SOC 129D: Food, Sustainability, and Culture  
Summer Session 2022

Monday / Wednesday 12 - 1:20pm  
McCullough Building, Room 126

Instructor:

Belinda Ramírez, PhD (they/them)  
bcr@stanford.edu
Office hours: MW 1:30-2:30pm or by appointment, Sweet Hall 221D

Course Description

Today we have entered a new geological epoch—the Anthropocene—characterized by unprecedented human alteration of global processes. This fast-paced global change both affects and is affected by agriculture. Concurrent food, energy, water, and climate crises, and a global rise in obesity amidst widespread hunger and undernutrition, have re-focused public attention on the deficiencies and complexities of the global food system. The dominant industrial food system has increasingly well-documented social, ecological, and health-related costs. Yet, a diversity of “alternative” food systems demonstrates that agriculture can be resource conserving, equitable, and health promoting.

Increasing food system sustainability requires interdisciplinarity along multiple dimensions: reconnecting agriculture with ecological systems, reshaping food production systems to be more nutrition-sensitive, and ensuring that policies and institutions that impact the food system safeguard social equity and the environment. This course will offer a unique opportunity for students to gain interdisciplinary knowledge of food systems. This course will incorporate multiple perspectives, from the local to the global level, as well as an understanding of how those perspectives are underpinned by different epistemologies and value systems. We will assess the sustainability of our daily food choices and their consequences and will develop competencies and cognitive skills in the area of food system sustainability including critical and systems thinking, creativity and analytical ability.

Learning Outcomes

The goal of this course is to increase student commitment to valuing sustainability, equity, and justice in our local, regional, national, and global food systems. By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1) Describe the major problems currently stressing global, regional, and local food systems, including risks and vulnerabilities associated with climate change
2) Analyze how food systems are composed of (give shape to and impact) social, economic, political and cultural systems as well as ecosystems, soil, water, and Earth’s climate
3) Explain how food justice, food security, food sovereignty, and food democracy are conceptually framed and represented in scholarly, activist, and public discourse
4) Identify key characteristics of our contemporary global food system
5) Analyze problem and solution narratives related to our food system, and more specifically, how the stories we tell about a food system problem affect how what solutions seem possible
6) Identify how power asymmetries manifest and are reinforced in and through food systems
7) Discuss the diverse and culturally situated ways people think about “good food” and critically reflect on your own culturally situated understandings of “good food”
8) Communicate about the complexity of food systems to diverse audiences, including classmates and the general public
9) Compare and contrast the popular food movement with movements for food justice and food sovereignty
10) Provide examples of transformative food systems work happening at the state, national, and international levels
11) Demonstrate ability to constructively critique and contribute to food systems initiatives happening at the state and national level
12) Critiques and express concern with industrial agriculture, including: biodiversity loss; energy use; corporate consolidation; greenhouse gas emissions; climate change; the impact of chemical fertilizers and pesticides on human, animal, and ecosystem health; social and environmental justice; labor; and unfair trade relations
13) Analyze alternatives to the current U.S. food system, including: organic agriculture, permaculture, agroecology, and food justice
14) Understand the influence of social structures (e.g., race, class, gender, and ethnicity) on people’s access to food and the means of producing food
15) Be able to succinctly summarize why sustainable agriculture is not merely desirable, but necessary in order to meet coming global challenges
16) Understand how marketing and labeling impact food practices and individual nutrition

Important Dates to Remember

• July 1: Deadline to add/drop a class
• July 22: Term withdrawal deadline
• July 29: Course withdrawal deadline; change of grading basis deadline
• August 11: Last opportunity to arrange an Incomplete for a course

Course Requirements

The assignments for this course are meant to serve as ways for you to reflect upon and synthesize what you have learned in the lectures, discussions, and course readings. The goal of this course is
for you to understand, process, and critically reflect on the material, not to memorize or repeat what was said in class or the readings. All assignments must be completed to pass the course.

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<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Leadership</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>rolling</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflection Paper #1</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7/1/22</td>
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<td>Reflection Paper #2</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7/15/22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflection Paper #3</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7/29/22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Project Précis</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>8/5/22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Completed Research Project</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>8/13/22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance/participation</td>
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**Discussion Leader (15%)**
Each student will be responsible for serving as a class discussion leader once during the summer session. Assignment of class leader responsibilities will occur during the first class session. Discussion leadership entails two parts and will comprise 15% of your overall course grade:

1) A brief (2-4 minutes) opening oral presentation highlighting the most important two or three points of the readings under consideration. Please note that all readings in a particular session are related thematically, so the opening oral presentation should seek to succinctly synthesize some of the material.

2) Development of one or two questions intended to stimulate class discussion after the brief opening oral presentation. Questions should be thought- and discussion-provoking.

**Reflection Papers (30%)**
Throughout the summer session you will write three reflection papers. The goal of these is to integrate what you experience and learn through readings, lecture, films, and class discussions. Your reflections should offer analysis, comparisons, and critiques of ideas, rather than simply recap a discussion or the argument of an author. Responses can be creative in form but should include a synthesis of how the articles relate to each other and your critical take on the readings. You must reference a minimum of two readings from the course in each paper, though strong papers will typically synthesize ideas and arguments from a larger number of sources. Outside references will not count towards this requirement. Reflections should be approximately 2-pages in length (500-750 words) and each is worth 10% of your overall course grade. These will be submitted via Canvas on July 1, July 15, and July 29.
**Food and Sustainability Research Project (35%)**

Time limitations prevent us from covering the exhaustive range of topics associated with sustainability and culture as they relate to food and food systems. Therefore, each student will select one food systems related topic they are interested in or passionate about, design a research question around that topic, research the question(s), and write a 6-8 page (double spaced) essay on the topic. As a class we will develop a list of potential topics. Possibilities include, but are not limited to: gender and farming, genetically modified foods, food safety, hunger and food insecurity, biofuels, foraging, the restaurant industry, and specific sustainable agricultural practices from around the world. You will complete a one-page précis to help you begin thinking and writing about your topic. This précis will be submitted via Canvas on August 5, and you will receive 5% of the total research project score just for completing it.

For the completed research project, you will need to cite at least 3 course readings in addition to any outside sources you use. You must submit your research paper by 11:59pm on Saturday, August 13 via Canvas. The completed final project is worth 30% of your course grade.

**Late Policy:** Assignments must be uploaded to Canvas as PDFs or Word documents by the stated due dates. Work turned in late without having communicated this with me beforehand may be marked down, and very late work may not receive credit or may lead to your needing to withdraw from the course during Week 6.

**Credit Received/No Credit:** Students taking this grading option need to achieve 70% and complete all assignments for a Pass.

**Extra Credit:** Every week you will have the option to attend a film screening related to topics covered in the course. I highly encourage you to attend these if you are able. As an incentive, you receive extra credit for just showing up. These will be held in the same room used for class sessions, McCullough Building Room 126.

**Attendance and Participation**

This is a lecture and discussion-based course and as such a large portion of your grade is based in attendance and participation. Your participation is key. This course is for you, and only you can make this class a rich learning experience for all of us. I strive to make our classroom a safe and fearless space for all of us. Come with an open and receptive mind, ready to learn.

Attendance and participation are expected for class sessions, so please arrive on time. I will take attendance and evaluate your participation. Participation means contributing during class discussion, but it also means being attentive (e.g. not distracted on your phone or doing homework for another class). At any point in the quarter, please talk to me if you have an idea about how to make the classroom feel like a safer space to share your thoughts and experiences.
Participation can take a variety of forms: asking questions as well as answering them, responding to and furthering your classmates’ points in constructive ways, etc. Bringing in ideas from outside class, like insights from other courses, articles you’ve read, and your own experience, can also be excellent ways to contribute to our discussions. To prepare to participate, consider the title of the class and the key concepts in the syllabus. Jot down some of the points made in the reading about those ideas.

Slides and other presentation materials from lecture are posted on Canvas after class. If you miss a lecture, please check with another student about what was covered in class before contacting me about missed content. A student who misses class should not expect the professor to go over all the material again with them individually. If you miss a class session, you may be expected to do additional make-up work. You are allowed to miss one lecture with no consequence to your attendance grade. Any absences beyond the one will result in a proportional attendance grade reduction. Insufficient attendance will result in not passing the class. Full attendance will be graded as a bonus. Together, attendance and participation are worth 20% of your final grade.
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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Material Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>6/20</td>
<td>Food systems and climate change</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/23</td>
<td>Extra credit film screening @ 1pm, McCullough 126</td>
<td><em>Food, Inc.</em> (2009)</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Reference</td>
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International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food) special report on the food price crisis. Skim through and pay attention to the bolded topics. |
McDonell, Emma. 2017. “Can Markets Save Agricultural Diversity?: Quinoa as a Case Study.” EnviroSociety. [URL]  
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>6/30</td>
<td>Extra credit film screening</td>
<td>@ 1pm, McCullough 126</td>
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<td><em>Wasted!</em> (2017)</td>
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<td>7/1</td>
<td>Reflection Paper #1</td>
<td>Due on Canvas by 5pm</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>7/4</td>
<td>No class — Independence Day holiday</td>
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**Social movements for food and agriculture**

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<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>7/7</td>
<td>Extra credit film screening</td>
<td>@ 1pm, McCullough 126</td>
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<td><em>A Place at the Table</em> (2012)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>7/11</td>
<td>Food and seed sovereignty</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Details</td>
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| | | Philpott, Tom, Raj Patel, and Rebecca McInroy, hosts. [“Episode 29: Tomatoes.” The Secret Ingredient Podcast, 58:46.](#)  
| 7/14 | Extra credit film screening @ 1pm, McCullough 126 | Food Chains (2014) |
| 7/15 | Reflection Paper #2 | Due on Canvas by 5pm |

### Sustainable food production

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<th>#</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Details</th>
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| 5 | 7/18 | Tools for analyzing food/ag sustainability | Brooks Emily. 2014. [“The Ultimate Confusion: Defining Sustainable Agriculture.” New Sustainability Inc.](#)  
| | | | IPES-Food & ETC Group. 2021. [“A Long Food Movement: Transforming Food Systems by 2045.” Executive Summary.](#)  

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>References</th>
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<tr>
<td>7/21</td>
<td>Extra credit film screening @ 1pm, McCullough 126</td>
<td>Seed: The Untold Story (2016)</td>
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<td>7/28</td>
<td>Extra credit film screening @ 1pm, McCullough 126</td>
<td>Black Gold (2006)</td>
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**7/29** | Reflection Paper #3 | Due on Canvas by 5pm
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**7** | 8/1 | Urban agriculture, home gardens, and cooperatives

**8/2** | Extra credit film screening @ 1pm, McCullough 126 | *King Corn* (2007)

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**Sustainable food consumption**

**8/3** | Crafting a sustainable food strategy | Carrington, Damlan and George Arnett. 2014. “Clear Differences between Organic and Non-Organic Food, Study Finds.” *The Guardian.* [URL]

**8/5** | Research Project Précis | Due on Canvas by 5pm
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading/Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>8/13</td>
<td>Food Systems Research Project</td>
<td>Due on Canvas by 11:59pm</td>
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*This syllabus is open to modification throughout the summer session; in the case that the syllabus changes, students will be informed in class and via email as soon as possible.*
Additional Resources

Food- and Farming-related Podcasts

- GastroPod
- Racist Sandwich
- The Splendid Table
- The Secret Ingredient
- BBC’s Food Programme
- Just Food
- Bite
- Gravy
- Sapiens
- Plate of the Union
- Real Food Reads
- The Food Chain
- The Urban Farm Podcast
- Heritage Radio Network
- Food Sleuth
- Delicious Revolution
- The Sporkful
- Cultivating Place
- Point of Origin
- Mushroom Revival Podcast
- Food by Design
- Home Cooking
- Radical Queers

- Berry Good Talk
- ATTRA - Voices from the Field
- Thriving Farmer Podcast
- Lunch Agenda
- The Farmers Beet
- Flipping the Table
- Mother Earth News and Friends
- Female Farmer Project
- No-Till Market Garden Podcast
- Food Talk
- In Her Boots
- Tent Talk
- Farmer to Farmer
- Young Farmers Podcast
- Toasted Sister
- Burnt Toast
- Farm to Table Talk
- Ox Tales
- Deconstructing Dinner: Reconstructing our Food System
- Good Food
- Eat This

Food-related news and commentary

- Civil Eats
- New Food Economy
- Food Politics (Marion Nestle’s site)
- The Salt (NPR)

- Food Tank
- Food and Environment Reporting Network (The FERN)
- The Counter

Other Policies

Course Expectations

Workload: University policy is for each credit unit to correspond to 3 hours of combined in- and out-of-class work per week. This 3-unit class is therefore meant to have 9 hours per week of combined in- and out-of-class work. With 3 hours of class per week, you should expect around 3 hours of out-of-class preparation per session.

Accommodations: If you find yourself facing challenges that make it difficult for you to keep up with the coursework, please let me know and we can figure out a way to support you.
Absence policy: If students miss more than one class session, they will coordinate with me to complete any necessary make-up work. Beyond the percentage of the final grade, students must have sufficient attendance to pass the class. Students who may miss a significant amount of class due to illness or other factors should contact the instructor as soon as possible.

Class Norms on Discussion
Talking about sustainability, food systems, and culture often necessitates discussing highly charged topics: race, class, injustice, exclusion, structural inequality, and past and present fights for autonomy. Topics covered in this class can also elicit feelings of despair or hopelessness in the face of frightening data about climate change. My goal as your instructor is to make this class a space defined by mutual respect as we work together through the topics of the course and the emotions that come forward. In our discussions, students should use these principles as a guide to respectful interactions:

- Treat the ideas of our readings and discussions as open to debate, scrutiny, and new, potentially contradictory evidence
- Be intentional in your use of language, especially on highly personal and/or sensitive topics
- Assume good intentions on the part of others

Grading Policies
Final grades are calculated using the 100-point system. 97-100% = A+, 94-96% = A, 90-93% = A-, 87-89% = B+, 84-86% = B, 80-83% = B-, 77-79 = C+, 74-76% = C, 70-73% = C-, 67-69% = D+, 64-66% = D, 60-63% = D-. Grades below a D- (below 60%) receive a NP (not passed). For those taking the class CR/NR, you must achieve at least 70% in the class to receive credit.

Late work policy: If you need more time to complete an assignment, please let me know in advance by email. Work turned in late without an extension may be marked down, and very late work may not receive credit, or may lead to your needing to withdraw from the course during Week 6.

Incompletes: A grade of I (Incomplete) allows you to complete unfinished work after the quarter has ended if unexpected personal difficulties like illness or family emergency prevent you from doing so. University policy is that, in order to be eligible for an Incomplete, you must have “satisfactorily completed a substantial part of the course work” and request the Incomplete before the last meeting of class, August 11.

Course Privacy Statement
As noted in the University’s recording and broadcasting courses policy, students may not audio or video record class meetings without permission from the instructors (and guest speakers, when applicable). These policies protect the privacy rights of instructors and students, and the intellectual property and other rights of the university. Students who need further accommodations should contact the Office of Accessible Education.
Learning Resources
In addition to in-class assistance, Stanford’s academic resources include:

- Hume Center for Writing and Speaking tutors
- Academic Skills Coaching (time management, effective studying, etc)
- Tutoring for Student-Athletes
- Support for Learning Differences
- Subject Tutoring and Language Practice
- Summer Academic Resource Center (SARC)

If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, services are available. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus here.

The Honor Code
You are responsible for understanding and following the University’s Honor Code policy and must make proper use of citations of sources for all assignments. For tips on how to uphold the honor code in an online learning environment, read these recommendations.

Academic Accommodation
Stanford is committed to providing equal educational opportunities for differently-abled students. All students of varying abilities are a valued and essential part of the Stanford community. We welcome you to our class.

If you experience any form of differing ability, please register with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate your needs, support appropriate and reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Academic Accommodation Letter for faculty. To get started, or to re-initiate services, please visit oae.stanford.edu.

If you already have an Academic Accommodation Letter, I invite you to share your letter with me. Academic Accommodation Letters should be shared with your instructor at the earliest possible opportunity (preferably before Week 2) so that I may partner with you and OAE to identify any barriers to access and inclusion that might be encountered in your experience of this course.

Communication
Email communication is preferred. Please note that it may take up to 48 hours to get a response to your email from your professor. Please include SOC 129D in the subject line of your email. If you have a question, please first consult documents on Canvas (e.g. syllabus, assignment instructions). If you can’t find an answer, ask another student. If you’re still stumped, then ask your professor.
Classroom Behavior
I consider the classroom to be a place where you will be treated with respect, and we welcome individuals of all ages, backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, genders, gender identities, gender expressions, national origins, religious affiliations, sexual orientations, abilities, and other visible and nonvisible differences. All members of this class are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment for every other member of the class. However, because this course deals with charged subject matter, do not expect to feel comfortable at all times. Be open to hearing various points of view that may be contentious or conflict with others, and expect to be challenged mentally and emotionally.

Please attend to all university policy and classroom etiquette procedures. Those not heeding the policies will be asked to leave the classroom immediately to maintain the learning environment. Please arrive on time, be attentive, and be respectful for all class meetings. Be mindful of how much time and space you are occupying. Try not to interrupt others when they have the floor. Students who are habitually disruptive in class by talking out of turn, bullying other students, or engaging in other unprofessional behavior may suffer a reduction in their final class grade through a withdrawal of attendance and participation points.

While in class, only use electronics for the purpose of taking notes or referring to this course’s readings and projects. Do not leave the classroom or pack up until the end of the time period, or until otherwise released (it’s quite rude and disruptive otherwise).

Stanford recognizes the inherent dignity of all individuals and promotes respect for all people. Hostility toward other students will not be tolerated. Free speech does not permit harassment, intimidation, threats, or other behaviors that impede the learning of other students or the work of faculty and staff. Please refer to the Stanford Policies and Guidance.

Preferred Pronouns
I will gladly honor your request to address you by your chosen name and/or gender pronouns. Please advise me of this preference early in the quarter so that I may make appropriate notes on my records.

Religious Holidays
Students who miss work for the purpose of religious observance are permitted to make up this work. Students should submit to me, in writing by the end Week 2, their documented religious holiday schedule for the quarter.

Title IX Compliance
Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is the federal law that prohibits sex discrimination in educational institutions that are recipients of federal funds. Students have the right to an educational environment that is free from harassment and discrimination. Sexual misconduct and physical and/or psychological abuse will not be tolerated. This includes sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking. As an instructor, I am committed to
promoting a safe and healthy environment, and should I learn of any sexual misconduct or physical and/or psychological abuse, I am required to report the matter to the Title IX Coordinator. Stanford's Sexual Harassment Support and Services provides information and assistance to students, faculty, and staff regarding reports of bias, discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, and sexual violence. Should you wish to speak to a confidential source, you may contact the Confidential Support Team (CST; business line: 650-736-6933; 24/7 hotline: 650-725-9955; https://vaden.stanford.edu/cst) or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS; 650-723-3785; 24/7 hotline: 650-723-3785; https://vaden.stanford.edu/caps) at Vaden Health Services. There is also a YWCA @ Stanford group for free and confidential support (408-649-7686; 24/7 support line: 800-572-2782; stanford@yourywca.org; https://yourywca.stanford.edu) and students may receive confidential assistance at the Office for Religious Life (ORL; 650-723-1762; religious-life@stanford.edu; https://orsl.stanford.edu). More information can be found on the Stanford SHARE Title IX Office website: https://sharetitleix.stanford.edu