

MIT 3932G: Politics and Representation of Food

Instructor: John Reed

Meeting & In-Class Screening: Thursdays 1:30-4:30pm in HSB-11

Email: jreed22@uwo.ca (I respond within 48 hours but Teams chat might close that gap)

Office: FNB-4081

Hours: Wednesdays 1:30pm-3:30pm or by appointment

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 first learn about the corporate-industrial model of food production and then 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.

Texts, Technology and Software

- **Texts:** All materials are available electronically via OWL. Skim PDF reader is great!
- **Technology:** None needed. If we pivot online due to COVID see below.
- **Software:** OWL and Office 365 (Teams for discussion, Stream for videos, Powerpoint for presentations, and OWL for guided course content and links to screenings & lecture.

Evaluation and Requirements

- (1) **Eight check-ins** responding to prompts posted each week (10%)
- (2) **Two Presentation contributions to 365 Powerpoint**, shared live. One by Feb 16 (30%)
- (3) **Carbon Footprint Assignment** due March 5 (25%)
- (4) **Final Essay/Project Proposal and Annotated Bibliography**, due March 25 (10%)
- (5) **Final research essay**, 10 pages, due by April 10 (25%)
or
Art or informational project+7-page essay, due by April 10 (25%)

Course Structure

We'll follow a few simple themes throughout the term: representation and ideology; commons and enclosure; globalization and ethics; and 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 a guest speaker attend to talk about their work.

Evaluation

1. 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 discussion on Thursdays. Then submit a weekly check-in by our next meeting.

2. Two Presentation Contributions to Office 365, shared. Submit 1 by February 16 (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 critical concepts, selected passages for discussion, images and video to bring it to life, along with questions to throw out to the class. I don't expect you to be the expert on this material; you are merely helping to parse it and bring it to life 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. 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 still a record of your hard work for all to consult.

3. Tracking the Carbon Footprint of Food, due March 05 (25%)

—>**Length: About 8 pages**

Using several syllabus readings, outside sources, and Mike Berners-Lee's *How Bad Are Bananas?: 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.

4. Final project proposal and annotated bibliography, due by March 25 (10%)

—>**Part One:** An annotated bibliography of 10 sources that you will consult for your final paper or project. Annotations should be one paragraph long and provide a summary of each text. Use whatever formatting system you wish, but be consistent.

—>**Part Two:** A one-page summary or central claim: A one-page outline of your final project (research question, central claim or hypothesis, etc.) or multi-media project along with this document.

5. Major Research Essay (25%), due by April 10

—>**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

5. Art, Activist, or Informational Project + Essay (25%), due by April 10

—>**Length: about 7 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 on your process, and include several syllabus themes and sources along the way. This accompanying write-up should be about 7 pages.

Important Information

COVID-Related

- In the event of a COVID-19 resurgence during the course that necessitates the course delivery moving away from face-to-face interaction, all remaining course content will be delivered entirely online, either synchronously (i.e., at the times indicated in the timetable) or asynchronously (e.g., posted on OWL for students to view at their convenience). The grading scheme will not change. Any remaining assessments will also be conducted online as determined by the course instructor.
- Students will be expected to wear triple layer non-medical masks at all times in the classroom as per university policy and public health directives. Students who are unable to wear a mask for medical reasons should seek accommodation through Accessible Education.

Submitting Work to OWL

- If students need assistance, they can seek support on the OWL Help page. Alternatively, they can contact the Western Technology Services Helpdesk. They can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.
- Google Chrome or Mozilla Firefox are the preferred browsers to optimally use OWL; update your browsers frequently. Students interested in evaluating their internet speed, please click [here](#).
- All assignments are due at 11:55 pm EST unless otherwise specified
- Written assignments will be submitted to Turnitin

Information about late or missed evaluations

- Late assessments without academic consideration will be subject to a late penalty 10%/day.
- Late assessments with academic consideration and worth more than 10% require the student to work with the Academic Advising unit in their Faculty of registration; once that has been approved, students need to contact the instructor to arrange for an alternate submission date.
- **You have one 48-hour 'no questions asked' (NQA) extension in this class.** It does not apply to exams. Contact John directly to arrange an NQA accommodation.
- **If you miss a lecture** please use the slides provided on OWL and contact me for an audio screen recording of the lecture.

Professionalism and Privacy

- Western students are expected to follow the Student [Code of Conduct](#).
- Additionally, the following expectations and professional conduct apply to this course:
 - Students are expected to follow online etiquette expectations provided on OWL.
 - All course materials created by the instructor(s) are copyrighted and cannot be sold/shared.
 - Recordings are not permitted (audio or video) without explicit permission.
 - Permitted recordings are not to be distributed.
 - Students may be expected to take an academic integrity pledge before some assessments.
 - All recorded sessions will remain within the course site or unlisted if streamed.

Schedule of Readings

01: Introduction

- Jan 12 Watch: •Food Inc. (2008) dir. Robert Kenner **in class**
- Read: •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

02: Industrialization

- Jan. 19 Watch: •Our Daily Bread (2006) dir. Nicholas Geyerhalter **in class**
- Read: •John Bellamy Foster, from The Vulnerable Planet
 •Eric Schlosser, "Cogs in the Great Machine" from Fast Food Nation

03: Globalization

- Jan. 26 Watch: •Darwin's Nightmare (2004) dir. Hubert Sauper **in class**
- 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 Public Health Nutrition.
 •Mike Berners-Lee, from How Bad Are Bananas? The Carbon Footprint of Everything

04: Commodity Fetishism

- Feb. 02 Watch: •Banana Land: Blood, Bullets and Poison (2014) dir. Jason Glaser, Diego Lopez **before class**
- 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

05: Waste, Recycling, Packaging, and the Environment

- Feb. 09 Watch: Trashed: A Global Tour of Rubbish (2013) dir. Candida Brady **in class**
- 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

06: Representation and Subjectivity I: The Semiotics of Food

- Feb. 16 Watch • Triangle of Sadness (2022) dir. Ruben Östlund **in class**
- 1 presentation completed by this week Read: • Warren Belasco, selections from Food: The Key Concepts
 • Carolyn Adams, The Pornography of Meat (selections)

07: Fall Reading Week — No Class or Screenings

Feb. 23

08: Local Issues Involving Agricultural Labourers and Human Rights Abuse

- Mar. 02 Watch: • Migrant Dreams (2016) dir. Min Sook Lee **in class**
- Carbon footprint due March 5 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

09: Tactical Media, Activism, and Art

- Mar. 09 Watch: • Food Chains (2014) dir. Sanjay Rawal **before class**
- Read: • TBA Tactical Media
 • Michel Certeau, "The Practice of Everyday Life"
 • Diana Yeh, "Pot Luck: Food and Art"

10: Biological Property and GMOs

- Mar. 16 Watch: • The World According to Monsanto (2008) dir. Marie Robin **in class**
- Read: • Vandana Shiva, "Genetic Engineering and Food Security" in Stolen Harvest.
 • Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, "Postmodernization, or the Informatization of Production" in Empire

11: Representation and Subjectivity II: The Social Construction of Speciesism

Mar. 23 Watch: Eating Animals (2018) dir. Christopher Quinn **in class**

—>Final project
proposal due
March 25 Read: Peter Singer, selections from Animal Liberation

12: Food, Culture, Sustainability, and Indigenous Sovereignty

Mar. 30 Watch: •Gather (2020) dir. Sanjay Rawal **in class**

Read: •Charlotte Coté, 'Indigenizing Food Sovereignty'
 •Kyle Powys Whyte, 'Food Sovereignty, Justice and Indigenous Peoples'

13: Conclusion, Catch-Up, Display Class Projects!

April 06 Watch: •NA

Final project
write up due by
April 10 Read: •NA

NOTES FROM THE FIMS DEAN'S OFFICE

Winter 2023

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_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_undergrad.pdf

Plagiarism

Students must write their essays and assignments 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 required 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

Academic Accommodation

Students with disabilities work with [Accessible Education \(AE\)](#) which provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive testing.

Medical Consideration

Students who have medical grounds for academic consideration for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth **10% or more of their final grade** must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty (for FIMS students this is [Undergraduate Student Services](#)).

Students are required to provided

documentation in the form of a [Student Medical Certificate](#). It will be the Dean's Office that will determine if consideration is warranted.

For work worth less than 10% of the final grade, the instructor will consider requests for academic consideration on medical grounds made in a timely manner in writing or during office hours. Such requests need not be accompanied by documentation. The instructor may decide to require documentation be submitted to the appropriate Academic Counselling office.

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 must be submitted to the Academic Counselling office of a student's home Faculty.**

Compassionate Accommodation

Academic accommodation (extensions, makeup tests and exams, additional assignments etc.) may be given to students on compassionate grounds. The situations for which compassionate accommodation can be given must be serious, including significant events such as death in the immediate family, trauma (fire, robbery, harassment, muggings, car accidents, etc.) or emergency situations. Documentation is required.

If a member of your immediate family is seriously ill, obtain a medical certificate from the family member's physician and submit the documentation to your Academic Counsellor.

If you have been involved in a severe accident, fire, or some other exceptional crisis, obtain a copy of the police report or be prepared to provide the necessary documentation upon request.

Generally, for deaths within a student's immediate family (parents, guardians, caregivers, siblings, spouses), bereavement leave is granted, upon provision of documentation. For deaths within a student's extended family, academic accommodation is given for one to three days, upon provision of documentation. Students seeking additional bereavement leave should contact their Academic Counsellors with valid documentation.

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 Advisor. Additional information is given in the [Western Academic Calendar](#).

Gender-Based and Sexual Violence

Western [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence, you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts, [here](#). The gender-based violence and survivor support case managers are located in Thames Hall (3114-3127 office suite.) To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.

Support Services

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to [Health and Wellness](#) for a complete list of supports.

SUPPORT SERVICES - LINKS

[FIMS UGSS](#): *academic advising; career services*

[Psychological Services](#): *Information about accessing mental health supports*

[Medical Services](#): *Student health related services*

[Office of the Registrar](#): *Financial Information, Timetable, Exam Schedules, Academic Calendar Information*

[Academic Support and Engagement](#): *Central Academic Supports, including Writing Centre, Learning Development, Transition and Leadership Supports, and Careers and Experience*

[Accessible Education](#): *Assessment and recommendations for students with disabilities*

[Accessibility Information](#): *Information to help support barrier free access, including floor plans, accessible washroom locations, service disruptions etc.*

[Indigenous Student Services](#): *Includes information about financial support, indigenous self-identification, orientation, and tutor support*

[Western International](#): *Information and support for international students and students seeking to go on exchange*

FIMS Grading Policy

FIMS Undergraduate programs now have the following class average policy:

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%.

Second year required courses (MIT 2000, 2025, 2100, 2200, 2500) are expected to have a course average between 70 and 75%. The third year required (MIT 3100) is expected to have a course average between 72 and 77%.

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

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.