MIT 3932G: Politics and Representation of Food

Instructor: John Reed

Asynchronous Screenings: 1.5 hour video screening via OWL link before meetings **Synchronous Discussion**: Thursdays 1:30pm-3:00pm via Teams and Powerpoint **Email**: jreed22@uwo.ca (I respond within 48 hours but Teams chat might close that gap)

Office: FNB-4081 (in-person visits tbd)

Hours: Fridays 1:00pm-3:00pm via Teams video/audio chat

Course Description

This course explores what we eat, how we eat, and why media representation is central to political, economic, ethical, and environmental problems at home and worldwide. You will (a) learn about the corporate-industrial model of food production and then (b) use your critical and creative skills to respond to what you've learned. You'll explore issues such as the commodification and control of biological property; factory farming and environmental damage; issues of representation, gender and identity; human/animal rights and welfare; the relationship between technology, food, and culture; globalization; food security; and the practice of alternatives to the corporate-industrial food system. You'll also explore how media and the arts can provide opportunities for education and resistance. Students submit eight discussion check-ins, undertake a carbon footprint analysis of some aspect of food, give two short presentations on a narrow aspect of a selected course reading, and produce a final research paper or mediated project that is due during the final exam period.

Texts, Technology and Software

- Texts: All materials are available electronically via OWL. Skim PDF reader is great!
- Technology: A smartphone, tablet, or computer with Internet access will do the job.
- **Software**: OWL and Office 365 (Teams for meeting, Stream for videos, Powerpoint for presentations, and OWL for guided course content and links to screenings & lecture.

Evaluation and Requirements

- (1) **Eight discussion check-ins** to prompts posted each week (10%)
- (2) **Two Presentation Contributions to 365 Powerpoint**, shared live. One by Feb 25 (30%)
- (3) Tracking the carbon footprint of a selected meal or food item, due March 07 (25%)
- (4a) Major research essay, 10 pages, due during the final exam period (35%)

or

(4b) Art or informational project+shorter essay, due during final exam period (35%)

Course Structure

We'll follow a few simple themes throughout the term. One: representation and ideology; two: commons and enclosure; three: globalization and ethics; four: art, social justice and activism.

The first few weeks will ease us into thinking about ideology and food. Marx helps us think about commodity fetishism, alienation, industrialism, postindustrialism, globalization, commons and enclosure, and these terms will provide a framework for the entire semester.

These early weeks also interrogate the interrelation of subjectivity, representation and consumption, and we'll build upon these political aspects further as we look at the supermarket, activism and the arts, social justice, environmentalism, animal rights/'speciesism' and the politics of bananas.

I'll be asking you to engage with these issues using your MIT skills in media, culture, and communication. We'll also have several guest speakers attend to talk about their work.

Evaluation

- I. Eight discussion check-ins completed the week of the readings, via OWL (10%).
- -> 1 single-spaced page. Submit 8 to OWL within seven days of our weekly meetings. I will post a discussion prompt. Do the reading, and attend synchronous discussion on Thursdays. Then submit a weekly check-in by our next meeting. The OWL page will walk you through this each week via the Assignments tab:)
- II. Two Presentation Contributions to Office 365, shared. Submit 1 by Feb. 25 (30%) —>Length: Quality over quantity. Spread your material across multiple slides!

You are responsible for part of the content of this course. Each week eight students will sign up to build presentation slides for the week. You'll be assigned portions of the readings, along with some helpful hints if need be. I'll place an empty Powerpoint cloud-based file online, and you'll fill it in with key concepts, selected passages for discussion, images and video to bring it to life, along with questions to throw out to the class. You are not expected to be the expert on this material; you are merely helping to parse it and bring it to life for discussion.

When we log on via Teams for discussion, I will NOT ask people to present in a linear way, from beginning to end. Instead, we will start with an open group discussion involving all of us, and students will 'chime in' with something to contribute when they feel the need. We will use Microsoft Teams chat to ask questions, submit links on the fly or workshop ideas in groups. Students with slides will chime in with material to lend and take over as needed. We'll likely move on to another point, and you'll chime in again later, when appropriate to the discussion. If we run out of time and you don't get to present, there is a record of your hard work for all to consult. This work forms an archive for others to consult and is extremely important.

III. Tracking the Carbon Footprint of Food (25%), due March 07 —>Length: About 8 pages

Using several syllabus readings, outside sources, and Mike Berners-Lee's <u>How Bad Are Bananas?</u>: The Carbon Footprint of Everything, you'll select a meal, food item, or ingredient and follow it with as much detail as you can. You should touch on several course themes—representation, political economy, and labour—but you can choose *how* you'll do that.

-- plus one of the following: --

IVa. Major Research Essay (35%), due during the final exam period->Length: about 10 pages

Using several syllabus readings, and outside sources, produce a research essay following one of the course themes that interest you. You may expand upon any of the ones we've encountered, or you may suggest one to me. Your essay should add up to about 10 pages.

or

IVb. Art, Activist, or Informational Project (35%), due during the final exam period —>Length: about 8 pages

Attempt to raise awareness about a food-related issue through art, activism, journalism, or another public-oriented method. We will mount or publish these during the final week of class. In addition to your project, you'll need to reflect of your process, as well as include several syllabus themes and sources along the way. This accompanying write-up should be about 8 pages.

Questions about this synchronous course:

Q: What is the late assignment policy?

A: Late assignments will lose 2% per day unless the student has a documented medical or family emergency or chooses to use a self-reported absence. Reach out to me if you need an extension, which I have the ability to grant individually.

Q: How will this course operate?

A: You will use OWL to access any lectures or films, download and submit assignments, and obtain slides and readings before our meeting. You will also participate in a weekly synchronous discussion and presentation using Teams and Powerpoint. Please log in at 1:30 pm each Thursday, having watched the film and completed the reading beforehand. Then submit your discussion response before we next meet. I will post 11 prompts; respond to 8. No back-dating!

Q: Where can I find screenings and selected lectures?

A: OWL. That link will take you to a Microsoft Stream Group that I created for this class. Lectures will contain a rough transcript, chapter markers, and closed captions (I won't always post lectures). You may download the transcript for reference if you wish. Teams will also make live captions of any meetings we record, and I can save the recording, if students wish, to a password-protected Stream channel that can only be accessed by students to whom I grant permission.

Q: How can I reach John if I have questions?

A: I am available by email at <u>jreed22@uwo.ca</u>. If you want to talk virtually, we can use the video function on Teams to chat.

Q: Can students record Teams meetings?

A: Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor.

Q: What is the university policy on Teams recording?

A: The data captured during these recordings may include your image, voice recordings, chat logs and personal identifiers (name displayed on the screen). The recordings will be used for educational purposes related to this course, including evaluations. The recordings may be disclosed to other individuals under special circumstances. Please contact the instructor if you have any concerns related to session recordings. Remember that if the group agrees to the recording of meetings, it will be placed on Stream for viewing with a UWO username/password by members of this class only. Please also remember that you may decline to engage your camera during meetings.

Q: What technological challenges might I encounter?

A: Some of the headaches you might encounter are: video lag, audio lag, slow Internet in rural areas, WIFI interruptions due to competing electronic devices (like microwaves), buildings where there are too many WIFI hotspots (like apartment buildings), closed public WIFI areas if there is an outbreak, ISP bandwidth overages, device failure, device expense, geographic issues (if you're half-way around the world it will be unreasonable to attend the in-person discussion at certain times), and geo-blocking due to content censorship.

I am attempting to run a course that considers these challenges! This class is, for the most part, self-guided in terms of graded work; if you cannot attend synchronous meetings, you will not be punished. You'll be missed, however! Lectures are also self-guided in terms of when to watch. Just make sure to watch! Of course, if you don't review the videos, you will surely see lower grades.

If you experience geographic, technological, or economic challenges, please reach out to me before it becomes a problem. We are here to help you!

Q: What is the academic code of conduct?

A: I won't bore you, but remember that what you say and do online can be held against you. Office 365 apps, email, and OWL are a service provided for all of us—we're merely allowed to access it:)

NOTES FROM THE FIMS DEAN'S OFFICE

Winter 2021

Rights and Responsibilities

The conditions governing a student's ability to pursue their undergraduate education at Western are ratified by Senate and can be found on the Academic Policies section of the University Secretariat: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/academic pol

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/academic_policies/rights_responsibilities.html

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/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_und_ergrad.pdf

Plagiarism

Students must write their essays and assignments, including take-home exams, in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence. All papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software Turnitin 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.

Accommodation Policies

Students with disabilities work with Accessible Education (formerly SSD) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing. The accommodation policy can be found here: Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

Academic Consideration for Student Absence

Students will have two (2) opportunities during the regular academic year to use an on-line portal to self-report an absence during the term, provided the following conditions are met: the absence is no more than 48 hours in duration, and the assessment

for which consideration is being sought is worth 30% or less of the student's final grade. Students are expected to contact their instructors within 24 hours of the end of the period of the self-reported absence, unless noted on the syllabus. Students are not able to use the self-reporting option in the following circumstances:

- during exam periods,
- absence of a duration greater than 48 hours,
- assessments worth more than 30% of the student's final grade,
- if a student has already used the self-reporting portal twice during the academic year

If the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence are NOT met, students will need to provide a Student Medical Certificate or equivalent documentation, if the absence is medical, or provide appropriate documentation if there are compassionate grounds for the absence in question. Students are encouraged to contact the FIMS Undergraduate Student Services Office to obtain more information about the relevant documentation.

Students should also note that individual instructors are not permitted to receive documentation directly from a student, whether in support of an application for consideration on medical grounds, or for other reasons. All documentation required for absences that are not covered by the Self-Reported Absence Policy must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's home Faculty.

For Western University policy on Consideration for Student Absence, see Policy on Academic Consideration For Student Absences - Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs

and for the Student Medical Certificate (SMC), see:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

In the event of a Covid-19 resurgence, it is possible that different procedures may need to be put in place on short notice.

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the Western Academic Calendar.

Grading at FIMS

- Normally, first year courses required for entry into an MIT or MPI module (MIT 1020E and MIT 1025F/G) are expected to have a course average between 68-72%.
- Normally, second year required courses (MIT 2000, 2100, 2200, 2500) are expected to have a course average between 70 and 75%.
- Normally, third year required courses (MIT 3000, 3100) are expected to have a course average between 72 and 77%.

Elective courses and 4th year seminars have no recommended course averages.

Support Services

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/

SUPPORT SERVICES - LINKS

Office of the Registrar:

www.registrar.uwo.ca

Mental Health Support:

https://www.uwo.ca/health

/psych/index.html

Accessible Education:

http://academicsupport.uw o.ca/accessible education/i ndex.html

Accessibility Information:

www.accessibility.uwo.ca/

Writing Support Centre:

http://writing.uwo.ca/

Learning Skills Services:

https://www.uwo.ca/sdc/learning/

Academic Learning and Support for Online Learning:

https://www.uwo.ca/se/digital/types/acade mic-and-learning-support.html

Indigenous Services:

https://indigenous.uwo.ca/

Western International:

https://international.uwo.ca/

Career Centre:

http://careerexperience.uwo.ca/

Appendix A: Suggested Grade Ranges in MIT, MPI and MTP

Guidelines to the MIT Grade Range

These guidelines are benchmarks, and are not to be followed as rigid regulations. They will be adjusted as appropriate to take into account the level of the course and any specific instructions given by a professor. As well, competency in English language usage (including spelling and grammar) may be taken into account in the assignment of grades by individual instructors. Note that the 70-79 grade range is broken into two divisions, as this is the grade range into which a large number of students fall

90-100 (Outstanding, A+)

The report shows sparkling originality and exhibits a high degree of critical analysis of the topic. Sophisticated synthesis and analysis of the theoretical and conceptual dimensions of the topic are demonstrated. Mastery of complex material and ideas is immediately evident. The topic is treated with sensitivity and subtlety of thought. The quality of the writing and background research is exemplary.

80-89 (Excellent, A)

The report shows originality and exhibits a high degree of critical analysis of the topic; it gets to the heart of the matter with comments and/or questions. It is clearly focused and logically organized. The quality of writing makes the report immediately understandable. Mastery of complex material and ideas is demonstrated. The report is of appropriate length, while preserving the priorities and emphasis of the material, so that the result is meaningful, not simplistic.

75-79 (Very Good, B+)

The report shows above average analysis, critical thinking and independent thought. Claims are supported by ample evidence and the components of the topic are well-researched and presented. The topic is addressed in reasonable depth and/or breadth and covers material appropriate to the course. The analysis is organized around focal points and the argument is easily followed. The report demonstrates an above average ability to write in an intelligible style and to condense material meaningfully and with a concern for priorities of that material.

70-74 (Good, B)

The report shows an attempt at analysis and critical thinking. Claims are supported by reasonable evidence. The topic is addressed in some depth and/or breadth, with references to the appropriate literature and course material. The analysis is organized around focal points. The report is generally well written and well argued.

60-69 (Competent, C)

The report demonstrates adequate comprehension of the topic. The report is on topic and is a reasonable summary of material covered in the course, but goes no further. Facts are stated accurately; the quality of writing is sufficiently intelligible with enough elaboration and enough connections made between ideas to permit a reader to understand the point of the report.

50-59 (Marginal, D)

The report shows less than adequate comprehension of the topic and of the material covered by the course. The report is a less than adequate summary of sources and/or is considerably off-topic. Facts are stated inaccurately or ambiguously; the writing style is difficult to follow; there is insufficient elaboration to permit reader's comprehension of relations among ideas; little judgment is shown in selecting detail for inclusion in the report.

Below 50 (Unacceptable, F)

The report demonstrates a failure to comprehend the topic. The material is disorganized and unintelligible. The report clearly does not meet the minimal requirements of the assignment.

Appendix B: Guidelines of Academic Appeals for FIMS Students

Grounds for Appeal:

The Faculty of Information and Media Studies does not view the appeals process as an opportunity for students to solicit a second opinion on a grade assigned to a particular piece of work. Appeals must pertain to the final grade in a course, and will only be entertained if sufficient grounds for appeal can be met, including: medical or compassionate circumstances, a defect in the evaluation process, bias, inaccuracy or unfairness.

Stages in the Appeals Process:

The first stage of the process is a discussion of the disputed grade with the appropriate Teaching Assistant (if applicable), and subsequently, the course Instructor. For grades assigned to individual assignments, essays, lab reports, projects and tests completed throughout the term, the student first must appeal to the Teaching Assistant or Instructor of the course, within three weeks of the date on which the Instructor or Teaching Assistant returned the assignments to the class. The Appeals Committee will not hear any further appeals about the final grade in any course unless this first step has been taken.

If completion of the first stage has not resolved the matter, the student may appeal the final grade in the course to the FIMS Appeals Committee. Appeals of final grades must be within the time frame indicated in the Undergraduate Calendar. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the appeal is submitted within the deadline. The student shall submit a formal letter to the FIMS Appeals Committee outlining the grounds for the appeal, the remedy sought and relevant materials including the information about when and with whom (Teaching Assistant and/or Instructor) the student met, as described in Stage 1. If the appeal involves a request for work to be regraded, the original marked work and a clean copy (if possible) must be included. If the appeal is commenced once the deadline has passed, it will not be considered either by the Appeals Committee or by the Associate Dean.

The FIMS Appeals Committee has the discretion to determine whether the grounds for appeal have been met.

If the Committee deems that the reasons for the appeal are not legitimate, the Associate Dean will be informed. The appeal will be terminated and the student will be informed.

If the Committee decides that the grounds for appeal have been met, the following steps will be taken:

1. the course Instructor will be shown the appeal letter and offered an opportunity to make a written response;

2. If work is to be regraded, a reader will be appointed who is competent in the area in question and was not involved in the assignment of the original mark. The reader will consider the work in question and will arrive at an independent evaluation. If there is a large discrepancy between the original mark and the regraded mark, a second reader may be appointed by the Committee. If the appointed reader(s) arrive at a grade within five marks of the original, the original grade will stand.

The FIMS Appeals Committee will review the evidence and will make a recommendation on the case to the Associate Dean Undergraduate.

The Associate Dean Undergraduate will consider the recommendation from the Appeals Committee, and will make a decision. The student and the instructor will be notified promptly and in writing by the Associate Dean of the decision and of the change in grade, if any. Within the Faculty of Information and Media Studies, the Associate Dean's decision on the matter is final.

Further appeals are possible under certain circumstances to the Senate Review Board Academic (for Undergraduate students) or to the Faculty of Graduate Studies (for Graduate students) but the student should carefully consult the guidelines regarding such Appeals.

Schedule of Readings

01: Introduction

Jan 14 Watch: •Food Inc. (2008) dir. Robert Kenner before we meet

FYI: •Joel Salatin, 'Declare Your Independence' in Food Inc.: A

Participant Guide

·Alice Cutler and Kim Bryan, 'Why We Are What We Eat" in Do It

Yourself: A Handbook for Changing the World

Meet: ->Thursday @ 1:30pm sign-in with Teams audio/video chat

02: Industrialization

Jan. 21 Watch: •Our Daily Bread (2006) dir. Nicholas Geyerhalter before meeting

Read: •John Bellamy Foster, from <u>The Vulnerable Planet</u>

•Eric Schlosser, "Cogs in the Great Machine" from Fast Food

Nation

Meet: —>Thursday @ 1:30pm sign-in with Teams audio/video chat

03: Globalization

Jan. 28 Watch: • <u>Darwin's Nightmare</u> (2004) dir. Hubert Sauper

Read: •Verena Raschke, "Colonisation, the New World Order, and the

Eradication of Traditional Food Habits in East Africa: Historical Perspective on the Nutrition Transition" in <u>Public Health Nutrition</u>.

•Mike Berners-Lee, from <u>How Bad Are Bananas? The Carbon</u>

Footprint of Everything

Meet: —>Thursday @ 1:30pm sign-in with Teams audio/video chat

04: Commodity Fetishism

Feb. 04 Watch: •Banana Land: Blood, Bullets and Poison (2014) dir. Jason

Glaser, Diego Lopez

Read: •Charlene Elliott, "Consuming the Other: Packaging

Representations of Foreignness in President's Choice"

•George Ritzer, selections on labour and fetishism of commodities

from "Karl Marx" in Classical Sociological Theory

Meet: —>Thursday @ 1:30pm sign-in with Teams audio/video chat

05: Biological Property and GMOs

Feb. 11 Watch: •The World According to Monsanto (2008) dir. Marie Robin

> Read: Vandana Shiva, "Genetic Engineering and Food Security" in

> > Stolen Harvest.

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, "Postmodernization, or the

Informatization of Production" in Empire

Meet: ->Thursday @ 1:30pm sign-in with Teams audio/video chat

06: Fall Reading Week — No Class or Screenings

07: Representation and Subjectivity I: The Social Construction of Speciesism

Feb. 25 Watch Eating Animals (2018) dir. Christopher Quinn

→1 presentation completed by

Read:

• Peter Singer, selections from Animal Liberation

this week

Meet:

->Thursday @ 1:30pm sign-in with Teams audio/video chat

08: Representation and Subjectivity II: The Semiotics of Food

Mar. 04 Watch: Okja (2017) dir. Bong-Joon ho

> •Warren Belasco, selections from Food: The Key Concepts Read:

→Carbon footprint due by

March 07

Meet:

->Thursday @ 1:30pm sign-in with Teams audio/video chat

Carolyn Adams, <u>The Pornography of Meat</u> (selections)

09: Tactical Media, Activism, and Art

Mar. 11 Watch: Food Chains (2014) dir. Sanjay Rawal

> Joanne Richardson, "The Language of Tactical Media" Read:

> > •Michel Certeau, "The Practice of Everyday Life" in Beautiful

Trouble

Diana Yeh, "Pot Luck: Food and Art"

Meet: ->Thursday @ 1:30pm sign-in with Teams audio/video chat

> Selected Cases: Critical Art Ensemble's 'Free Range Grain'; Jon Rubin and Dawn Weleski's 'Conflict Kitchen'; Design Studio for Social Intervention's 'Public Kitchen'; Lucy+Jorge Orta's 'All in One Basket', '7X7', 'The Meal'; Wim Delvoye's 'Cloaca'; The Yes Men's 'Skip Showers for Beef' and 'Monsanto and the Carnival of Corn'; Alex Rivera's 'Why Cybraceros?'; Judy Chicago's 'The Dinner Party'; Natalie Jereminko's 'Garbage Portraits'; Coalition of Immokalee Workers 'Modern-Day Slavery Museum' and 'Taco Bell

boycott'; Paul McCarthy's 'Hot Dog' and other works...

10: Waste, Recycling, Packaging, and the Environment

Mar. 18 Watch: <u>Trashed: A Global Tour of Rubbish</u> (2013) dir. Candida Brady

Read: • Dana Gunders, 'Wasted: How America Is Losing Up to 40

Percent of Its Food from Farm to Fork to Landfill'

• James Twitchell, excerpts from Lead Us Into Temptation: The

Triumph of American Materialism

Meet: —>Thursday @ 1:30pm sign-in with Teams audio/video chat

11: Local Issues Involving Agricultural Labourers and Human Rights Abuse

Mar. 25 Watch: •Migrant Dreams (2016) dir. Min Sook Lee

Read: •Eric Holt-Giménez, 'Food Security, Food Justice, or Food

Sovereignty?'

•Alison Hope Alkon and Julian Agyeman, 'The Food Movement as

Polyculture' in Cultivating Food Justice: Race, Class, and

Sustainability

•Margaret Campbell, 'Environmental Justice' in Beautiful Trouble

Meet: —>Thursday @ 1:30pm sign-in with Teams audio/video chat

•Gabriel Allahdua, farm worker and activist with Justice 4 Migrant Workers (a volunteer-run migrant worker advocacy organization).

12: Food, Culture, Sustainability, and Indigenous Sovereignty

Apr. 01 Watch: • Gather (2020) dir. Sanjay Rawal

Read: •TBA

->2nd Meet: ->Thursday @ 1:30pm sign-in with Teams audio/video chat

presentation completed by this week

13: Conclusion and Catch-up

Apr. 08 •Work on your final projects that are due during the final exam

period.

—>Essay and project due during the final exam period