

DRAFT SYLLABUS – SEE WEBSITE FOR READING ASSIGNMENTS

Food Systems Planning

FOOD-GE.2034-001 Spring 2013

Matthew Hoffman

(This course is officially listed as Food Systems II: Food Processing and Industrialization. However, it is not a course about food processing. It is a course about food systems and city and regional planning.)

Course time and location: Wednesdays 4:55 – 6:35 in Waverly 566A

Instructor email: matthew.hoffman@nyu.edu

Office Hours: Wednesdays 12:00 – 2:00 or by appointment, 411 Lafayette, 5th floor

Course description:

This course is about the role of planning and local civic institutions in building sustainable food systems. The fact that more than 9 million people get fed every day in the city of New York without any apparent plan for how this happens is considered a miracle of free markets. We will be taking a closer look at this miracle and examining some of its shortcomings in an effort to understand what needs are not being addressed and what can be done to address them. Very recent case studies, primarily from urban areas, will be used to illustrate the role of non-profits and local governments in building sustainable food systems. Classes will feature numerous guests – many of the leading figures shaping NYC's food system. The culture of this course is that of a graduate seminar and students are expected to come to class prepared to engage in discussion.

Course objectives:

- To understand the role of planning and local civic institutions in sustainable food systems.
- To understand specific food systems related issues that planners attempt to deal with.
- To understand what planners are doing in various locations to address these issues.

Key Theme:

Throughout this course I would like to maintain a special focus on the relationship between cities and rural areas as they are connected by food. Both urban and rural areas have been shaped by this connection, in some ways for the worse; and it may be that some improvements to both urban and rural areas can be made by, and perhaps only by, changes in the food systems that connect them. This is something that I would like to think about together throughout the semester.

What you must do:

This course requires you to do a lot of **reading** and to come to class prepared to discuss what you have read. The material is very interesting and if you are well-prepared you will have a good time discussing it in class.

Here are some tips about how to do the reading.

- First, set aside adequate time for the task. You can sit for a whole afternoon or you can divide your reading up during the week, but trying to do it all on the night before class won't work.
- Second, read with brisk purposefulness. Academic literature is not meant to be read in a leisurely and aimless fashion like a story. You are looking for information and ideas. As soon as you pick the next article or book off your stack, you want to know immediately what it is about. Read the title and the abstract. Then skim through, reading all the section headings. Have a look at the conclusion. Then go back and begin reading the article. If you already have a clear idea what the author's main points are when you begin reading, you can move through the article much faster and will be in a better position to understand and evaluate the arguments being made.
- Third, and most important, highlight and take notes. Some people keep all their notes in a notebook. Others prefer to highlight or underline sections of text and cram their notes in the margins. Some do both. Whatever your style, this is what you need to be doing while reading. The sections of text that you highlight or underline will generally be what you and/or the author think are important information or ideas. Your notes will generally be your own reflections on what you are reading; how it relates to other things that you are reading or thinking about; disagreements that you have with it; or questions that the piece raises for you. As you read more and more, the collection of highlights and notes that you build will become the raw material for your own work.
- Fourth, make it enjoyable. For scholars especially, reading should be a pleasure as well as work. Settle into a comfortable chair in a nice place with something nice to drink. Maybe food too. You're going to be there for a while. Look forward to reading—it is what you like to do.

Required Book and other Required Reading:

You are only required to buy one book for this course and it is not expensive. I have ordered it to the NYU bookstore, but they are having trouble getting it. You will find it on Amazon.

Steel, Carolyn. 2008. *Hungry City: How food shapes our lives*. London: Vintage Books.

Most of the readings for this course are articles or book chapters that I will provide for you in pdf format on the class website, where you will find a folder for each week. Inside this folder you will find both required and optional readings, and sometimes a note to guide your reading. You are of course encouraged to seek out additional sources of information and alternative viewpoints on your own and to use these to enrich our class discussion.

Other assignments:

Participation in discussion is central to a graduate seminar. You must come to class prepared to talk about what you have read. You know of course that you should bring the readings with you, along with your notes. You should also have a number of talking points or questions jotted down. This is an important habit to get into for all of your classes, as well as for your future professional life. The quality of class discussion will depend heavily on students coming prepared with points they want to talk about – be interesting, provocative and sincere. On the days when there is a guest speaker or panel, come prepared with questions or jot some down while they are speaking – and then ask them.

Group presentation and paper: Just within the past few years, a number of major municipalities and one state have embarked upon comprehensive food system planning initiatives. We are going to take a close look at what they are doing in order to understand what their goals are and how they are trying to achieve these goals. I am going to ask you to divide into groups of five to six persons each. Each group is going to be responsible for a different city or region and study up on what is happening with food systems planning in that place, after which that group will make a power-point presentation to the rest of the class about their case study's approach to a variety of planning issues. I will provide documents about each case study and each group will pursue additional information on their own. A five page paper will be due from each group on the day of their presentation, assessing their case in terms of a number of criteria that will be specified in class.

Final paper or project: Your final assignment can take any of a number of forms, one of which is the traditional final paper (approximately 10 pages, 12 pt. font, space-and-a-half) on a topic of your choice, due electronically on the last day of class. Take this opportunity to either think through some of the ideas that come up in this course or to learn more about something relevant to the course that you really want to know about but which we didn't cover. I encourage you to start on this early. Your grade for this assignment will be based on its quality *as a paper*. Neither a fascinating topic nor a copious amount of research will yield a high grade if it is difficult either to perceive exactly what your point is or to see how the information presented supports that point. Don't be put off however – if you are in doubt, come discuss your outline with me early on and all will be well. Other options that can be pursued instead of a paper include mapping projects, model food system plans, community food assessments, and other aspects of planning and design. If you are thinking of pursuing a project instead of a paper you should talk to me about it well in advance.

Grading:

- attendance and participation 30%
- Group presentation and written assessment of case study 30%
- Final Paper or Project 40%

If you have any questions about the course; if you would like to discuss the readings or to talk about food systems in general; or if you need a faculty member with whom to discuss any aspect of your experience at NYU, please either visit me in my office during my office hours or contact me to make an appointment. While it is by no means a requirement, I hope that I will have the opportunity to meet and speak with each of you outside of class at least once.

Course Outline and Schedule

(See course website for reading assignments.)

- Week 1** (Jan. 30) **Introduction – What is planning?**
- Week 2** (Feb. 6) **Urban Agriculture in NYC.** *Meet in large conference room, 411 Lafayette, 5th Fl.*
Guest: Nevin Cohen of The New School , author of Five Borough Farm
- Week 3** (Feb. 13) **Feeding the City**
- Week 4** (Feb. 20) **Watershed Planning.** *Meet in large conference room, 411 Lafayette, 5th Fl.*
Guests: Tara Collins of the Watershed Agricultural Council and Challey Comer of Columbia’s Urban Design Lab
- Week 5** (Feb. 27) **Food Systems and Community Development**
- Week 6** (March 6) **Group presentations** of food system plans – Philadelphia and LA
- Week 7** (March 13) **Group presentations** of food system plans – Oakland and Vermont
- Spring Break –
- Week 8** (March 27) **Feeding NYC.** *Meet in large conference room, 411 Lafayette, 5th Fl.*
Guests: Robert LaValva of New Amsterdam Market and Olivia Blanchflower of Greenmarket Co.
- Week 9** (April 3) **Food Planning in NYC.** *Meet in large conference room, 411 Lafayette, 5th Fl.*
Guests: Shira Gans, formerly of the Manhattan Borough President’s office, and Christina Grace, food systems consultant
- Week 10** (April 10) **Introductory GIS Workshop** with Himanshu Mistry
Meet in Tisch LC19
- Week 11** (April 17) **Food Justice.** *Meet in large conference room, 411 Lafayette, 5th Fl.*
Guest: Amy Blankstein of Just Food
- Week 12** (April 24) **Cities as Empire and Garden Cities**
- Week 13** (May 1) **Sitopian Design** with Claire Hartten of Green Rabbits (location TBA)
- Week 14** (May 8) Presentation of final projects and papers