

UG ENST 430 Culture and Agriculture, Spring 2018

3 credits M,T,Th 3:40 – 5:00

Class runs 1/22 – 3/22

Instructor, Josh Slotnick

Office Hours: Tues, Thurs 2:30 – 3:30 JRH 201. After the end of Feb. I am at the PEAS farm, text or write for an appointment.

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Culture and Agriculture surveys the treatment of farmers and farming in the Humanities. The course is divided into three parts: 1.) Specific crops or elements of agriculture and their effect on history, 2.) Artistic commentary on agricultural life, and 3.) Farmer philosophy. In all cases, we will attempt to link the grand sweep of history back to the local whenever possible. I will present stories to you in a variety of formats, and you will wrestle with this information in reading, writing and speaking. I hope you will read critically, write clearly and speak with the confidence of your convictions. To that end, we will read articles as well as a book chapter each week, you will write a series of short papers, and have at least one, if not more, opportunities to present to the class and/or lead an activity.

The first third of the course will focus on three crops: cotton, coffee, and corn (as moonshine) and one agricultural/industrial practice (meat processing) that all inspired major socio-political change, and helped to form a cultural identity. We will also look at coffee's role in forging the ironic link between globalization, the marketing fetishization of "local", and the cultural rise of our nearest metropolitan area, Seattle. In the second third of the course we will look at artistic interpretations of agricultural life. We will check in on farmer poetry, the musical legacy of the great migration, and the power of the spoken word. In the last section of the course, farmer philosophy, we will consider the iconic agrarian voice of Wendell Berry, and other agrarians in a concerted look at urban agriculture as community development. We will consider agrarianism in the context of the current boom in urban social justice agriculture, and the thorny issues of gentrification and embedded racism.

We will read two books over the course of our shortened semester. *This Blessed Earth; A Year in the Life of an American Family Farm*, by Ted Genoways (2017), and *Changing Season; A Father, a Daughter, a Family Farm*, by David Masumoto and Nikiko Masumoto (2016). Both of these books take on similar issues – how a family farm can hold on economically selling into the mass market, but they come from very different perspectives. These books are as new to me as they are to you, but they come well recommended. The book reading part of the course runs alongside the rest of the material, and though does not necessarily integrate seamlessly, the issues of identity, and art should permeate the books and the course as a whole.

There will be three classes a week, Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. **Mondays** I will lecture. The lectures should take half of the class time. Following the lecture, we will have an activity to inspire questions and discussion. I firmly believe that as you take the information I present in lecture, and remake it in a new form; it will become more yours than mine. The activities we engage in, post-lecture, will demand the re-formation of information, but may not always feel traditionally academically rigorous. They will, however, require you to think about what you heard, as well as work out your ideas cooperatively.

Tuesdays We will discuss the readings. Five times during the course a small leadership group of students will design a guided discussion or activity based on the selected readings for the week (taken from the readings on reserve). Five times means everyone will do this once, and it is part of your grade. I have scripted the theme of the discussion or activity (see course schedule below). The group has two options for how to structure their time. I will ask questions of the presenters and play an active role in both of the options described below. If it begins to go off the rails, I will rescue it. I have written a theme for these activities in the syllabus.

Option 1.) Activity

The group will design an activity where the class, in small groups, actively works with the material from the readings and then presents their creations to the class. The presentations should take the form of a contextually non-traditional presentation of academic material, examples of this include: a play, a song, a PSA, an advertisement, a piece of art, a campaign speech, a debate etc. The activity must require the students to understand the readings well enough to translate the information to another medium. ***The leadership group must meet ahead of class to design the activity.***

Option 2.) Small Group Discussion

Each person in the leadership group will individually write three questions to inspire discussion, then ***the group will meet, before the class on Tuesday***, and talk through the readings, as per their questions. The Leadership group will combine redundant questions and possibly create new questions based on themes they identify in the readings. In class the leadership group will break everyone into small groups and the small groups will work through the questions the leadership group designed. The Leadership group will then guide a whole class discussion. This discussion must address the theme listed in the syllabus written in **bold** type in the description of the **student group activity**.

Thursdays I will speak briefly (20 minutes) on the book readings for the week, then I will guide a discussion/activity based on the reading.

The last day of class is March 31th, the Thursday before spring break.

The Work

Reading Responses

For all the readings, both the selections from the reader and the books, all students will pull from each day's reading a quote they feel is especially compelling and write a paragraph about their choice. **Bring this to class** as I may ask you about your quote in discussion. **Put the date of the Reading Response on top of the page. This must be handed in on the day we discuss the reading**

Lecture Reactions

On Mondays we will have a presentation or performance. You should take notes and at the end of class write a one-paragraph reaction. The reaction should be half re-cap (what happened,) and half your conclusions (what you think about what you heard), **Put the date on top of the page**. You will have 5 minutes to do this.

PAPERS

Topic Papers

Undergraduates will write two 4 - page topic papers (2 pages, single-spaced, double-sided). **You will choose two of the three assigned papers**, due dates and details are in the class schedule. That means you can write a paper on a specific crop and its historical ramifications (pt.1), or you can analyze an artistic treatment of farmers and farming – this could be fine art, music, poetry, literature or film (pt.2), or you can take on a specific piece of farmer philosophy (pt.3). Whichever two of the three topics you choose, do not write about something or someone we have already discussed in class. That means you will take on a crop, element of agriculture, or a piece of art, or thought, that we have not talked about in class. I am happy to offer paper suggestions for any of these topics. Due date details are in the course schedule, as are a points breakdown for how the papers will be graded.

Book papers

Undergraduates will write two 4 page papers (2 pages, single-spaced, double-sided), one paper for each book. I will describe the specific nature of the assignment when the papers are formally assigned 2/25, and 3/31.

Graduate Student Increment

Graduate students will write a 5 page topic paper for each of the three parts of the class, and a 5 page paper on each of the two books (two papers total). These papers should link the books to historical themes discussed in lecture and demonstrate some original thought.

Grading

Undergraduates

The papers: (30points per paper x 2) 60 points

Weekly readings quotes and Lecture/presentation responses: (26 responses X 2 points per response = 52 points

Book essays: (30 points per essay x 2) 60 points,

Class participation (your role in A Student Activity, plus contributions to class): 18 points.

Total points for the class: 190. Grading is in increments of 10%

Graduate students

The papers: (30 points per paper x 3) 90 points

Weekly readings quote and Lecture/presentation responses: (26 responses X 2 points per response = 52 points

Book essays: (30 points per essay x 3) 90 points,

Class participation: 18 points.

Total points for the class: 250. Grading is in increments of 10%

Participation

There are a lot of points in this class for participation. Most days we will do some type of activity that requires you to talk with your peers in small groups and occasionally to the whole class. Everyone will also have an opportunity to lead a Tuesday discussion of the readings.

Participation means your involvement in leading class discussions, your contribution to those discussions, and your ability to engage in the small group activities. If you are an extremely shy person, and feel you cannot do this, let me know and we will make other arrangements. In order to do well in class participation, you absolutely must come to class, pay attention to the lectures, do the readings and demonstrate, through commentary and action, that you have thought about what you have read and heard. Good comments will make connections between the readings, lectures, and your life. In small group activities the room should be noisy, and you should be part of that.

Readings

You need to purchase two books: The Shepherd's Life, by James Rebanks and Farmer, Rancher, Fisherman, by Miriam Horn. All of the other readings are on reserve available in hard copy and I will try for e res too. My strong suggestion is for you to copy a complete set of the reserve readings and put them in a binder. They can do this for you right there at the library. I understand that there is a cost associated with this, that's why I am hoping we can put the readings on e res as well. Bring the binder to class so you can reference the readings in discussion.

Expectations on Written Work

Culture and Agriculture is a 400 level class. The workload may not be tremendous, but I expect a high level of quality in your writing! Best strategy, edit your work 2X before you hand it in, use active verbs, active voice, specific details and no rookie writing mistakes please. These types of mistakes will cause the grades on your papers to drop. I am including an important snippet here from the Provost's page:

IV. ACADEMIC CONDUCT

Students must practice academic honesty.

A. Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. Academic misconduct is defined as all forms of academic dishonesty, including but not limited to:

1. **Plagiarism:** Representing another person's words, ideas, data, or materials as one's own.

Class Schedule

1/22: Lecture: Introduction, and A High-Speed History of American Agriculture

1/23 : **NO CLASS BUT READ ANYWAY** READER:, pp. 1-53. Transcripts from the 2013 documentary, *The Farm Crisis*, and the chapter, *Triage*, from the book, The Worst Hard Time, by Timothy Egan

1/25: Reading discussion from 1/23, and Book discussion: *This Blessed Earth*, by Ted Genoways, pp 1-57

Part 1: Crops, and the Arc of History

1/29: Lecture: Cotton, The Rise and Fall of the South and the Great Migration

1/30: READER: pp. 55-91. Selections from the books, The Warmth of Other Suns, by Isabel Wilkerson, American Hunger, by Richard Wright, and Between the World and Me, by Ta-nehisi Coates

Student Group Activity #1: Convey The Great Migration

2/1 Book Discussion: *This Blessed Earth*, pp 58-115

2/5 Lecture: Lecture: Coffee, Subversive Culture and The Symbol of Globalization

2/ 6 READER: Pp. 93-120. Article, Think Seattle, Act Globally, by James Lyons, from the Journal, Cultural Studies, Vol.19, No. 1, 2005; Article, The Dark Side of Globalization: Why Seattle's 1999 Protesters Were Right, from the magazine, The Atlantic, Jan 6, 2014

Student Group Activity #2; Globalization, Localization, and Dissent in 2018. Why local, how does globalization fit in to your version of a better world, and what is your message for change?

2/8 Book Discussion: *This Blessed Earth*, pp 116 -163

2/12 Moonshine; From NASCAR to Opioids, and the effect on the south

2/13 READER: pp. 121-150. Legalize it All, by Dan Bam, Harpers magazine, April 2016; Opioid Painkiller Prescribing, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, July 2014; Fighting Obamacare, Many Red States Find Fewer Tools to Fight the Opioid Epidemic, LA Times, June 18, 2016

Student Group Activity #2 ; Should we? And, Why the southern link: moonshine, red states and opioids

2/15 *This Blessed Earth*, 164-211

2/19 Be presidential while you're not at school, because its Presidents' day **NO CLASS**

2/20 Lecture: Modern Meat; the story of Fremont Nebraska. Post-lecture we factionalize and fight it out
READER: Who Gets to Live in Fremont, Nebraska. From Slate, Dec. 6, 2017. Pp 151-168

Paper 1 Assigned

Write 3 pages (2 pages double-sided, single-spaced + 1 page, single-sided) on the historical ramifications of the cultivation of a specific crop, or other element of agricultural practice. This treatment should be similar to our discussions of cotton, coffee, moonshine, or modern meat production. You pick a crop (or other element of ag), that we have not discussed in class, and then

describe what happened because the crop was grown, used, irrigated, eaten etc., as it was, and why this is important.

Paper is worth 30 points: 10 points for your description of how the crop was grown, or agricultural practice was implemented, 10 points for a description of what happened, and 10 points for an explanation of why those consequences are important. Due 2/27

2/22. Book Discussion: *This Blessed Earth*, pp 212-222

Book Paper, This Blessed Earth, Due 3/1

Part 2: Artistic Commentary on Agricultural Life

2/26 1000 years of Farmer Poems, w/Roger Dunsmore and Josh

Paper 1 DUE

2/27 Lecture/performance, Marco Littig, from Blues to Jazz: The Great Migration in Music, from the Delta to Chicago. READER, pp. 169-177 selection from Deep Blues, by Robert Palmer, 1981

3/1 Book Discussion: *Changing Season: A Father, A Daughter, A Family Farm*, by David Mas Masumoto, and Nikiko Masumoto: read from “Preface” through “How to French Plow”

Book Paper, The Shepherd’s Life, DUE

3/5, Philip Burgess poems and stories

READER: pp. 179-188. Burgess’ poems

3/6 Live Art and Activist Storytelling. READER: pp. 189-193. Worksheet, Telling Your Public Story, by Marshal Ganz, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard, 2007; View,

We tell stories

3/8 Book Discussion: *Changing Season; A Father, A Daughter, A Family Farm*: read from: “The Scent of Raisins” through “Thinking Slow”

PAPER 2 ASSIGNED: Write 3 pages (2 pages double-sided, single-spaced + 1 page, single-sided) on an artist we have not discussed in class who has taken on agriculture, farmers or agrarian life, describe her work, how it has been influential, and why you feel the work is compelling. If possible include samples. If you need help choosing an artist, let me know. I’m happy to help.

Paper is worth 30 points: 10 points for a description of the artist and their work, 10 points for how the artist has been influential, to other artists or to shaping public opinion, give evidence for your claims, and 10 points for an explanation of why you personally feel this artist, art, or story is compelling. See also general expectations on written work above. Due 3/15

Part 3: Farmer Philosophy

3/12 Lecture: Localism, Amenities for the Creative Class, and the Rise of Missoula’s Food Scene
Your Town’s Story (w special appearances by food justice and food sovereignty)

3/13 READER: pp.. 195-238. *The Creative Class?* Op Ed, by Malik Yakini, from The Michigan Citizen 11/23/2014; *Gentrification and the Urban Garden*; by Lauren Markham, from The New Yorker 5/21/14; civileats.com/2015/09/03/why-food-belongs-in-our-discussions-of-race/*Evolution or Gentrification:*

Selections from the book Dismantling Racism, by Joseph Barndt

Student Group Activity #3 : Listen to Placemakers Podcast, w Majora Carter. Answer questions: Is urban ag gentrification, how do race, power and privilege play a role, and does development-oriented change have to go badly for pre-gentrification residents?

3/15 Book Discussion: *Changing Season; A Father, A Daughter, A Family Farm* read from, “The Art of Pruning” through “Nikiko’s Field Note; A Farm Woman”

PAPER 2 DUE

3/19 Lecture: Albert Borgmann’s Focal Practices. Keeping it Real: Local vs Global vs Cyber

3/20 READER pp. 239-251 *The Whole Horse* by Wendell Berry, from *Fatal Harvest Reader*, 2002, by Andrew Kimbrell, and Forward to, An Agrarian Reading of the Bible, by Wendell Berry, from An Agrarian Reading of the Bible by Ellen Davis, 2008

Student Group Activity #4: Is Urban ag Agrarian? Can we be Agrarian non-farmers, what would that look like in daily life?

3/22 Book Discussion: *Changing Season; A Father, A Daughter, A Family Farm*; read from “Feminist Farmer through the last piece of the book, “The Farmer’s Heart” **Book Paper Assigned. Due in my box 4/5**

PART 3 PAPER ASSIGNED: Write 3 pages (2 pages double-sided, single-spaced + 1 page, single-sided) on a philosopher’s take on farmers, agrarianism, or agricultural life. You choose the writer. They don’t have to be a classical philosopher (but certainly can be), they can be a novelist, essayist, etc., so long as 1.) you can clearly describe their beliefs/arguments and 2.) we did not already consider them in class. The paper should detail your philosopher’s position, and describe why this is important, to you and for the greater good.

Paper is worth 30 points: 10 points, explanation of their position or argument, with examples, 10 points, why is this argument compelling to you, and, 10 points, how would the world be better if these ideas were put into practice (the greater good). See also general expectations on written work above. PAPER DUE 4/5 IN MY BOX IN EVST