

**EDU 098: Making Visible The People Who Feed Us: Labor in the Food System**

Wednesdays, 10 am – 11:50 am, Academic Surge 2375

2-3 credits

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**OVERVIEW:**

Do you ever wonder about the people behind the food we eat? Who are the people who work in the food system – those who produce, process, distribute, sell, and serve food? What are their stories and experiences? What knowledge and skills do they have? In this class, we will attempt to answer these questions by responding to and reflecting on a variety of sources that uncover the experiences of people who work in the food system and come from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. In particular, we will explore poems, comics, books, exposés, news articles, reports, radio segments, scholarly texts, excerpts of documentaries, short videos, and TED talks.

We will focus on making visible the people who work in the food system, especially those who tend to be hidden from public view or get little attention in the media. The guiding question that we explore in this class is: In what ways do texts make visible the sources of agency and oppression of the people who work in the food system? To address this question, we will explore the words, sounds, and/or visuals used in the texts; consider the purpose and audience of the texts; and draw upon complementary texts to shed light on how workers in the food system experience resist racial, gender, and/or class inequities and stereotypes or assumptions.

**GOALS:**

Through the completion of this course, students will develop their ability to:

- **Demonstrate** an understanding of how people who work in the food system exercise agency and also experience injustices shaped by the larger social, political, historical contexts
- **Demonstrate** an understanding of how multicultural, multimodal texts make visible the agency and oppression of people who work in the food system
- **Analyze** and produce texts, with attention to the meanings of language, visuals, and/or sounds as well as the purposes or functions of the texts
- **Examine** personal values, beliefs, assumptions as they relate to food and to the people who work in the food system
- **Grapple** with multiple values, beliefs, and perspectives about people who work in the food system and about the food system more broadly

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

There are no required texts for the course. All readings will be provided to you via SmartSite or in class.

**GRADING:**

Grading will be pass/no pass and will be based on timely and satisfactory completion of the following:

- **Introduction about yourself – DUE Tuesday, April 5 at 12 noon**  
Introduce yourself to everyone in class by writing or recording a blurb about yourself on SmartSite under Forums. Instructions will be provided as to what to include in your introduction. Read (or at least skim) your peers' introductions before class on Wednesday, April 6, so that you get to know your peers better.
- **Weekly 1-page response papers to the assigned texts (9 total) – DUE at 11:55 pm on the Monday before class**  
Every week, you will write or record a 400-500-word response (approximately – feel free to write a little more or less) to texts that highlight people who produce, process, distribute, sell, or serve food. A menu of prompts that you can respond to is on p. 4 of this syllabus. Each response is due Monday night at 11:55 pm on SmartSite.
- **Taste & Tell – once during the quarter**  
Once during the quarter, at the beginning of class, you will spend 3-5 minutes doing a “taste and tell” by sharing and/or talking about a food item that is personally or culturally important to you. This is meant to be a fun activity, and really anything goes. Please don't feel obligated to spend money for this.
- **Reflection on weekly response papers – DUE Wednesday, June 1 at 10 am**  
At the end of the quarter, you will re-read all of the response papers you've written this past quarter and write a 500-word (approximately) response in which you reflect on your response papers. More instructions will be given later in the quarter.
- **Mini-project proposal – DUE Wednesday, June 8 at 11:55 pm**  
At the end of the quarter, you will apply what you have learned throughout the course by developing a project proposal in which you propose the creation of your own text to further make visible the people who work in the food system. You will be given guidelines for developing your project proposal. You will submit a draft of your proposal by Wednesday, May 18 at 10 am. You will receive feedback on your proposal draft by Wednesday, May 25.
- **End-of-quarter reflection paper – DUE Wednesday, June 8 at 11:55 pm**  
At the end of the quarter, you will write a letter, addressed to me, in which you reflect on the course. More instructions will be provided later in the quarter.

- **Class participation and attendance**

You are expected to attend each class session and participate in discussions.

## **NORMS FOR CLASS PARTICIPATION**

We will develop norms for class participation together during the first class session.

## **ACADEMIC HONESTY**

All work you do for this class must be your own, and you must correctly cite and document your sources. Plagiarism will not be tolerated and assignments that are plagiarized will not receive credit. If you are unsure about what constitutes acceptable use of material from sources, please don't hesitate to ask me.

## **EMAIL AND SMARTSITE**

I will send announcements and updates about class activities as well as individual messages via email. It is your responsibility to check your UC Davis email regularly and to make sure there is adequate space in your mailbox.

Course materials will be available on SmartSite ([smartsite.ucdavis.edu](http://smartsite.ucdavis.edu)), and you will submit assignments via SmartSite's Assignment Tool. SmartSite is set so that late assignments will not be accepted.

## **NOTE**

The syllabus is subject to change. You are responsible for any additions or modifications that are announced in class or via email.

**Menu of Response Prompts for Weekly Response Papers**

In writing your weekly response papers, respond to any one (or a combination) of the following:

1. How did a particular part of the text make you feel? Explain why.
2. What does the text remind you of? Does it make you think of any other experiences or other feelings or other stories? If so, why?
3. What is a word, phrase, line, or passage in the text that stuck out for you? Why?
4. What social, cultural, political, and/or environmental issues does the text raise for you?
5. Talk back to the author: Imagine you got to interview the author. What questions would you ask, and why?
6. Write a letter to the author.
7. Talk back to the character(s) in the text: Imagine you got to chat with and/or interview the characters in the text. What questions would you ask, and why?
8. Write a letter to the character(s) in the text.
9. What's a connection (or two or more) you can make between this text and something you've experienced, felt, read, seen, heard about or learned?
10. Do a creative response to the text. Write a poem, a blog post, a song; draw a sketch, painting; create a digital story, game; or anything else you'd like.

**SCHEDULE**

	<b>In-class activities</b>	<b>To read/respond and do for the next class session</b>
<b>Week 1: March 30 Introduction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is a food system? Who works in the food system?</li> <li>• Go through syllabus and assignments</li> <li>• Respond to in-class text about work and workers more generally</li> <li>• In-class reflection: 3 points from today and a question</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write / record response to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 2 excerpts from Seth Holmes's <i>Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies</i> (2013): pp. 68-71 AND pp. 96-98</li> <li>○ trailer of <i>Food Chains</i> (2014) documentary (DUE April 4 by 11:55 pm = Response 1)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Post an introduction of yourself on SmartSite under Forums (DUE April 5 by 12 pm)</li> </ul>
<b>Week 2: April 6 Production (large-scale)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 points you remember from last session</li> <li>• Share responses to texts with one another in small groups and as a whole class</li> <li>• Introduce the concepts of agency and structure / structural oppression</li> <li>• In-class readings ("horizontal" texts) and small-group discussions and activities</li> <li>• Whole-group discussion: structure and agency among farmworkers</li> <li>• In-class reflection: 3 points from today and a question</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write / record response to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Video: "Hidden in the Harvest" by the Center for Investigative Reporting (DUE April 11 by 11:55 pm = Response 2)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Week 3: April 13 Production (small-scale)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 points you remember from last session</li> <li>• Share responses to texts with one another in small groups and as a whole class</li> <li>• In-class reading and small-group discussions and activities</li> <li>• Whole-group discussion: structure and agency among farmworkers</li> <li>• In-class reflection: 3 points from today and a question</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write / record response to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 2 out of the following 3 excerpts from Natasha Bowens's <i>The Color of Food</i> (2015): pp. 72-76 (Transforming the South); pp. 142-147 (A Farm of Her Own); pp. 150-154 (Defying the Odds) – you're more than welcome to read them all. (DUE April 18 by 11:55 pm = Response 3)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Week 4: April 20 Production (small-scale)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 points you remember from last session</li> <li>• Continuation of in-class reading and small-group discussions and activities</li> <li>• Share responses to texts with one another in small groups and as a whole class</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write / record response to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 2 excerpts from <i>Every Twelve Seconds: Industrialized Slaughter and the Politics of Sight</i> (2011) by Timothy Pachirat (author worked at a beef processing plant) – pp. 158-161 AND 213-225.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<b>In-class activities</b>	<b>To read/respond and do for the next class session</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whole-group discussion: structure and agency among farmworkers and farmers</li> <li>• In-class reflection: 3 points from today and a question</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Optional reading</i>: Appendix A: 121 jobs in the slaughterhouse) (DUE April 25 by 11:55 pm = Response 4)</li> </ul>
<b>Week 5: April 27 Processing (meat)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 points you remember from last session</li> <li>• Share responses to texts with one another in small groups and as a whole class</li> <li>• In-class reading and small-group discussions and activities (using different critical lenses)</li> <li>• Whole-group discussion</li> <li>• In-class reflection: 3 points from today and a question</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin thinking about project proposal and arrange meeting with Lina to discuss your idea</li> <li>• Write / record response to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Mac McClelland’s “I was a Warehouse Wage Slave” (2012) (DUE May 2 by 11:55 pm = Response 5)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Week 6: May 4 Distribution</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 points you remember from last session</li> <li>• Share responses to texts with one another in small groups and as a whole class</li> <li>• In-class reading and small-group discussions and activities (using different critical lenses)</li> <li>• Whole-group discussion</li> <li>• In-class reflection: 3 points from today and a question</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write / record response to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “Supermarket Checker: If You Want Personality, Then You Come to My Line”</li> <li>○ Excerpts from <i>Producing Consumption: Doing Work on a Supermarket Shop Floor</i> by Rachel Schwartz (2011): pp. 83-84, 90-93, AND 119-127 (DUE May 9 by 11:55 pm = Response 6)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Week 7: May 11 Retail</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 points you remember from last session</li> <li>• Share responses to texts with one another in small groups and as a whole class</li> <li>• In-class reading and small-group discussions and activities (using different critical lenses)</li> <li>• Whole-group discussion</li> <li>• In-class reflection: 3 points from today and a question</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write / record response to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Excerpt from “Working Life of a Waitress” by Mike Rose (2001), pp. 8-17 only (but you’re welcome to read the whole article if you’d like)</li> <li>○ Comic strips #1 and #6 about waitressing from “A Year in Waiting” (feel free to peruse the others) (DUE May 16 by 11:55 pm = Response 7)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Submit project proposal draft – DUE May 18 by 10 am</li> </ul>
<b>Week 8: May 18 Service (restaurants)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 points you remember from last session</li> <li>• Share responses to texts with one another in small groups and as a whole class</li> <li>• In-class reading and small-group discussions and activities (using different critical lenses)</li> <li>• Whole-group discussion</li> <li>• In-class reflection: 3 points from today and a question</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write / record response to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “What I Learned from Four Years Working at McDonalds” by Kate Norquay</li> <li>○ <i>Optional reading</i>: “Abolish Restaurants: A Worker’s Critique of the Food Service Industry” (DUE May 23 by 11:55 pm = Response 8)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<b>In-class activities</b>	<b>To read/respond and do for the next class session</b>
<b>Week 9: May 25 Service (fast food)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 points you remember from last session</li> <li>• Share responses to texts with one another in small groups and as a whole class</li> <li>• In-class reading and small-group discussions and activities (using different critical lenses)</li> <li>• Whole-group discussion</li> <li>• In-class reflection: 3 points from today and a question</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write / record response to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Schwartz's article (2015), "Rethinking Work" (DUE May 30 by 11:55 pm = Response 9)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• End-of-quarter reflection on response papers (DUE June 1 by 10 am)</li> </ul>
<b>Week 10: June 1 Synthesis &amp; Reflection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 points you remember from last session</li> <li>• Share responses to texts with one another in small groups and as a whole class</li> <li>• Share reflections on reflections</li> <li>• Provide feedback to one another's project proposal drafts (this should be given some time – workshop time)</li> <li>• In-class reflection: 3 points from today and a question</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep working on project proposal</li> <li>• Work on end-of-quarter reflection</li> </ul>
<b>Wednesday, June 8 at 11:55 pm: Project proposals and end-of-quarter reflection are due on SmartSite.</b>		