Course Description: This course examines agrarian thinking and food justice movements in the United States through literature, essays, and film. We will learn about the political philosophy of democratic agrarianism, particularly as articulated by the New Agrarianism movement, and the contributions of indigenous, enslaved, and immigrant peoples to agricultural practices and foodways. Throughout the course we will pay close attention to the rust belt as a location of contemporary work for food justice. Questions we will consider include: What is the relationship between agriculture, citizenship, and democracy? What kinds of ethical and political thinking grow out of im/migrant labor communities? How can the local foods and urban farming movements work to dismantle racism and white supremacy? Can urban farming help communities resist gentrification? How do we define and practice “food justice,” “food sovereignty,” and “food democracy”?

Course Objectives:

- to understand the philosophy, ethics, and concept of citizenship in American agrarianism
- to examine the commitment to a “sense of place” and privileging of the local in the New Agrarianism, and how this commitment reflects and structures social relations of race, gender, class, and nation
- to develop an understanding of local foods, urban agriculture, and food justice in relation to long-standing social movements for environmental justice and farmworker’s rights
- to improve critical thinking through class discussion and writing assignments
- to learn from food justice organizations and activists through class readings, media, and guest speakers

Required texts:

- Jane Smiley, *A Thousand Acres*
- Helena María Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus*
- Documentaries: *Homecoming, The Harvest, The Garden, Soul Food Junkies*
- Readings posted on Blackboard

Recommended:

- Robert Gottlieb and Anupama Joshi, *Food Justice*
- Seth Holmes, *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies*

Course requirements:

Reading Responses: A reading response is a sharp, concisely written analysis of all texts assigned for that class day (including films). Your response should explicate the theses and arguments of the texts, analyze their rhetorical approaches (written or visual), and tie the readings into wider class themes. Pose 2 well-formulated questions at the end of the response, and email them to the class through the Blackboard link. 2 pages, due at the beginning of class on the day the texts are discussed. 5 responses total are due during the semester; at least 2 are due before midterm. No late reading responses will be accepted.

Midterm Essay: A 6–8 page essay in response to class texts and discussions. Questions will be posted to Blackboard at least 1 week before essays are due. Outside research is welcome but not required.

Final essay: A 10–12 page paper, due at our class exam time, about a topic you choose. This includes:

Prospectus for your final paper: 2 pages with annotated bibliography of 5 outside sources, due 11/14. The prospectus should articulate your thesis, provide a context (who else is talking about this question?) and explain its significance (what contribution does your paper make to thinking about the issue?). Annotations of sources should be 200-300 words, articulate the thesis and argument of the work, and explain its relevance to your topic.

Peer Review: Peer review is an essential component of professional scholarship. For this assignment, you will exchange rough drafts of your final papers with one other student in class on 12/9. You will be graded on how complete your draft is; the more complete the draft is, the more useful this process will be to you.
Participation: You will be evaluated on the consistency and thoughtfulness of your engagement with class concepts and on your alert and respectful attention to fellow class members. Please bring your texts to class.

Discussion leadership: Students are asked to lead discussion of the readings/films for that day. Please meet with me ahead of time to plan your strategy.

Discussion questions: Please email 1–2 questions for each guest speaker 24 hours before class.

Grading Criteria:

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Course policies:

- **Honor Code:** Oberlin College’s student-created, student-run Honor Code is vital to the integrity of the work that all of us do at the institution. Acknowledging the influence of others and understanding the academic customs of showing one’s sources are highly valued skills of liberal arts learning. You can find the code online at the college web site: [www.oberlin.edu/students/links-life/rules-regs.html](http://www.oberlin.edu/students/links-life/rules-regs.html). One requirement of the code is that you must write the following statement on every assignment: "I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment." You must also sign your name to that statement. Typing your full name after the Honor Code will serve as a signature if you submit an assignment electronically via your email or Blackboard accounts.

- **Educational Access:** I am committed to structuring a course in which all students can learn, and I am working to create an inclusive learning environment. Please let me know if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in dis/ability-related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact Disability Services in Peters G–27/G–28.

- **Late Work:** If you need an extension, please contact me at least 24 hours in advance.

- **Attendance:** Attendance at all classes is expected.

- **Format:** Please format all work for this class in 12 point Times font with 1-inch margin on all sides, double-spaced, pages numbered, and include a works cited page.
Course content and trigger warnings: Please be aware that some issues discussed in this course may be disturbing and/or “triggering.” I cannot always anticipate those triggers, but I will always respect any student’s need to take care of themselves. In addition, I am always available to talk about class content. Please also note that discussing questions of power, privilege, and inequity can be challenging both intellectually and personally. I hope that we will be able to create a classroom constituted by mutual respect and willingness to learn from one another.

Tentative schedule of readings and assignments
(Student to change. Changes will be announced in class.)

DEMOCRATIC AGRARIANISM

Week 1
T 9/1 Introduction to the course; the pastoral and Georgic aesthetic modes; democratic agrarianism; Jefferson, “Notes on the State of Virginia”
R 9/3 Berry, “A Defense of the Family Farm,” “The Pleasures of Eating”

Week 2
T 9/8 Pollan, *The Omnivore’s Dilemma* (chs 6, 8); “Out of the Kitchen, Onto the Couch”; Bittman, “Farmer’s Market Values”
R 9/10 *A Thousand Acres* (Books 1 and 2)

Week 3
T 9/15 *A Thousand Acres* (Books 3, 4, 5, and Epilogue)

BLACK AGRARIANISM


Week 4
T 9/22 Student discussion leaders: the politics of memory

IM/MIGRANT LABOR

R 9/24 Holmes, Introduction and ch 2, *Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies*; Guthman, “Interview with Seth Holmes”

Week 5
T 9/29 Gray, introduction and ch 2, *Labor and the Locavore*
R 10/1 Student discussion leaders: child labor in the US
Film: *The Harvest*; Berger, “Long Days in the Fields”; Gottlieb and Joshi; “Growing and Producing Food”

Week 6
Midterm questions posted to Blackboard
M 10/5 7:00 p.m. film, “Ghosts of Amistad” + Q&A with Marcus Rediker
T 10/6 *Under the Feet of Jesus* (Books 1 and 2)
R 10/8 no class—Janet at ASA

Week 7
T 10/13 *Under the Feet of Jesus* (finish)
R 10/15 no class—Janet at Climate Change symposium

Week 8
Fall Recess Midterm evaluations posted to Blackboard
FOOD JUSTICE

Week 9
T 10/27  Guest lecture: Chie Sakakibara
Sakakibara, “Climate Change and Cultural Survival in the Arctic”

R 10/29  Go over midterm evaluations

Week 10
T 11/3  Student discussion leaders: sovereignty as decolonization

R 11/5  Guest lecture: Kyle Powys Whyte, Citizen Potowatomi Nation, Prof of Philosophy, MSU
Whyte, “Indigenous Food Systems, Ej, and Settler-Industrial States”

Week 11
T 11/8  film, The Garden; Gottlieb and Joshi, “Growing Justice”
F 11/11  Prospectus due by email

Week 12
T 11/15  Student discussion leaders: gentrification
Martinez, Power at the Roots, ch 2; http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/12/nyregion/as-neighborhoods-gentrify-co-ops-find-they-are-not-to-everyones-taste.html; watch: “Gentrification and Urban Development”

THE POLITICS OF OBESITY

R 11/17  Guthman, “Teaching the Politics of Obesity”; Gottlieb and Joshi, “Accessing Food”

Week 13
T 11/24  film, Soul Food Junkies; Nettles, “Saving’ Soul Food”
R 11/26  Thanksgiving holiday--no class

Week 14
T 12/2  Jamie Oliver’s Food Revolution, episode #1; Hartigan, “Who Are These White People?”
R 12/4  Student discussion leaders: body shaming
readings TBA

Wrapping Up

Week 15
T 12/9  Peer review of final essays in class
R 12/10  class evaluations; Gottlieb and Joshi, “An Emerging Movement”

12/19  9:00 pm: final paper due by email