

Bennington Farm to Plate

ENV 4256.01

Dr. Valerie Imbruce

4 credits, Wed 2-6pm

Dickinson 212

Office hours: Tues and Thurs 1-2pm. Sign up on my office door.

Office: Barn 219

vimbruce@bennington.edu

ph. 802-440-4891

In 2011, Vermont released its Farm to Plate Strategic Plan to provide a rationale and approach to increase economic development in Vermont's food and farm sector and improve access to healthy, local foods. Much of this work is to be done by a network of devoted individuals and organizations across the state, including a nascent Farm to Plate Council in Bennington. In this course we will contribute to the statewide effort by conducting research on food and farm issues in the Bennington region. Students will learn methods for making systematic observations about food production, distribution, or consumption, interpreting the data collected, and documenting results. Students in the course will engage in group projects and an individual project of their own design. We will also collaborate with Kate Purdie's documentary production course to explore video as a means of documentation.

Books

Required

- Albers. 2000. *Hands on the Land: A History of the Vermont Landscape*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Hinrichs and Lyson (eds.) 2007. *Remaking the North American Food System: Strategies for Sustainability*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

Recommended

- Vitek and Jackson. 1996. *Rooted in the Land: Essays on Community and Place*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

***all other readings will be available on the library e-reserves. The password for the course is **food**. Please refer to your email for more detailed instructions.

Course Learning Objectives

- To learn how to design and carry out a geographically situated research projects using qualitative and quantitative methods;
- To understand the functionality of Bennington's regional food system through review of primary literature, field based data collection and review of documentary film;
- To learn how to communicate research results to a diverse audience.

Course Organization, Attendance and Assessment:

The course meets once per week for 3 hours and 50 minutes. Some class days you will be asked to meet at 1pm to facilitate field trips. You are expected to be on time and prepared. Participation in class discussion and activities is a core requirement of the course. There may be course related events that will take place outside of our regular meeting time, documentary film screenings and community meetings that you will be asked to attend. Please inform me as soon as you know that you will not be able to attend a class, or soon after sickness or emergency. You may be permitted one absence that must be excused by me. Excessive lateness may be considered an absence. Class absences that are not excused may result in no credit for the course. Failure to complete assignments or plagiarism can also result in failure of the course.

Your evaluation will be based on the following criteria:

Course Evaluation
20% Class Participation
20% Weekly assignments
20% Class Project
40% Research Project

Course Schedule – may be subject to change

PART ONE

Wed Feb 20: Bennington's food system

- Read Albers, *Hands on the Land*
- In class review of the reports Bennington Farm to Plate Connecting the Dots and BF2P Action Plan

Wed Feb 27: Constraints on production and consumption of local food

2:10-4pm: Meet in Kintoteca for in class film screenings of *Lilac Ridge* and *Greenhorns* with Purdie's class

4:10-6pm: Meet in DKS 212

- Read the Introduction, Chapters 1, 2, 6 and 10 from Hinrichs and Lyson, *Remaking the North American Food System*

Due: 2-3 page response to the question "How can we apply the concepts and frameworks discussed in Hinrichs and Lyson about American food system reform to Bennington?"

Sat Mar 2 – Walloomsac Farmers Market, meet at flagpole at 10am

Wed Mar 6: Interviewing and study design of barriers to use of local food

2:10-4pm: Meet in film equipment room for discussion on interviewing techniques with Purdie's class

- Read Bernard, *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology* Chapters 4, 10 and 11.

4:10-6pm: Meet in DKSN 212 for a discussion with guest Alisa del Tufo on designing a study to assess barriers to use of local food by low-income populations in Bennington

- Read selections from Ver Ploeg et al. (2009). *Access to affordable and nutritious food—measuring and understanding food deserts and their consequences: Report To Congress*

Due: 2-3 page summary of Ver Ploeg and development of 2-3 questions regarding food access in Bennington – be ready to present your ideas in class discussion

Wed Mar 13: Guest panel of Walloomsac Farmers Market Board Members

- Read Chapter 3 and 12 from Hinrichs and Lyson, *Remaking the North American Food System*
- Read Duffany, *The Effects of Farmers Markets on Community Development: A Case for Social and Economic Embeddedness at the Market Place*
- Read an article of your choosing on ways to connect farmers with low-income consumers, or make local food more affordable (example ideas are mobile farmers' markets and use SNAP benefits at farmers' markets)

Due: 2-3 page response to readings addressing the question "What are the limitations of the farmers' market model to connect local farms with a diverse clientele and what solutions have been proposed?"

Wed Mar 20: Bennington's food environment

2:10-4pm: Meet in Kinoteca for review of recorded interviews with Purdie's class

4:10-6pm: Field trip to Bennington retail food outlets

- Readings and assignment TBD

Wed Mar 27: Field trip or other activity

- Readings and assignment TBD

Wed Apr 3: Happenstance Farm and School House Dairy, Eagle Bridge, NY.

- Readings and assignment TBD

LONG WEEKEND

PART TWO of the course will be designed as a class.