

CRD 298: Critical Social Science of Agriculture
Spring 2023
Monday 10:00am–1:50pm
Hunt Hall, Room 166

Instructor

Dr. Mark Cooper
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Office hours: Monday 2:10p-3:00p (Hunt Hall Courtyard, or 1335 Hart Hall)
Wednesday 11:00a-11:50a (Zoom)

Course Description

This course is an interdisciplinary seminar that uses a range of social science disciplines to examine modern agriculture. The course will emphasize the importance of social science perspectives for analyzing and critiquing existing agricultural systems. The course will also examine the role of social science approaches in the governance of agriculture and building alternative futures. Beyond attention to agriculture, the course also engages broader issues around understanding and engaging academic work from a variety of disciplines and the philosophical and methodological foundations of research in, and across, multiple disciplines. The course offers a critical study of existing agricultural systems, the problems and challenges associated with these systems, and how to envision and shape alternative futures for agriculture.

Course Objectives

There are three primary objectives for this class:

- 1) establish a sophisticated understanding of critical social science perspectives on agriculture,
- 2) acquire knowledge of key issues in agricultural systems, evaluate potential responses to these issues, and develop insight on additional or alternative responses,
- 3) improve personal capacity for engaging research and practical activities on agriculture through refinement of theoretical, analytical, and methodological skills.

Course Components

Discussion Participation	each class period	24%
Reading Responses, weeks 2-8	each _____ by _____	21% (3% each)
Discussion Leadership	twice during the quarter	20% (10% each time)
Major Assignment: Proposal	May 8	5%
Major Assignment: Presentation	June 5	10%
Major Assignment: Final	June 15	20%

Late assignments will not be accepted without prior approval.

Course Policies and Information

How This Course Works

The first week of the course is dedicated to organizing the course and a brief background discussion. The final week of the course is dedicated to student presentations.

Weeks 2 through 8 of the course are based on discussion of specific topics and readings. Each of these weeks will cover two topics, for a total of 14 topics over the course of the quarter.

Week 10 of the course will be dedicated to student presentations about their major assignment.

Students will have substantial influence over the specific topics we cover in the course. During the first course meeting we will develop a list of potential course topics, and students will vote on which specific topics they prefer to cover. Final decisions about course topics are ultimately at the discretion of the instructor.

Bring Readings to Class

Bring the week's assigned readings to class with you. Discussions will frequently refer to specific parts of the readings and you will be expected to revisit and reflect on the readings during class.

Student Support

Please consult the Student Disability Center for assistance setting up an accommodation plan.
<https://sdc.ucdavis.edu/>

Confidential and professional support for social, emotional, and psychological issues can be accessed through the Student Health and Counseling Service.
<https://shcs.ucdavis.edu/counseling-services>

The UC Davis Center for Advocacy, Resources & Education (CARE) provides confidential help if you or someone close to you has experienced sexual harassment or any form of sexual violence.
<http://care.ucdavis.edu/>

The Pantry is a student-run resource providing free food and personal items for students.
<http://thepantry.ucdavis.edu/>

Notice of the Code of Academic Conduct

The UC Davis Code of Academic Conduct exists to support high standards of behavior and to ensure fair evaluation of student learning. Students who violate the Code of Academic Conduct are subject to disciplinary sanctions that include censure, probation, suspension, deferred separation or dismissal from the University of California.

Students are responsible for knowing what constitutes a violation of the Code of Academic Conduct. Please review the Code carefully and ask the professor if you have any questions. Remember that the professor and teaching assistant are obliged to refer you to Student Support and Judicial Affairs in all cases of violation or suspected violation. The Code of Academic Conduct is available at:
<https://ossja.ucdavis.edu/code-academic-conduct>

Course Components

Discussion Participation (weekly throughout the quarter, 24%)

Group discussions are the primary component of this course. The participation of every student, every week is necessary if discussions are to be successful. If you come to class having read closely and completed the reading response, participating in discussion should be easy and enjoyable.

The goal of group discussion is to examine course topics and readings more closely, share your impressions and reactions to the course topics and readings, and learn from the perspectives and impressions of your fellow students. Successful discussions require active listening and giving full consideration and respect to other students' ideas and opinions.

You are expected to be present for every class unless your absence is approved beforehand.

Reading Responses: critiques, comments, questions (7 weeks, 21% total)

All course readings will be posted to Canvas.

In seven of the ten weeks during the quarter you will prepare reading responses that consist of critiques, comments, and questions on the week's topics. There are no reading responses due in the first or last week of the course.

Each week of class addresses two topics. You will prepare a reading response for each topic (i.e. each week's reading response will have two parts, one for each topic). Each topic's reading response should be about half of a single-spaced page – and no more than one single-spaced page. Reading responses should be written concisely and clearly, identify what you see as the readings' strengths and weaknesses at empirical and theoretical levels, and pose questions for clarification and for further discussion. Responses should demonstrate your engagement with the readings and provide a contribution to that week's discussion.

Reading responses have three purposes:

- 1) they require you to reflect on the readings and organize your thoughts before class,
- 2) they provide the framework for discussion leaders to organize how we engage the readings,
- 3) they demonstrate depth and breadth of thinking and engagement with course topics.

The objective of these responses is to generate starting points for class discussion. Responses should raise issues that you feel are worth discussing in class, including:

- identify concepts or points within the readings that you do not sufficiently understand;
- comment on parts of the readings that you agree or disagree with;
- comment on parts of the readings that you find especially enlightening;
- explore how the readings relate to your own personal experience;
- explore how the readings relate to each other;
- explore how the readings relate to readings, ideas, or issues from elsewhere in the course;
- explore how the readings relate to perspectives or research from outside the course.

Reading responses must be uploaded to Canvas each week **by _____ on _____** and will be made immediately available for the discussion leaders.

Discussion Leadership (twice during the quarter, 20%)

For each course topic (there are two topics per week) two or three students will serve as the discussion leaders. It is the discussion leaders' responsibility to organize the group discussion based on the collected reading responses, their understanding of the key issues and debates within the readings, and any additional study or review they do on the topic before class.

Major Assignment (5% + 10% + 20%)

Aside from the class discussions and weekly reading responses there is only one assignment for this course. The purpose and form of the assignment is chosen by each student in consultation with the instructor. There is substantial flexibility in the assignment; this allows each student to customize their assignment to best suit their interests, stage of graduate training, and professional aims. Examples of potential assignments include: an extended literature review, a critical review of a specific topic, a research proposal, a conference paper, a draft capstone project, or a draft journal article. The assignment has three components.

Major Assignment: Proposal (5%)

Halfway through the course you will write a description of the written assignment you plan to pursue. This should be approximately 150-250 words, and describe – in as much detail as possible – the form and the topic of your written assignment. You are encouraged to meet with the instructor to discuss the idea you will propose for the written assignment before the due date. The proposed written assignment should be uploaded to Canvas **by 11:59pm on Monday May 1.**

Major Assignment: Presentation (10%)

In the final meeting of the class each student will present findings from their major assignment to the class. Presentations should be organized, thoughtful, and well communicated, and convey a 2-3 key ideas (rather than all ideas, or a summary of ideas) learned in process of doing the written assignment. The length of presentations will depend on course enrollment, but will likely be around 6-7 minutes per student. Presentations should include a few accompanying slides or graphics. The slides/graphics for the presentation should be uploaded to the course's Google Drive folder **by 10:00am on Monday, June 5.**

Major Assignment: Final (20%)

The final component of the major assignment is a written paper, around 10-15 single spaced pages long, though the length will vary depending on the form of the assignment. Further description of the written component of the project will be provided during the quarter. The final written assignment should be uploaded to Canvas **by 5:00pm on Thursday, June 15.**

Course Topics

April 3

Course Introduction, Organization, and Brief Discussion

April 10

a: Introduction to the Social Science of Agriculture, part 1

b: Introduction to the Social Science of Agriculture, part 2

Reading response #1 due

April 17

a: Political Economies of Agriculture

b: Peasant Studies

Reading response #2 due

April 24

a: Agriculture and Development

b: Food Regimes and Financialization

Reading response #3 due

In class: discuss assignment proposals

May 1

a: Food Security, Food Crises, and Hunger

b: Governance of Farmers, Ranchers, and Landowners

Reading response #4 due

Assignment proposals due

May 8

a: Land Access and Land Ownership

b: Alternative Agricultural Systems

Reading response #5 due

May 15

a: Agriculture and Environment

b: Agriculture and Climate Change

Reading response #6 due

May 22

a: Livestock Animal Welfare

b: Meat and non-Meat

Reading response #7 due

May 29

No Class (Memorial Day)

June 5

Class Presentations

Class presentations due, 10am

June 15 (Thursday)

Final assignment due, 5pm