footnotes or endnotes where appropriate, and a list of references (choose a style, and be consistent). Have a title page with the title, your name and student number, and the date. Staple your paper in the top left corner (no fancy binders). Respect the guidelines for the assignment word length.

Referencing Be sure to reference all quotes, paraphrased ideas and arguments, and data drawn from other sources, using scientific in-text referencing of author and date (Garrett 2003), giving page numbers only when you use direct quotations (Garrett 2003:34-35). Direct quotations can be useful, but use them with care, and do not overuse. A complete set of references of all in-text references (and nothing not referenced) should be listed alphabetically at the end in a bibliography. See the UWO Geography website for instructions on essays and referencing.

### Some General Tips for Writing a Successful Paper

The success of a research paper depends upon having a good, unambiguous thesis statement – that is, the explicit argument that will guide your paper, proposing an explanation for the problem in question. Without a strong thesis, papers tend to read like mere collections of information, when the point is to critically interpret it – to demonstrate how particular evidence explains the issues at hand. You will need to contextualize the conservation and development issues in question but don't let the description run away with your paper; a good test for whether to include information or not is to ask: "does this have relevance to my thesis?"

It is important to begin with a strong introduction that clearly states your thesis, catches the reader's attention, telling them why the subject at hand is important, and outlines the organization that is to follow. Making an outline can be very helpful before you start writing, framing it by your thesis and listing the key ideas for and against. Style and presentation are important. The body of the paper should be well organized, developing arguments with examples, quotations, data, and references, and providing transitions between sections. Avoid vague and unsubstantiated generalizations – they greatly weaken the persuasiveness of your argument. Any use of maps, graphs, and tables should be clear and should serve an explanatory purpose, and must be integrated into the text and referred to. Mechanics, punctuation, and spelling do weigh in the overall impression of the paper. End with a clear conclusion that concisely and unambiguously summarizes the major arguments and points and re-iterates the significance of the issue. It should *not* introduce new ideas or data.

There is no substitute for hard work, and good writing will typically involve multiple drafts, so leave yourself time to edit and revisit your work (essays written at the last minute rarely read well).

## Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between Western and [www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com).

Any work that is found to have been plagiarized will receive a grade of **zero**.

## Late Policy

Deductions of 10% of grade per day will begin immediately after the class in which it is due ends. Term papers will not be accepted if they are more than 7 days late. Extensions will only be granted if there is documented evidence of exceptional circumstances.