N327 - Food Systems and Sustainable Diets - Fall 2019

**Time:** Thursdays from 1:30 PM – 4:30 PM.
**Instructor:** Hugh Joseph - hjoseph@tufts.edu

**Course summary:**
Perspectives on sustainable food systems and sustainable diets will address social, economic, governance, health, cultural, and environmental dimensions. Systems-based, multi-disciplinary approaches are key to understanding these from holistic perspectives. Topics covered include biodiversity, climate change, local food systems, food waste, livestock/meat; literacy; oceans & seafood; water and beverages; sustainable dietary guidelines. A particular emphasis is sustainable diets and dietary guidance; specifically, how can food consumption serve as a critical change model for producing a more sustainable food system?

The course emphasizes active class participation, including student-led presentations and group activities designed to build skills in applying sustainability and food system concepts to real-world situations. Assignments will focus on understanding the interplay of multiple facets of sustainable food systems, and how to navigate their complexities to produce practical outcomes in domains such as public policy, agricultural and food industry practices, public health nutrition, NGO advocacy, and communications.

There are no course prerequisites, but as an advanced course, first year students should have a reasonable background in food systems education and/or experience. If unsure, please contact the instructor or enroll and come to the first class to evaluate your readiness for it.

Note: A detailed week-by-week syllabus from 2018 is available by contacting the instructor: hugh.joseph@tufts.edu.

**Course Learning Objectives. By taking this course, students will be able to:**
- Analyze food systems in terms of their interlinked components - including agriculture, processing, distribution and consumption – with broader socio-economic, environmental and cultural aspects of human diets.
- Apply systems-based and multi-disciplinary approaches to assess contemporary sustainability-related policies and practice.
- Address specific aspects of food systems sustainability, such as waste, climate change, biodiversity, food security, resource use, and global pollution.
- Connect diets / food consumption to overall food systems sustainability, including economic, ecology, food justice, and animal welfare concerns.
- Apply assessment tools to compare the sustainability of various foods and diets.
- Formulate practical guidance for sustainable diets in varied settings and contexts – institutions, food service, education, government, and NGOs.
**Weekly overview:** Classes are 3 hours (Thursdays, 1:30 PM - 4:30 PM) and will generally include the following:

(a) Interactive lectures on specific food system topics (see weekly summaries).
(b) Overviews of systems, systems thinking, sustainability, food systems, sustainable diets, ethics, framing, etc.
(c) Group exercises where students apply these themes to food supply chains and sustainable diets in terms of assessments, policies, and/or practices.
(d) In-class discussions on students’ selected topics (see list below).

**Readings:** Weekly readings will incorporate the following:
- Assigned articles or book chapters - typically two or three each week.
- An additional student-selected reading for class discussion.
- Students will also review additional literature for their weekly assignments and major paper.

**Assignments:**

A: **Weekly mini-assignments:** On many weeks, there will be short written assignments covering the major themes and/or exercises to be used as part of class discussions.

B: **Major paper:** Papers will comprise a sustainable systems-based assessment, incorporating tools, techniques, and insights covered throughout the course, resulting in an applied example of food systems / diets interactions, to synthesize some of the complexities of food systems and sustainability, and to apply this to potential policy, education, or practice settings. In 2018, most students compared two or more foods or food systems strategies, including multi-criteria assessments.

C: **Topics for student-led class discussions:** Many applied aspects sustainable food systems – supply chains and diets - will be addressed via a weekly reading, based on student selections. These can include:

- Agroecology
- Climate change
- Community / regional food systems
- Fair trade
- Food industry / food processing
- Food marketing
- Food quality / taste
- Food rights
- True cost of food
- Food security / food access
- Labor and food justice
- Nutrition and personal health
- Obesity and health
- Organic production
- Oceans and waterways
- Fish and other seafood

**Grades** are based on three components:

A. Weekly assignments and exercises: 40%
B. Major paper: 50%
C. Class participation - includes consistent and timely class attendance, completing required readings on time, preparation for class discussions, and active in-class involvement: 10%
**Weekly Syllabus Summary:** (Note: 2018’s detailed weekly syllabi available by request to instructor – hugh.joseph@tufts.edu).

9-5: Week 1

Key themes:
- Course overview
- Food systems - concepts and models
- Food systems - history / terminologies

9-12: Week 2

Key themes:
- Sustainability
- Sustainable food systems
- Organics

9-19: Week 3

Key themes:
- Sustainable diets
- Food security and sustainability
- Food systems thinking

9-27: Week 4

Key themes:
- Sustainable food consumption (vs. diets)
- Footprints / lifecycles

10-3: Week 5

Key themes:
- Environmental footprints
- GMOs

10-10: Week 6

Key themes:
- Sustainable agriculture
- Sustainability of beverages
- Food justice - fair trade
10-17: Week 7

Key themes:
- Localism
- Sustainability and food service / restaurants

10-24: Week 8

Key themes:
- Focal and regional food systems
- Oceans and seafood

10-31: Week 9

Key themes:
- Multi-criteria assessment
- Food system ethics
- Food as a commons

11-7: Week 10

Key themes:
- Sustainability assessments
- Food justice

11-14: Week 11

Key themes:
- Sustainability assessments (continued)
- Sustainable dietary guidelines (SDG)
- True cost of food

11-21: Week 12

Key themes:
- Food systems - waste and losses
- Sustainable dietary guidelines (SDG)
- Animal welfare

12-5: Week 13

Key themes:
- Student major paper presentations