**Food Systems Assignments**

**Fall 2022**

**Prof. Dimitri**

There are two main assignments for the class, as described below and each worth 40 percent of your final grade. The remaining 20 percent of your grade is based on your peer review of the infographic and class participation.

**Infographic assignment** *40 percent of grade*

1. Pick one topic related to the food system; as a guideline tie your topic to one of the class themes. Infographic topic due 9/13. (turn in during class)
2. Decide whether you want to (1) present information or (2) advocate for an action. For example, if you chose food waste, the informational approach would describe food waste. An advocacy approach might focus on the actions someone could take to reduce food waste.
3. You should be able to summarize the main theme/idea of your infographic in two to three sentences.
4. Conduct basic research and collect your data. Aim to include between 3-5 elements. Note you can include more if you want, just remember to make sure every element adds to your theme.
5. Sketch out your infographic.
6. Have a classmate peer review your infographic draft. *Bring draft to class 10/4.*
7. Peer review comments due to classmates *10/18*
8. Revise and turn in (with the peer review). Don’t forget to include a title and references. *11/1*

Sample infographics

ERS, USDA. Various dates. [Infographic gallery](https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/infographic-gallery/).

# Shifflett. 2014. [INFOGRAPHIC: Interlinked U.S.-China Food Trade](https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/infographic-interlinked-us-china-food-trade) (globalization)

# Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. Undated. [Wealth Distribution.](https://www.stlouisfed.org/-/media/project/frbstl/stlouisfed/Blog/2019/August/US_Wealth_Distribution_Infographic.jpg?la=en) (equality)

# CISA. Undated. [The math behind your milk](https://www.buylocalfood.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/DairyInfographic-600x763.jpg). (farm production)

# WWF. [Food waste](https://www.wwf.org.au/Images/UserUploadedImages/408/infographic-food-waste.jpg). (environment or consumer choice, depending on your view)

# Final project: *40 percent*

The food system is a web of people and businesses that produce, distribute, and manufacture food transform agricultural commodities into food.  Also included is the consumer, who ultimately eats the food. In this course, we covered an overview of the US food system, while illuminating some of the human and environmental costs. Because the food system operates in the market, examining the economic factors that influence the decisions of firms and individuals is critical to understanding the food system.

The current form of our food system costly, and has consequences for the people involved (workers, consumers, and farmers); the economic viability of farms and the potential for market power by firms in the food system; and the environmental consequences of agricultural production. Grassroots movements and many policies have emerged to address a social cost of the food system. However, these are not without flaws as well, and in many cases may create other, new problems.

For your final presentation, your task is to integrate the material for the entire course by reflecting on what we studied over this semester.  You will either record your presentation and post it in bright space, or give a presentation to the class during the last class of the semester. For this assignment, please work individually or in a pair (this means no groups of three or more).

Thus, your assignment is to develop a 15 minute presentation that covers the following points:

1.     Select one food product or agricultural commodity that you will follow through the food system. I will use eggs as an example.  Make this selection by Thanksgiving.

2.     Describe, to the best of your ability, the egg supply chain (from farm to consumer). 3 minutes of your presentation

3.     What aspect of the food system related to your product functions well, in your view? Be sure to justify your position. For the ‘egg food system,’ I might highlight the productivity of the sector. My evidence would include eggs per farm, or eggs per bird, and how this changed over time; more efficient use of feed and other inputs could be part of the justification. Alternatively, I could choose to highlight the success of product differentiation, and point to the different kinds of eggs (organic, free range, natural etc). Another approach could be to focus on locally marketed eggs. I would use data from the Census of Agriculture or other evidence to support my argument.  3 minutes of your presentation

4.     Discuss a social or environmental cost of the food system, and provide evidence for this. For eggs, an easy cost is related to animal welfare (crowding of cages and so on). Again, provide evidence for the social cost. 3 minutes of your presentation

5.     Select 2 of the following organizing themes: globalization, resiliency, sustainability, consumer decision-making, equity, and discuss them in the context of your product. For eggs, you could talk about global trade and consumer choice over the different eggs (free range, organic, natural etc) in the market. 6 minutes of your presentation, approximately 3 minutes for each.

NOTE that you cannot get an A on this assignment (and in the course) if you skip this part.

6.     Don’t forget references: Remember cutting and pasted URLs into your document is not an appropriate way to provide references.

Back up your arguments with literature, data, and your logic. Try not to make unsubstantiated claims. Think about the pace of your voice and try to sound engaged in the topic. Use me as your primary audience.

Post a recording of your final project (15 minutes) or give a presentation during class time. Work independently or with one other person. Due December 16.

**Food Systems, Fall 2022**

**Course schedule and readings/videos/podcasts**

**9/6             Course overview and introduction to the food system**

Goals of today’s class: Discuss syllabus, course, review course assignments.

**9/13          An overview of the food system**

*Readings:*

Dimitri, C. 2021.  Introduction to the food system. *Posted.*

Kimmerer, R.W. 2020. Chapter: Skywoman Falling. *Braiding Sweetgrass (available online through the library)*

USDA, 1955. More and better foods from today’s paycheck. Agriculture Information Bulletin No. 138. *Posted.*

**9/20           The farm level: growing agricultural products**

Goals of today’s class:  To understand the basics of farm level production and understand the challenges farmers face as they try to keep their operations afloat.

*Readings:*

Dimitri, C. 2021. On the farm. *Posted.*

Middle Tennessee State University Extension. 2020. [An introduction to agricultural risk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eCiu0h8KvWY). 5 minutes.

# [Fourth-generation dairy farmer warns looming federal restrictions could end family farms](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ROETohCZZSw). 2021. 5 minutes.

[Where are the workers? A farm crisis in Washington](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Asoh-gyFAg). 3 minutes.

Innovative Techs. 2021. [How Israel became the most advanced country in agriculture](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SQu6T3NtX3M)**.** 8 minutes

Kimmerer, R.W. 2020. Chapter: Honorable Harvest. *Braiding Sweetgrass*.

**09/27 Intermediaries: transforming commodities into food**

Dimitri, C. 2021. Food handling and market channels: moving products along the supply chain.  *Posted.*

Manchester, A. 1992. The Food Marketing Revolution: 1950-1991. Up to page 91 (the pages don’t have much text). *Posted as Manchester*

Swanson, A. and K. Bradsher. 2022. Climate change could worsen supply chain turmoil. The New York Times. Sept 8. Posted in Brightspace.

Kimmerer, R.W. 2020. Chapter: The Three Sisters. *Braiding Sweetgrass*.

Short videos:

Cheerios. 2014. [From Oats to O's](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RLI3yqNe-4c).

Superfreshgrowers. 2013. [Touring an apple packing facility](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YAUeQHghUUs)

**10/4**  **Environmental costs of the food system**

Dimitri, C. 2021.  Environmental impacts of agricultural production. *Posted*

Howden, M. 2019. [UN climate change report: land clearing and farming contribute a third of the world’s greenhouse gases](http://theconversation.com/un-climate-change-report-land-clearing-and-farming-contribute-a-third-of-the-worlds-greenhouse-gases-121551).  *The Conversation.*

Charles, D. 2020. [Farmers are warming up to fight against climate change](https://www.npr.org/2020/11/20/936603967/farmers-are-warming-up-to-the-fight-against-climate-change).  NPR. All Things Considered.

Kimmerer, R.W. 2020. Chapter: Mishkos Kenomagwen: The teachings of grass. *Braiding Sweetgrass*.

**10/11           No class**

**10/18           Market power in the agricultural sector**

An important consideration is whether handling firms and food retailers (some of these firms are referred to as “big food companies”) exert market power over their suppliers and buyers. In practice, this means paying farmers excessively low prices for the agricultural commodities used to manufacture food, or charging buyers excessively high prices for the final products sold.  There are many legal and illegal ways of gaining market power, and in the food system, merging and consolidating are the most concerning activities.

Bunker, N. 2015. [Market power and monopsony in the labor market](https://equitablegrowth.org/monopsony-market-power-labor-market/). Washington Center for Equitable Growth.

Macdonald, J. 1999. Cargill’s acquisition of Continental Grain: An anatomy of a merger. Agricultural Outlook. *Posted.*

Kimmerer, R.W. 2020. Chapter: Windigo Footprints. *Braiding Sweetgrass*.

This is for fun: the [*Who controls our food system*](https://www.foodopoly.org/) quiz on the food and water watch site.

**10/25            Food sovereignty**

Guest lecture: Natasha Bunzl

Dekeyser, K., Korsten, L. and Fioramonti, L., 2018. Food sovereignty: shifting debates on democratic food governance. *Food Security*, *10*(1), pp.223-233. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12571-017-0763-2

*This section to be updated*

**11/1  Globalization**

Dimitri, C. 2021. Globalization. Posted in our classroom.

Krugman, P. 2022. The world is getting less flat. The New York Times. Sept 6. Posted in brightspace.

Swinnen, J., 2017. Beer consumption and trade in an era of economic growth and globalization. *Choices*, *32*(3), pp.1-6. [Remote access URL](https://shibbolethsp.jstor.org/start?entityID=urn%3Amace%3Aincommon%3Anyu.edu&dest=https://www.jstor.org/stable/90015009&site=jstor).

Kimmerer, R.W. 2020. Chapter: Wisgaak Gokpenagen: A Black Ash Basket. *Braiding Sweetgrass*.

**11/8  Intertemporal decisions, discount rate**

Ericson KM, Laibson D. "Intertemporal Choice". In: Bernheim D, Laibson D, DellaVigna S, Handbook of Behavioral Economics - Foundations and Applications 2. Elsevier; 2019.

Laibson, D. 2019. [Present Bias, Self-Defeating Behaviors, and Behavior Change](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=txVmiYGgknA). (video lecture)

Kimmerer, R.W. 2020. Chapter: Burning Cascade Head. *Braiding Sweetgrass*.

**11/15  Sustainability**

Dimitri, C. 2022. Sustainability. Posted in brightspace.

Solow, R. 1991. [Sustainability: An economist’s perspective](https://users.manchester.edu/Facstaff/SSNaragon/Online/texts/425/Solow%20(1991),%20Sustainability.pdf). Lecture given at Marine Policy Center. June 14.

Kimmerer, R.W. 2020. Chapter: Allegiance to Gratitude. *Braiding Sweetgrass*.

**11/22  Resiliency**

Dimitri, C. 2022. Resiliency. Posted in our classroom.

Brekken, C.A., Fiegener, R. and Duncan, S., 2018. [Linking regional food networks to ecological resilience](https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/26487439.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3Af22422e3fd7df7e59c57c79ccd580256). *Choices*, *33*(2), pp.1-10.

Kimmerer, R.W. 2020. Chapter: Shkitagen. People of the Seventh Fire. *Braiding Sweetgrass*.

**11/29  Humans and decision making**

# Ariely, D. 2009. [Are we in control of our decisions](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9X68dm92HVI)?. Ted Talk. 17 min.

# [You 2.0. Decide Already](https://www.npr.org/2019/08/30/755850405/you-2-0-decide-already)! Hidden Brain Podcast. Sept 2 2109.

# Gladwell, M. [Choice Happiness and Spaghetti Sauce](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D8QJn4ArgXE). Ted Talk. 17 minutes.

Chandon, P. 2015. [Why people don’t realize how large portion sizes have become](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MSEIcaHoiEU). 10 minutes.

Kimmerer, R.W. 2020. Chapter: People of Corn. People of Light. *Braiding Sweetgrass*.

**12/06 Income and wealth equality**

# Piketty, T. 2021. [A Brief History of Equality](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WJUowgzGFck&t=6s) | Thomas Piketty | LSE Online Event. The Economica Centenary Coase Lecture. (about 1 hour)

Chetty, R. 2016. [Reviving the American Dream: Lessons from Big Data.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2U9-Wq2ub0) 13 minutes (Ted talk).

Kimmerer, R.W. 2020. Chapter: Old Growth Children. *Braiding Sweetgrass*.

**12/13   Course wrap-up and final presentations**

Kimmerer, R.W. 2020. Chapter: Defeating Windigo. *Braiding Sweetgrass.*