I. Basic Information
Semester: Fall 2012
Course location: 2108 A+AB
Course meeting time: Mon/Wed 10:30a.m. – 12p.m.
Instructor: Lesli Hoey
Contact information: Office 3137 A+AB, lhoey@umich.edu
Office Hours: Mon 1p.m. to 3 p.m. / Wed 12p.m. to 2p.m.

II. Description and Purpose
This course introduces ways of understanding, analyzing and shaping food systems. Food systems are inherently ‘wicked’ problems, affected by multidimensional issues and interdependent actors at multiple scales. Food, therefore, serves as an important platform for any future activist, action researcher, planner or policymaker to learn critical analytical, planning, and communication skills for understanding and addressing other equally complex public problems. When it comes to re-imagining food systems, there are no ‘right’ answers. Efforts to improve food systems often remain paper plans or only make slow progress, however, because they overlook unique and dynamic contextual factors, emphasize particular aspects at the expense of others – economic priorities rather than social, health or environmental, for instance – or pay too little attention to local buy-in or resource and capacity constraints. The immediate purpose of this course is to prepare you to facilitate more effective food system change, whether in your own neighborhood, as a city planner, researcher, or as part of a non-governmental organization. To do this, the course will 1) expose you to the inherent complexities of food systems and 2) introduce you to strategies and skills useful for analyzing and planning food systems.

We will do this by critically examining historical and contemporary trends in food systems from environmental, socio-political, health and economic perspectives along with emerging strategies for facilitating the development of more equitable, sustainable and healthy food systems. Our readings will cover food system planning tools, theoretical debates, empirical findings, policies, grassroots movements, and governance strategies. Most examples come from the US, but discussions will also draw on global issues and lessons. No prior course work is required. While the course is geared towards master’s students in Urban and Regional Planning, the content is appropriate for (and would benefit from the involvement of) students in a variety of other fields.

III. Learning Objectives
Specifically, by the end of this course, you should be able to:
1. Effectively communicate about food systems with different audiences
2. Contrast the evidence and underlying values/perspectives shaping major food policy debates
3. Analyze social, economic, health, environmental, urban and globalized dimensions of food systems
4. Apply strategies for food system assessment and planning

IV. Course Format and My Assumptions
I expect that students will have a range of knowledge and experience related to food systems – those perspectives will offer critical contributions to our discussions. At times, we will be discussing controversial issues. I expect us to all create an atmosphere that is respectful – to aim to not necessarily agree, but to gain deeper understanding. We will use CTools for downloading readings, supplemental resources, and for posting reading responses. You should feel free to read each other’s comments ahead of time to discuss in class. I will also create a section in CTools where any of us can post links that relate directly to the class, including links to food-related Ann Arbor/Detroit or other regional events, talks, film reviews, blogs, news articles, youtube.com videos, additional readings you’d recommend.
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V. Grading Procedure
Your performance in this class will be based on a combination of participation (which includes two presentations and written responses to the readings) and three assignments.

Grading Weights
15% Participation (10 reading responses, presentations, involvement in discussions, etc.)
25% APA/Farm Bill Policy Brief
25% Food Actor Practitioner Profile
35% Food systems assessment tool or strategy analysis

Grading Scale:
98 or more = A+
93 to 97 = A
90 to 92 = A-
88 to 89 = B+
83 to 87 = B
80 to 82 = B-
78 to 79 = C+
73 to 77 = C
70 to 72 = C-
60 to 69 = D

Feedback options
You have the option to choose a deadline that matches the kind of help you want with your writing.

Deadline I: If you turn in your paper 7 days before the posted deadline (e.g., by October 10 if the posted deadline is October 17), you’ll get it back with comments. Rewrite and resubmit the paper for grading at Deadline III.

Deadline II: If you turn in your final version 3 days before the posted deadline (e.g., by October 14 if the posted deadline is October 17), you’ll get it back with comments and a grade. With this option, you do not rewrite and resubmit the paper.

Deadline III: This is the FINAL deadline posted on the syllabus. If you turn in your paper at this time, you will get it back with a grade, but no comments.

Extra credit options
You have the option of gaining extra points if you attend any events, talks or watch other films, TED talks or other relevant videos (an hour or longer) that clearly relate to food AND if you write a 600 word response (about how it related to topics covered in the course). For each response you write about these additional activities, you will receive one extra point (and you can do this three times, to receive a total of three extra points toward your final grade). These can be turned in anytime until December 3.

VII. Course Requirements
You will receive additional information about each of the assignments below as we do them. You are expected to complete several activities for the “participation” grade, and three assignments.

Participation
Your participation grade will be based on your completion of several types of activities that will not be formally graded, though all will be counted as ‘complete’ or ‘not complete’. These include:

- Short in-class exercises we will do in class (minute papers, anonymous quizzes, class opinion polls, etc.) to help me learn about your prior knowledge, comprehension of concepts we cover, remaining questions you have, and offer me feedback so that I can correct major gaps in your learning and adjust the course over time.
Two class presentations/discussions

You and/or a partner will lead to give us all a chance to cover more ground (in relation to understanding the implications of the Food Bill) and learn from each other about the variety of methods for doing food system analysis and unique ideas for reshaping food systems. Trying to condense your written assignments on these topics into a short amount of time – 10 to 20 minutes (depending on the size of the class) – will also be useful for you to focus your writing. The feedback you receive, the discussion that ensues, and what you learn from other presentations will also be useful for strengthening your final written assignments.

Written responses

You will complete on the readings and documentaries to improve your ability to retain the ideas discussed while strengthening your overall writing (by being concise!) and prepare for class discussions. I encourage you to do more than the number I require - the mini annotated bibliography you’ll create will be useful for the assignments in this course and future courses/work. In your responses, do not simply summarize the main points. Instead, ask questions the readings raised for you, challenge the ideas/findings discussed, consider the practical implications of the readings for your future work/research, explain what was surprising and why, discuss issues the author did not raise, etc. Note that you must turn in 10 out of 19 responses (roughly one every other class) over the course of the semester, based on any of the topic areas we will cover. Responses should focus on the readings for the upcoming class and must be between 150 and 300 words. Postings are due by 9 a.m. on the day that class meets.

Practitioner Profile

For this assignment, identify someone (preferably in the surrounding region so you can meet face-to-face) involved in efforts to strengthen food systems in some way. Your interview will follow the methodology of “practitioner profiles” (for examples and more explanation see http://courses2.cit.cornell.edu/fit117/) which allow you to see into the realities of doing food systems planning and action. Your analysis section should refer to relevant readings and topics we discussed over the semester that help interpret the food actor’s strategies. Focus on misperceptions in the broader public about this type of work, the challenges of this work, additional questions raised, unique ideas about how to improve food systems, other issues or ideas not touched on in the literature, etc. We will discuss how to do practitioner profiles in more depth in a few weeks. Your write-up will include the transcribed interview along with your analysis and reflection. For a one-hour interview, the final paper with the analysis should be approximately 20 to 30 pages, double spaced, 12pt font, 1-inch margins. This can be turned in at any time until the last day of class. Consult me about your ideas of who to interview before moving forward.

Policy Brief on Farm Bill Implications for Community and Regional Food Planning

For this assignment, you will work in pairs (of your own choosing) to conduct an analysis suggested in the Policy Guide on Community and Regional Food Planning adopted by the American Planning Association (APA) in 2007, which states: “Analyze how different titles of the Farm Bill affect communities and regions, pose barriers to achieving goals of community and regional food planning, and in particular, how they may affect planners’ ability to implement actions recommended in General Policies #1 through #6. (p. 18).” This exercise – particularly the presentations everyone will give in class – will allow us divide up our time to study the unwieldy Farm Bill while allowing you each to become familiar in-depth with one particular aspect that interests you. Everyone should use the policies APA has suggested food-related planners follow as a framework (which any food activist, practitioner or action researcher would be interested in following), but your team can also choose to think about the implications of a certain Farm Bill section for local food systems strengthening in a low-income country. Along with the 15-20 minute presentation/discussion you will lead with the class (depending on the class size), you should write a policy brief summarizing your findings: 5-pages, double-spaced, 12-pt font, 1-inch margins. Each pair will receive the same grade.
Analysis of a Food Planning/Assessment Tool or Strategy for Strengthening Food Systems
For this assignment, you will choose a food systems assessment tool or strategy to study. You should draw on the readings earlier in the class to frame your analysis (i.e. does it do a good job of covering food justice issues but not economic implications or the reverse? etc.), and you should also consult as many outside sources that offer critiques and lessons learned about the assessment tool(strategy strengths and weaknesses. This is not intended to be a case study (a study of one program or place), or a hypothetical review of an assessment method, but a comparative analysis of a food assessment tool or strategy tried in two or more places, so that we can begin to see how contextual factors influence the outcomes or require adaptations. A few weeks into the semester, we will discuss the range of food systems analysis tools and strategies that could serve as good paper topics (e.g., food systems analysis can include food policy councils, search conferences, the Household Food Insecurity Access Scale, Community Food Assessments, etc. while strategies for strengthening food systems can include conditional cash transfer programs focused on nutrition, school food programs, vertical farming, etc). You are also welcome to analyze another food systems assessment approach or strategy as long as there is sufficient and varied secondary data, studies, critique, documentation, etc. from which to draw to inform your analysis. Along with the 15-20 minute presentation/discussion (depending on the class size) you will lead with the class on your paper topic, the final paper should be approximately 15-20 pages, double-spaced, 12-pt font, 1-inch margins.

VIII. Course Policies

Academic Integrity:
If you are concerned that you might be plagiarizing – using the words, data, images or ideas of others without clear attribution – you probably are. You are responsible for knowing the guidelines established by the University of Michigan Rackham Graduate School for documenting the use of source materials (http://www.rackham.umich.edu/policies/academic_and_professional_integrity/). Scott Campbell also has a useful site for explaining plagiarism (and other useful advice for improving your writing) (http://www-personal.umich.edu/~sdcamp/up540/writingtips.html). If you are confused, speak to me.

Accommodations for students with disabilities
In compliance with the University of Michigan Rackham Graduate School policy, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for students with disabilities. Requests for academic accommodations are to be made during the first three weeks of the semester, except for unusual circumstances, so arrangements can be made. Students are encouraged to register with Office of Services for Students with Disabilities to determine eligibility for appropriate accommodations. See: http://www.rackham.umich.edu/policies/accommodations_for_graduate_students_with_disabilities/

IX. Readings
There is no required textbook for this class. Course readings (below) will be made available via CTools (all articles or chapters of books) and/or through library reserves in the Art, Architecture and Engineering Library.

The only book I encourage you to get costs $12 to $14 on Amazon: Food Fight: The Citizen's Guide to the Next Food and Farm Bill. This will be essential reading for the APA/Farm Bill assignment you will do in early October, and it serves as a great reference book for a variety of background material on food policy. Two copies will also be on reserve at the Art, Architecture and Engineering Library.
X. Course Calendar and Reading List

Wednesday Sept 5 – First Class

Monday Sept 10 – Framing food systems
- Heller, M and Keoleian, G. 2000. Life Cycle-Based Sustainability Indicators for Assessment of the US Food System. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Center for Sustainable Systems. **READ pp. 6-10, 36-48, and one section of your choice between pages 10 and 36 (i.e. the Origin of Source section or the End of Life section, etc.)**

Wednesday Sept 12 – Framing food systems

Monday Sept 17 – History

Wednesday Sept 19 – Corporate role

Monday Sept 24 – Corporate role
Wednesday Sept 26 – Environment (biofuels and natural resource management)

Monday October 1 – Environment (impacts of food systems processes)

Wednesday October 3 – Environment (food miles and transportation)

Monday October 8 – The Farm Bill and Food Planning (student presentations)

Wednesday October 10 – The Farm Bill and Food Planning (student presentations)

Monday October 15 – FALL BREAK

Wednesday October 17 – Waste
**FINAL DEADLINE in class and on CTools at 10:30a.m.: Farm Bill & APA policy brief**

Monday October 22 – Health
Wednesday October 24 – Food deserts

Monday October 29 – Food justice

Wednesday October 31 – Food justice

Monday November 5 – Food justice

Wednesday November 7 – Farm workers
Monday November 12 – Food as economic driver

Wednesday November 14 – Localization debates

Monday November 19 – Urban agriculture

Wednesday November 21 – Urban agriculture

THANKSGIVING (Nov 22-Nov 25)

Monday November 26 – Film or speaker, TBD

Wednesday November 28 – Food systems assessments and strategies presentations

Monday December 3 – Food systems assessments and strategies presentations

Wednesday December 5 – Food systems assessments and strategies presentations

Monday December 10 – Last Class

NOTE: The FINAL deadline for your assessment/strategy analysis is **7 days after your presentation**: If you presented Nov 28 – paper is due Dec 5 at 10:30, in class and on CTools If you presented Dec 3 – your paper is due December 10 by 10:30 a.m., in class and on CTools If you presented December 5 – your paper is due December 12 by 10:30a.m. on CTools

Tuesday December 18th
** FINAL DEADLINE at 12p.m., NOON on CTools (if not completed earlier): Practitioner profiles**