Class Meeting Time:  TU and TH, 12:30 – 2:00PM
Class Meeting Place:  BEN 1.104

Professor:  Dr. Rebecca Torres
Geography Building, Room #208
rebecca.torres@austin.utexas.edu
*Office Hours: TU, 2:00 – 5:00 PM

Graduate Assistant:  Marina Islas
Geography Building, Room #416
marina.islas@utexas.edu
*Office Hours: TU 11:00 – 12:00PM
TH, 1:00 – 2:00 PM

Students with disabilities can request accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities at (512) 471-6259. More information may be obtained at http://www.utexas.edu/diversity/ddce/ssd/

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course focuses on contemporary transformations in global agro-food systems from a social science perspective. Employing an interdisciplinary approach, we will explore recent changes in agricultural production, markets, networks and consumption in both industrialized and developing nations. We will seek to unravel the current paradox of growing global disparities, that is, why more people are going hungry in the world while obesity has reached a historical high – threatening to shorten life expectancies (unprecedented in the era of modern medical science). Globalization, particularly the tensions between the “global” and “local” will be an overarching theme threaded throughout the course. In particular, we will examine the contentious nature and contradictions embedded within “agricultural development,” – particularly processes of “modernization” and the neoliberalization of agricultural policy, development, trade, consumption and desires. We seek to comprehend these global processes, but also to explore them at a local level to understand the “real life” human dimensions of transformation in agricultural and food systems. We will also examine new alternative approaches to addressing some of the challenges and contradictions in agro-food systems including – organic farming, local food movements, community supported agriculture,
fair trade, ethical consumption, producer organization and alternative sustainable development.

In our analysis of agro-food restructuring we will examine key current issues and debates from a variety of perspectives and points of view. Topics will include: the “green revolution” and its socio-economic impacts; the genetic engineering debate; hunger and inequality; biofuels and global food crisis; food safety and nutrition; the politics of food aid; neoliberal agrarian policies and smallholders; farm labor and social justice; land reform; the sustainable agriculture movement; agriculture and the environment; gender and agriculture; farm labor issues; and vertical integration and the loss of the family farm, among others. To illustrate current trends and processes we will examine case studies from different parts of the globe, with special focus on Latin America, in particular Mexico and Cuba. We will approach topics through a variety of methods including critical readings of academic, ethnographic and more popular texts; seminar discussions (both instructor and student facilitated); in-class projects & activities; invited guest speakers; films and student research paper presentations.

**TENTATIVE COURSE TOPICS:**

- Overview State of World Agriculture
- Historical and Contemporary Political Economy of Global Commodities (i.e. Chewing Gum, Sugar, Coffee, Corn, and others)
- The Green Revolution and its Impacts
- The New Green Revolution? Genetic Engineering & Agriculture
- Neoliberalization of Agriculture, Policy and Trade
- Hunger in America & the World
- Biofuels and Food Production
- Fast Food Nation
- Farm Labor and Migrant Workers
- Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environmental Justice
- Land Reform and Resistance
- Agrarian Reform in Cuba -- farmers markets, organics and restructuring
- Sustainable and Local Alternatives to Global Agricultural Development and Food Production
- Fair Trade and Ethical Consumption
- Strategic Alliances, Food Labeling, Regional Identities

**COURSE SCHEDULING:**

Agriculture by its very nature is an interdisciplinary and “hands-on” topic. For this reason, I have designed the course to include a variety of different in-class activities, films and potentially guest speakers. I believe this makes for a far more interesting course. However, scheduling is a bit more complex and requires greater flexibility. This factor, along with the accommodation of guest speaker schedules may mean that we must “jump around” a bit with respect to topics. For these reasons, I reserve the right to make changes in the schedule whenever necessary – but we will not move up the date of
scheduled hand-in assignments (though sometimes our change may give you an extension on a deadline). On occasion, if necessary, I will send you an updated “class schedule” as I make changes. I will also post the updated schedules under “Course Documents” in Blackboard. Please check your e-mail and our class blackboard (Bb) site regularly as I may inform you of modifications via e-mail or on the Bb web site (usually I will indicate changes on the announcements blackboard page as well as in class). If you should miss a class meeting, it is your responsibility to find out any changes in scheduling from one of your classmates, or me.

COURSE READINGS:

The course readings consist of 3 required books, selected articles/book chapters, hand-outs and certain web sites. The reading load is relatively moderate as you are expected to do a significant amount of reading for your individual research papers. Therefore, these readings are in addition to the bibliography you will collect and review for your individual research papers. The 3 books are available at the University Co-Op: 2246 Guadalupe Street Austin, TX, 78705, (512) 476-7211. Other readings will be posted on our Bb site. I will post readings in advance but make sure to check the current schedule – in the event that I make a change to the readings. In other words, check the schedule before doing the readings as I might decide to drop or add a particular article/chapter.

Please consult the weekly course schedule to plan your readings accordingly. As the course progresses, I will continue to update the schedules to allow some degree of flexibility. Any changes to this schedule will be announced and posted on Bb.

Required Books (Purchase):


Selections from books, journal articles and Web Sites:

With the exception of the three books you must purchase, readings will be available through on our blackboard (Bb) site. ***Use the most recent “tentative course schedule” to guide your readings – THERE MAY BE READINGS POSTED ON THE SITE THAT WE DECIDE NOT TO COVER –SO CHECK THE LATEST SCHEDULE FOR READINGS.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS & GRADING:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short Reaction Papers (Due according to schedule, 2 total)</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>100 pts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student(s) Facilitated Reading Discussions (small groups, 1 time)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>50 pts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commodity Study Presentation (small groups)</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>75 pts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preliminary Bibliography and Research Questions for Final Paper</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>25 pts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper (8-10 pp): Independent Research</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>150 pts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance/Participation (in-class activities, film questionnaires,</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>100 pts</td>
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<td>discussions, student research presentations [double weighted], etc.)</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>500 pts</td>
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** Letter grades will be assigned based on the following criteria:

(A) = 470 pts - 500 pts  
(A-) = 450 pts - 469 pts  
(B+) = 440 pts - 449 pts  
(B) = 420 pts - 439 pts  
(B-) = 400 pts - 419 pts  
(C+) = 390 pts – 399 pts  
(C) = 370 pts – 389 pts  
(C-) = 350 pts - 369 pts  
(D+) = 340 pts - 349 pts  
(D) = 320 pts - 339 pts  
(D-) = 300 pts - 319 pts  
(F) = Below 300 pts

SHORT REACTION PAPERS

Short Reaction Papers will comprise 20% of your grade. Throughout the semester you will complete 2 Reaction Papers, each 3-4 pages in length (double-space) and each worth a possible 50 points (100 points total). The goal of these papers is to prepare you for our in-class discussion of the assigned readings. Good class discussions depend upon the quality contribution of all students. Therefore, it is imperative that students come to class adequately prepared to participate in class discussions. Preparation of Reaction Papers and discussion facilitation will require that you do not simply passively read and underline the text but that you critically analyze the authors’ arguments and formulate your own opinion, response and reaction. Your Reaction Papers must be concise and comprehensive, adhering to the format specified below. Please use appropriate in-text citation when discussing more than one article. Make sure you cite all of the relevant readings assigned to a topic. In other words, always refer to the title of the text and the author in your paper, and if directly quoting from a text always include a page number.
Reaction Papers must include a critical review of the author’s principal arguments, as well as your own response to the readings, and how they relate to previous work. A simple summary of the readings, absent any critical analysis including your own thoughts, opinions, reactions, ideas, etc. will not be considered adequate and therefore will lower your grade. Often I will assign an overarching question(s) to serve as a theme to organize your reaction and critique on the specific topic. In addition, please formulate 2-3 questions at the end of your paper that we may draw upon in class discussions. These questions may be to clarify something you did not understand or to lead the class in further discussion.

Each student will sign up for two reaction papers and be prepared to share their Reaction Paper with the class, summarizing its main points and proposing one of their questions to the class for discussion. This is not a formal presentation, but rather will be used as a discussion starter. Unfortunately, there will not be time for everyone to share every time so I will ask for volunteers and/or randomly invite students to share their papers. While not formally graded, this will be factored into your overall participation grade.

Missing assignments will be recorded as a “0” and they will significantly lower your grade. You should keep all of your assignments and bring them to all class meetings in the event we have additional time to discuss previous readings. Also, always bring the books and articles we are reading to the class discussions.

You must notify me in advance of any intended absence due to illness or other reasons. If you have an unexpected absence due to illness you must provide documentation to receive credit for the late assignment. All papers must be handed-in via Blackboard, under the “Assignments” section, by 12:30 PM (before class begins) on the day on which they are due (no e-mailed papers unless special permission is granted; you should receive a confirmation message from Blackboard when you have successfully uploaded your paper). I will not accept papers left in mailboxes, under my office door, or elsewhere. Papers will not be accepted late.

STUDENT FACILITATION OF READINGS

I believe in active learning where students take a leadership role and have the experience of designing, planning, preparing and facilitating a seminar discussion/activity. It is much more interesting and fun to have different formats, facilitators and approaches to our class topics. Small groups of 4-5 students will facilitate seminar sessions on selected course topics/ readings throughout the semester. You will sign up for 1 session to facilitate with other students who choose the same topic/reading/class session. Facilitators will be expected to meet outside of class to plan and prepare the 1-hour of class time they will be responsible for facilitating discussion, in-class activity, learning exercise, etc. Students are free to organize the seminar in any manner they feel will stimulate discussion and analysis of the topic and/or readings for the given period. Creativity is encouraged and will be rewarded. Please do not simply provide a verbal presentation of the content of the readings - - the idea is to stimulate the class to think about, discuss, etc. the topics at hand. In addition, discussion leaders are required to
prepare a brief handout that introduces the topic and outlines the activity and any important points to be covered in class. Facilitators are required to make use of visual materials such as flip-charts (provided by Dr. Torres) in order to record group activity. Charts and maps (broadly defined!) are examples of appropriate forms of recording. This helps to organize and improve the ensuing discussion. Remember, the goal of this is to engage all members of the class and encourage interesting discussion and debate on the topic. The required handout and any other facilitation materials (PowerPoint, additional texts, etc.) should be uploaded to Blackboard under “Discussion Board” by 12:30 PM the day on which class is facilitated.

The one session you facilitate will count for 10% of your grade. You will be evaluated on preparation, creativity and the quality of class discussion/interaction. Because this is a group exercise – you will each have the opportunity to evaluate the other members of your group with respect to their participation, effort, contributions, etc. The evaluations of team members will also be considered when assigning grades (i.e. not all facilitators will necessarily receive the same grade). Evaluation forms can be found on Blackboard and should be turned-in under the appropriate link in “Assignments” by the next class meeting after facilitation has taken place. Facilitation Grades will not be given until all group members have turned in a peer evaluation form. Creativity is encouraged and I will provide a handout with some potential formats to help you with ideas. Also, I encourage your group to consult with me if you are unclear or would like to brainstorm some ideas. We will sign up for topics/readings in the first week of class.

**Please let me know in advance if you plan to use flip charts, markers, post-its, stickers, PPT, other available materials, etc. in your seminar session. With advance notice I can arrange a time when you can pick these items up before class.**

ATTENDANCE/PARTICIPATION:

Given that this class follows a seminar-format – participation is very important (20% of your final grade). It is imperative that you attend all classes and come prepared to discuss all the assigned readings (even those for which Reaction Papers are not assigned – and especially those your classmates facilitate!). We will take formal attendance everyday and incorporate that into your final participation grade (please make sure you sign the attendance roster every class meeting). You will be rewarded with points for each class attendance. Please be advised that absences are weighed heavily and will likely have a negative impact on your final grade. If you are absent the day we do an in-class assignment – you will not be allowed to make-up the activity and you will lose points for the missed assignment as well as the absence. Also, if you are absent the day that a Reaction Paper is due – you will not be permitted to hand-in that paper outside of class unless you have an excused absence. Sessions where students present their research papers will be double weighted in terms of attendance.

GROUP PRESENTATION: COMMODITY STUDY:

A major unit of this class deals with the political economy of agricultural commodities and value chains. In groups of 3-4 people, you will research and present on one of the
following commodities: 1) corn, 2) sugar, 3) bananas, 4) coca, 5) chicle/chewing gum, 6) chocolate, 7) beef, or 8) asparagus, which will be worth 15% of your final grade. You will create a 15 minute presentation on the global agricultural commodity you signed up for at the beginning of the course. Your presentation should critically discuss how the global trade of the commodity you have chosen reveals the roots and production/reproduction of inequalities between the global North and South. You must turn in detailed slide notes and a bibliography, and each student must give a portion of the presentation.

We will further discuss the details of this assignment in class. Please also refer to the handout on this assignment that will be distributed and posted on Blackboard. In general, the presentation must incorporate at least 6 academic sources. It should utilize PowerPoint or Presi, be 15 minutes long, include a bibliography and slide notes, and follow APA or another approved citation style.

**DUE DATE: Thursday, October 25th and Tuesday October 30th**

You will sign-up for your presentation date early in the semester so that you may plan according. I will hand out the evaluation criteria for the research presentation. All students are expected to attend all research presentations, which will have double attendance value.

**FINAL PAPER: INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH PAPER**

One of the principal components of this course is an in-depth, original research paper based on the Agriculture/Food/Hunger-related topic of your choice (pending my approval). This paper will provide you with the opportunity to study in-depth an agriculture-related topic that interests you. The research paper, which is worth 30% of your final grade, will be submitted electronically via Blackboard on **Thursday, December 6, 2012 by 12:30 PM**. You must submit a paragraph establishing your research topic and main research questions, as well as a list of 10 references according to the class schedule.

You should begin to consider potential research topics today! Selecting a good topic is essential to writing an excellent paper. You will spend a significant amount of time on this paper so it is important to choose carefully a topic that interests you. Select a topic that is narrow but for which there are sufficient references available. You may select a topic related to material covered in class – however it must not be redundant. For example, we may spend a 1 weeks on farm labor – however a topic exploring Latino migrant farm labor in North Carolina would be appropriate.

We will discuss detailed research paper guidelines in class; however, the following offers some general guidelines:

- 8-10 pages double spaced (not including title, tables, graphics, images and reference pages)
• 12 point, Times New Roman font
• 1 inch margins (top, bottom, sides)
• Page Numbering
• In-text citation of references
• Page numbers on quotes
• APA or other approved style (I will provide a hand-out on APA)
• Reference List/ Bibliography with at least 10 sources (a minimum of 6 must be journal articles or books)
• Include all of the following components: Title, Introduction, Thesis Statement, Body of Text (with sub-headings if appropriate), Conclusions, Reference Pages

**Please refer to the “RESEARCH PAPER INSTRUCTIONS & EVALUATION CRITERIA,” hand-out for further details

NOTE ON LAPTOP/ELECTRONIC DEVICE USE

While I am generally a supporter of digital note-taking and utilizing the internet to quickly look up class-relevant information, laptop use must not become distracting nor detract from class participation. I do not want to prohibit laptops, so please use your best judgment, prioritize assignments, and be sure that if you are coming to class, you are prepared to be engaged. This is not only important to create a conducive learning environment, but obvious disengagement due to laptop use that is irrelevant to class activities will lower your participation grade.

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Note on Academic Integrity: Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information please visit the Student Judicial Services Website: http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs. Refer to the Dean of Students Student Judicial Services website or call 471-2841 for the official university policies and procedures on scholastic dishonesty.

Note on Academic Writing:
This is a writing intensive course in which you will have the opportunity to critically and creatively engage with readings and conduct your own independent research. Please take this opportunity to work to improve your writing. We are available to answer questions and provide constructive feedback on your papers. Please DO NOT HESITATE to contact myself or the graduate assistant if you need help with your writing assignments. Also, we strongly encourage you to use UT’s Undergraduate Writing Center located in the Flawn Academic Center 211. Contact them by phone at 471-6222 or find more info on their website: http://uwc.utexas.edu/.