Approaches to Knowledge and Truth: 
Ways of Knowing in Development Studies and Social Change 
Topic: Global Food Security 

Development Studies and Social Change   Moodie Site: http://z.umn.edu/dssc8111
DSSC - 8111 (2 credits)
Fall 2013 – Fridays 9:40-11:20am
Carlson School of Management 1-122

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Office Hours: By appointment. Please coordinate with me over email. I come to campus almost every day and have a relatively flexible schedule. While a day or two of notice is preferable, it is not expected—sometimes things come up. Please consider a meeting to discuss course material, concerns about the course, anthropology, interdisciplinary research, area studies, grant application advice, general graduate school advice, etc. Don’t hesitate—I’m here to be a resource for you!

Course Objectives: This seminar aims to stimulate students to think critically about the practice of interdisciplinary research by embedding disciplinary exploration in the overarching theme of global food security. Students will examine and evaluate the epistemologies, historical trajectories, models and anti-models of core disciplines which will provide them with a framework to employ them in different research contexts in contrast or in conjunction with each other. Students will be able to describe how epistemological differences, those which guide approaches to knowledge and truth, affect the corpus of research about global food security, and evaluate its wider implications for the trajectory of development studies and global change.

Class Format: In the majority of the weeks, our class will be visited by a Guest Speaker. In preparation for each class, students will draft an “Interdisciplinary Perspectives Worksheet” that addresses the background of the discipline of our Guest Speaker. This will prepare us to critically evaluate the discipline’s strengths in comparison or in conjunction with other disciplines. The Guest Speaker will begin class by grounding us in their discipline, and discussing how their own global food security related research fits within this disciplinary context. While each speaker will have different presentation formats, we encourage this interaction to be based

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in open discussion. The disciplinary discussion leader will make sure the Guest Speaker addresses our concerns about interdisciplinary epistemologies. Next, the student article discussion leader(s) will lead a lively discussion of the assigned articles, and the memo discussion leader(s) will highlight the interesting themes from the student memo submissions.

Course Expectations:
- **Attendance**: Students are expected to come to every class. Excused absences will be considered according to CLA policies. Missing more than one class might put your grade in jeopardy, so be proactive about contacting the instructor.
- **Participation in Discussion**: Students are expected to actively participate in discussion, ask the Guest Speakers questions, and make contributions to the Interdisciplinary Perspectives Worksheets. While it is sometimes difficult to speak in class, there are many pedagogical reasons to speak up. Your comments are valued as contributions to the collective understanding of course materials, and actively participating will reinforce your grasp of the concepts, and perhaps inspire you and your colleagues to deeper thought.
- **Professionalism**: Please remember to treat your colleagues and instructor with patience and respect. By using a format that values open discussion and active participation, ideas and opinions might be expressed in inchoate forms. Please give your classmates the benefit of the doubt and express your concerns in a respectful way. Also, please respect the commitment and sacrifices of other members by coming to class prepared and contributing to your highest ability.
- **Submission of Memos**: Each week you will have a memo assignment, which will be turned in by _____________. This will be circulated and read by the instructor and your colleagues, and may serve as a springboard for discussion by the Student Discussion Leader(s). You will be responsible for turning in a memo for each week, with the exception of the weeks you are leading the article discussion, and one other week (a “freebie” week). Failure to submit all the required memos will result in the assignment of “N-No credit” on the S/N scale.

Course Grading Policies: This course is offered on an S/N basis and follows the CLA procedures for determining a satisfactory grade. Note that the failure to attend class, adequately participate, or to submit assignments will result in the assignment of the grade “N-No credit.” Absences will be considered excused with the proper documentation required by CLA, or on a case-by-case basis in advance. **Be aware, you must complete all assigned memos (excluding one freebie) to earn credit for the course.** Incompletes are discouraged, but will be assigned if determined necessary by the instructor and a student’s advisor.
Weekly Assignments:
- Complete readings (one or two articles of around 40 pages total)
- Write one to two page single-spaced “memo”
- Share the memo by due date: __________
- Skim your peers’ memos (optional)
- Be prepared for discussion
- If you are a Student Discussion Leader this week:
  - No need to submit a memo if you are an Article Discussion Leader
  - Read the class memos if you are a Memo Discussion Leader
  - Be prepared to lead discussion
  - (consult Student Discussion Leader Worksheet)

**Term Schedule:**

**Week 1/September 6**
Heather O’Leary – Anthropology
Course Introduction / Situating Ourselves

**Week 2/September 13**
Valentine Cadieux – Geography / Psychology
Environmental Decision Making, Food Systems and Interdisciplinarity
(*note: CLASSROOM CHANGE THIS WEEK meet in STSS 423B on the East Bank*)
Article Discussion Leader(s):
Memo Discussion Leader(s):
Disciplinary Worksheet Leader(s):

**Week 3/September 20**
Rachel Schurman - Sociology
The ‘new philanthropy’ and the Green Revolution for Africa
Article Discussion Leader(s):
Memo Discussion Leader(s):
Disciplinary Worksheet Leader(s):

**Week 4/September 27**
Allen Isaacman - History
Development, Large Dams, and Food Security
Article Discussion Leader(s):
Memo Discussion Leader(s):
Disciplinary Worksheet Leader(s):
Week 5/October 4
Dan Philippon - English
Literary and Rhetorical Perspectives on Food Politics
Article Discussion Leader(s):
Memo Discussion Leader(s):
Disciplinary Worksheet Leader(s):

Week 6/October 11
David Wilsey – Development
Indigenous Knowledge; Food Systems and Sovereignty
Article Discussion Leader(s):
Memo Discussion Leader(s):
Disciplinary Worksheet Leader(s):

Week 7/October 18
Craig Hedberg – Public Health
Developing Countries and Food Export
Article Discussion Leader(s):
Memo Discussion Leader(s):
Disciplinary Worksheet Leader(s):

Week 8/October 25
Terry Roe – Applied Economics
Food Security From the Top Down: Globalization, Exhaustible Resources, and Food
Article Discussion Leader(s):
Memo Discussion Leader(s):
Disciplinary Worksheet Leader(s):

Week 9/November 1
Sheri Breen - Political Science
A Political Analysis of Global Seed Sovereignty
Article Discussion Leader(s):
Memo Discussion Leader(s):
Disciplinary Worksheet Leader(s):

Week 10/November 8
Deb Olson – Public Health
Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN
Article Discussion Leader(s):
Memo Discussion Leader(s):
Disciplinary Worksheet Leader(s):
Week 11/November 15
Tracey Deutsch – Gender Studies / History
What's Love got to do with it? History, Gender, and the Politics of Food
Article Discussion Leader(s):
Memo Discussion Leader(s):
Disciplinary Worksheet Leader(s):

Week 12/November 22
No Class – Special Project
Consult the course website or instructor for further description.

Week 13/November 29
No Class – Thanksgiving Holiday
This American holiday celebrates many things, including food. Reflect on your own experience(s) of the Thanksgiving holiday. How has your training in interdisciplinary methods and/or your exposure to global food security issues framed your understanding of the holiday? This could be a longer free-write, or a memo that applies some of the theories and methods that you have learned in class. What things are at play beneath the surface of the Thanksgiving feast?

(*note: Next week your colleagues might bring in foods to share in conjunction with an assignment. Please inform the instructor by today (email or otherwise) if you have any food allergies, discomforts, or trepidations (e.g. gluten allergy or discomfort around people consuming meat). It is very important to all of us that every class member is comfortable!)

Week 14/December 6
“Final Exam” – Open Discussion
Final Deadline for Submitting Late Memos
In lieu of a graded final exam, come to class ready for an open, ungraded discussion about everything we have learned over the semester. To stimulate discussion, come prepared with a question for your classmates about interdisciplinary methods or about global food security that you will pose during class. Also, bring a food item to share, or a representation of one (e.g. a drawing or picture from a magazine), that you look at in a new way after this seminar. Think about how members of different disciplines would analyze the significance of this food, or focus on one approach that is outside of your own discipline. Think about what sub-themes of the course your food embodies. Finally, we will circulate sheets of paper for you to remind your colleagues of their greatest contributions to the seminar this semester. Sharing positive feedback with each other will help you grow as individual scholars and as a cohort.

Week 15/December 13
No Class – University classes ended on Wednesday, Dec. 11
Interdisciplinary Perspectives Worksheet

1. Discipline Name(s): ________________________________________________

2. Who are the canonical scholars in this field broadly? In global food security? What did they contribute?

3. How does this discipline conceptualize and define knowledge? What questions does this discipline seek to answer?

4. How does this discipline seek to prove truth? What methodologies does this discipline favor?

5. What are the models and anti-models that shaped this discipline? How did this perspective evolve?

6. What is the historical trajectory of this discipline? How has it changed since the first major publications?

7. What are the discipline’s limits and the specialties?

8. How can this discipline lend itself to interdisciplinary research? What disciplines bolster/are bolstered by this discipline’s findings?

9. How do you imagine using this discipline in your own research project(s)?
**Student Discussion Leader Worksheet**

**Article Discussion Leader(s):** Your role today will be to answer the following questions about the article and to pose a few of your own questions to the class. Your goals are to make sure everyone understood the article, and to engage them in lively discussion. You are exempt from writing a memo this week.

1. Spend 15 minutes synthesizing the article(s) after you have read them
2. What are the authors arguing? How do they explain and define this piece of the global food security challenge?
3. How do the authors’ arguments follow/transcend traditional disciplinary parameters?
4. Engage the speaker in a few thoughtful questions.
5. Be prepared to be a resource for your peers

**Memo Discussion Leader(s):** Your role today will be to highlight the connections between your peers’ responses to the reading and with each other. Your goal is to provoke further discussion of the articles and epistemologies in light of the responses.

1. Spend 15 minutes synthesizing the memos
2. What were some common themes and questions from the class memos?
3. What questions from the Memo Writing Prompts list do you think would be interesting to discuss that were not covered in the class memos?
4. What other questions do you propose for deeper understanding of this week’s topics?
5. What makes these memos different than the memos from other weeks/disciplines?

**Disciplinary Worksheet Leader(s):** Your role today will be to adumbrate the speaker’s disciplinary perspective. Your goal is to make sure the common thread of the course, the investigation of interdisciplinary epistemologies, is present in discussion.

1. Spend 15 minutes filling out the Interdisciplinary Perspectives Worksheet before class.
2. Consider consulting written resources, but also living resources, like your colleagues at ICGC (peers or faculty), or other experts on campus.
3. Pay special attention during the Guest Speaker’s talk, and make sure they answer all of the questions on the worksheet.
4. Pose additional disciplinary questions to the speaker.
5. Be prepared to be a resource for your peers
Memo Writing Prompts

What follows is a list of writing prompts to aid you in your weekly memo writing assignment. Some weeks it will be easier to come up with ideas for a memo than others; considering this list of questions will help you engage with the readings. Do not feel limited to the bounds of these questions—feel free to write about what is important to you about the readings. These memos are developed to be used by your future self—to track the progress of your intellectual inquiry around these topics, and to provide yourself with breadcrumbs to follow on future occasions when the reading is not as fresh in your mind. Whether you answer the same question every week, multiple questions in one memo, or questions of your own, be sure to make the memo meaningful to you.

1. What makes this discipline different than your own? Similar to your own?
2. How could your discipline be used by the author(s)? Is this type of interdisciplinary combination common?
3. How could you use the methods laid out in the reading in your own project?
4. What disciplines could be used to strengthen the position of the author(s) argument(s)?
5. Do you agree with this “way of knowing” the “truth” about global food security?
6. How does this perspective define the challenge of global food security? What is missing?
7. What aspects of global food security did the authors cover particularly well?
8. Are there certain theoretical strains in your own discipline that would be more amenable to this research/method than others?
9. How did the prose from this discipline surprise you?
10. What is the series of rhetorical moves that the author(s) made? Was there a move that seemed particularly weak?
11. How would this research articulate with some of the other perspectives we addressed in previous readings and discussion?
12. Which aspects of global food security did you think this discipline would highlight/downplay? Were you right?