

FDSC 421-Food Systems: Farm to Fork
Course Syllabus
Spring 2025

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Course Description: This course will introduce students to the concept of *food* systems at the local, regional, and global levels. Students will examine and reflect on critical issues influencing food production, processing, distribution, and consumption. Scientific and technical publications, multimedia presentations, field experiences, observations, informal interviews, and class discussions will be used to promote student understanding.

Text:

Chase, L. & Grubinger, V. (2014), *Food, farms, and community: Exploring food systems*. Lebanon, NH: University of New Hampshire Press.

Other course material will come from a variety of sources including scientific and professional journals, publications from governmental agencies, information from agricultural organizations, multimedia presentations, and personal field experiences. Some of the handouts used (with permission) are from the *Teaching the Food System* curriculum initiative at Johns Hopkins School of Public Health (foodspanlearning.org), a project which the professor participated in field testing of the original materials and provided review for revision. A complete curriculum is for teaching mostly middle and high school students is available from this source. Documents/handouts/media will be provided through your university D2L account. Access to the Internet and a printer are essential.

A Facebook group page, specifically for this class will also be used to disseminate relevant news and opportunities for extended learning as well as provide opportunities to further develop your skill in the use of social media. Therefore, you will need a Facebook account for this course in order to fully benefit from course content and activities. Students choosing not to submit their assignments through Facebook to allow for peer review and further discussion will not be able to earn full credit for those assignments and must communicate directly with the professor regarding options for submitting those assignments in an alternative format.

Student Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of the course the student will be able to-

- a. **Learning Outcome 1:** Students will be able to demonstrate *knowledge* of issues, processes, trends, and systems in context of food production, processing, and distribution.
- b. **Learning Outcome 2:** Students will be able to *apply* knowledge about issues, processes, trends, and systems in context of local/regional food production and processing through course discussions and assignments.
- c. **Learning Outcome 3:** Students will be able to *evaluate* conditions for establishing and maintaining local/regional food production or processing enterprises.
- d. **Learning Outcome 4:** Students will be able to *synthesize* observations, discussions, interview results, and other course activities in a final exam or *Reflective Essay* supported with properly cited references and examples.

The instructor reserves the right to modify this syllabus during the semester, if needed. The instructor also reserves the right to extend credit for alternative assignments, projects, or presentations. Some elements of grading may be delegated to a teaching assistant for this course.

The following instructional objectives will guide course content to achieve these outcomes.

1. Define the phrase *food systems* and contextualize within a local, regional, and global perspective.
2. Communicate issues related to food systems using accurate terms, definitions, and descriptions.
3. Interpret research, technical, and trade publications related to food systems.
4. Discuss the concepts of local, regional, global, and community food systems.
5. Determine regulatory influences on food production, distribution, and consumption.
6. Examine economic factors affecting food production, distribution, and consumption.
7. Review ecological and environmental factors associated with food systems.
8. Compare food processing for local, regional, and global food systems.
9. Analyze criticism of animal agriculture as a component of food systems.
10. Explore issues related to food safety and hygiene.
11. Appreciate the impact of labor and technology used in farming and food processing.
12. Recognize the diversity of products and production methods in food systems.
13. Participate in activities designed to promote career awareness and development in food systems.
14. Engage in farm-based activities that contribute to local or regional food systems.
15. Synthesize course topics, resources, activities, and perspective into an essay regarding food systems.
16. Engage in social media relevant to informal learning and marketing used by local food producers.

Grade Determination:

	<i>Possible Points</i>
Online discussions (12 Modules @ 20 per module)	240
Assignment #1 Review of research article	100
Service Learning/Career Awareness & Development Engagement	100
Farm-Based Experiential Learning Activities	100
Assignment #2 Fabulous Farm to Fork Food Systems Finale	100

$$\text{Your Grade (\%)} = \frac{\text{Points Earned} \times 100}{640} \quad (\text{A} = 90\text{-}100 \text{ B} = 80\text{-}89 \text{ C} = 70\text{-}79 \text{ D} = 60\text{-}69 \text{ F} = \text{below } 60\%)$$

Class Engagement for All Course Activities

This is a “flipped” or web-enhanced course, where most media-related activities and handouts are available online for review outside of class. There are related online discussion prompts for each module that serve as formative assessments for each module. There will be 10 online modules (or units) for this course which are opened and closed following a schedule. Additionally, there will be weekly lecture/discussion with outside of class-time farm-based experiential learning activities and designated service learning projects from which you can choose.

Attendance and Participation in Class/Online Discussions

You are expected to attend each class period ready to participate in discussion and other class activities. Participation in face to face class activities will enhance your understanding and perspectives related to the various aspects of food systems. Each module will have 2-3 online discussion prompts related to the reading assignments, multimedia presentations, and other course activities. Replies to the discussions will be due by 11:50 p.m. the first Sunday following when the module is posted/opened. In order to get full credit for online discussion, a reply to each prompt must be posted in a timely manner.

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Assignment #1

Each student will select a research article from one of the journals recommended by the professor. The article must address research relevant to some aspect of food systems. Further discussion in class and directions in D2L will clarify how this review should be presented.

Food-based Service Learning/Career Awareness & Development Engagement

Each student is expected to engage in **at least one service-learning activity related to food systems**.

Pre-approved examples include:

- Five hour volunteer service to the Lion Food Pantry or Commerce Food Pantry,
- Five hour volunteer service in “dirt therapy” such as community or school garden,
- Train or judge youth in food preparation through 4-H or FCCLA activities/events,
- Plan, organize, and host an Agriculture/Food related science and/or history fair

Each student is also required to assist with the Area V & VI FFA Career Development Event on either **Monday, April 15 or Tuesday, April 16**. This is an *all-day* event (on April 16) and will count as an official university excused absence. There will be a variety of events in Commerce and Sulphur Springs for you to choose from to participate. I can assist you in determining how to fit these events into your class schedule although, as previously mentioned, this is a university excused absence.

Please note that credit will only be awarded for service-learning activities completed during the Spring 2024 semester.

Assignment #2 Fabulous Farm to Fork Meal Preparation and Sharing

Students will plan, prepare, and share a meal using local ingredients that they have selected. Meal preparation and serving will be conducted on-your own. You will be to create a video presentation of 8-10 minutes that highlights and explains the sources, ingredients, preparation, cooking, and other key factors. You may work in groups, if preferred. The video will need to be posted on our Facebook course group page as well as in the assignment folder. This serves as our final exam.

Farm-Based Experiential Learning Activities

Each student is expected to engage in **at least 10 hours of experiential learning activities** at the TAMUC Twin Oaks Farm for Experiential Learning or other instructor-approved site. These activities may include pruning, painting, preparing seedbed, and planting. A safety orientation/training session will be included. Additionally, space will be designated to allow students to prepare and plant their own vegetable plots. Verification of hours engaged must be documented by a university faculty or GA.

Written Assignments and Format

Essays and other assignments should be written in a format compatible with the *American Psychological Association (APA) Manual for Publication*, 7th or latest edition. A synopsis and tutorial on scientific writing, including the use of APA format is available from the Online Writing Lab at Purdue University (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>). Personal face-to-face assistance with editing and format suggestions is also available from the on-campus Writing Center at TAMU-Commerce.

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