Course Description:
This is a graduate level reading seminar in American History. Our emphasis this semester will be on the production, labor, and cultural significance of food. In ways that may prove surprising, the labor and systems surrounding food connect to almost all aspects of the American experience. An understanding of this subject will provide students with a firm foundation to continue their graduate level education and may prove useful for a variety of related topics. Studying agriculture and food will bring us in contact with immigration, environment, and political history as well as gender specific topics pertinent to farming. You will never look at food and agriculture the same way again.

Course Expectations and Outcomes:
At the graduate level students must expect a considerable amount of reading. Students who do not keep up with readings will not excel in the course. Students will read for comprehension of the historical material, source analysis, thesis development, and organization. This is work that professional historians complete regularly and is a good introduction into how history is written. Additionally students will be responsible for writing professional reviews of the books and be expected to discuss them in class. The writing and discussion aspects of this class are equally important – failure to participate will result in a substantial decrease in grades. Students will also be expected to write a literature review of 3 articles written about related topic of their own choosing. This review will be due at the end of the semester and be worth 100 points.

Writing book reviews:
For each book students will complete a 500-750 word, typed, double-spaced book review. This review should fairly assess the content and style of the book. Examples of reviews are available and can be consulted but each review must be original. Any quotes from the book must be cited correctly. Quotes from other reviews are NOT permitted. The review is due at the beginning of the class in which the book is being discussed. Each review is worth 25 points. NO email submissions will be accepted.

Historiography Paper:
As a cumulative project for the semester, students are required to locate and read three or four full length scholarly articles about a topic relative to the course. The historiography paper is an opportunity for students to synthesize and evaluate these articles based on their source material, topical focus, writing style, and the historic relevance of the article. This project needs to engage all the selected articles specifically and as a group. If one or more articles are not available online, a hard copy must be
provided to the instructor. Additional information about this project will be provided during the semester. This paper will be worth 100 points.

In Class Discussion:

For some students the discussion in the course will prove the most challenging. Students need to come to each class – no exceptions!! Graduate courses are not like undergraduate courses where attendance is optional. If students cannot attend these classes they should not take this course. Students must come prepared each evening to discuss the book. Unprepared students will lose points. Every meeting one student will take the lead as “discussion leader”. This person will be responsible for preparing questions and topics of discussion about the readings for that night. Students who refuse to participate will lose points. Graduate level education is a mutually driven experience – the professor is there to guide discussion, not lecture. Discussion is worth 200 points over the course of the semester.

Required Texts – students MUST purchase or have read the following books before the due date for the review – NO EXCEPTIONS!!! These books are available for purchase at the bookstore and online. I am encouraging you to look for affordable used sources for all these books, some even have Kindle versions available. The first full night of class will require article readings that will be provided on Blackboard.

Food Politics by Marion Nestle (California) 0520254031
Trucking Country by Shane Hamilton (Princeton) 0691135827
School Lunch Politics by Susan Levine (Princeton) 0691146195
Revolution at the table by Harvey Levinstein 0520234391
97 Orchard by Jane Zeigleman (Harper Collins) 0061288500
Hoboes, Bindlestiffs, and Fruit Tramps by Mark Wyman (Hill and Wang) 0809030217
Fruits of Their Labor by Cindy Hahamovitch 0807846392
Every Farm a Factory by Deborah Fitzgerald (Yale) 0300111282

Schedule

Monday Jan. 17 – No Class – MLK Day

Monday Jan. 24 – Class Introductions – using databases and library resources for graduate education

Monday Jan. 31 – Discussing articles – students pick two (available on BlackBoard)

Monday Feb.7 – Read and Discuss 97 Orchard – review due
Monday Feb. 14 – Read and Discuss Revolution at the Table – review due
Monday Feb. 21 – Read and Discuss Fruits of Their Labor – review due
Monday Feb. 28 – Read and Discuss Hoboes, Bindlestiffs – review due
Monday March 7 – Read and Discuss Every Farm a Factory – review due
Monday March 14 – No Class, Spring Break
Monday March 21 – Read and Discuss School Lunch Politics – review due
Monday March 28 – Read and Discuss Trucking Country – review due
Monday April 4 – Read and Discuss first half of Food Politics
Monday April 11 – Read and Discuss second half of Food Politics – review due
Monday April 18/25 No Class – Paper work time
Monday May 2 – Historiography Paper Due, Class will meet