Revised syllabus: Food, Culture and Environment Manjari Chatterji

WRITING-BASED INQUIRY SEMINAR:
Food, Culture and Environment

Fall 2009
Sec 008 11.30-12.30
Sec 009 12.40-1.40

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Required Texts:
A Complicated Kindness by Miriam Toews(*Odyssey* text)
The Omnivore's Dilemma by Michael Pollan
A Writer's Resource: A Handbook for Writing and Research, ed. Maimon

Course Description: Is the party over, or is it just beginning? What about our love affair with cars? What happened to "shop till you drop"? What is the "New" American Dream? While we hear a good deal about the end of oil, the end of prosperity, tipping points, depletions, and recessions, we also hear good news about sustainability, renewable energy, green jobs, organic agriculture, electric cars and a bright future for humans, even to the 7th generation* as the Iroquois used to envision. What are the trade-offs as we globally address climate change? It is up to us to learn about and choose our options in an informed and open spirit. We can all agree that a SUV is better replaced by a smart car, but what about paper vs. plastic cups? Which has a higher carbon footprint? Can it be smarter for a shopper in Los Angeles to buy an avocado from water-rich New Zealand than from Southern California's irrigated desert? The answers are more complicated than they seem.

America spends more than $200,000 per minute on foreign oil -- $13 million per hour, according to the NRDC. Another fact from Richard Manning's "The Oil We Eat": More than 350 billion pounds of plastic is produced each year and nearly 10 percent of total US oil consumption - about two million barrels a day - is used to make plastic each year. Our current industrial system is run on oil: transport, chemicals, heating/cooling, medicine, plastics, agriculture(fertilizer, pesticides machinery)--everything is oil-derived. When the oil runs out, our civilization as we know it ends. Unless, we have alternatives for each of these needs, alternatives that are renewable and that do not contributing to global warming.

In this course we will explore these and related ideas in greater depth with particular focus on *a safe, healthy, and sustainable food system*. We will also develop our *writing skills* so we can articulate our understanding, and share our findings in meaningful ways.

***Seven generation sustainability** is an ecological concept that urges the current generation of humans to live sustainably and work for the benefit of the seventh generation into the future.

"In every deliberation, we must consider the impact on the **seventh generation**... even if it requires having skin as thick as the bark of a pine."—Great Law of the Iroquois (from Wikipedia)

Requirements and Evaluation:
Regular attendance, preparation and participation are 20% of the final grade. Short reports, library assignments, collaborative work including brainstorming, peer reviews of rough drafts, and editing are 10% of the final grade. Essays, presentations, and a research paper constitute 70%. The individual distribution of papers will be included in the handouts and is listed as follows:

DUE DATES and percentages

9/25 Essay # 1	15%
10/2 Debate	5%
10/9 Poster	5%
10/16 Essay # 2	15%
10/23 Outline	5%
10/30 Presentations	5%
11/6 Essay # 3	15%
11/20 Report	5%
12/16 Research paper	20%
Class Participation	10%

Other Important dates:

October: Earth Charter events

11/16 Library Orientation
11/23 Research Paper topic and bibliography due

Odyssey Program requirements:

- We will read and write about the novel A Complicated Kindness by Miriam Toews.
- Play Assignments: Sept. 21-25 (tba)

Earth Charter: please checkout www.uwosh.edu/earthcharter to understand ways in which this WBIS theme overlaps with the Earth Charter's goals of:

- Ecological Integrity

- Social & Economic Justice
- Democracy, Nonviolence & Peace

As a class, we shall attend EC events: tba (mid-October)

Attendance: After 3 absences your grade goes down a letter point; after 9 your grade turns to an F.

Guidelines: You will be assigned groups on the first day of class. You are expected to be responsible to your group as well as to the class as a whole. A WBIS class is based on participation, collaboration and **discussion**; there is no substitute for being there! Please inform your group if you are going to miss class, so they can prepare without you.

What is discussion? It is a structured, time-bound activity. The object of discussion is to share your insights and observations with a few classmates and to understand better the topic of the day. It works when each member has done the reading, or other assignment, and is willing to share his/her ideas and opinions with the group. It is a waste of time if we are unwilling to grapple with the text, or essentially fail to see the topic within the context of the WBIS theme. *Discussion then is a dialogue*—a shared democratic process of many voices arriving at a new level of understanding—if not consensus. The habitual non-participant can expect a lowered grade on the participation aspect of the score.

Quizzes cannot be made up, unless you have a serious and excused absence. Quizzes are not a test of memory. You will get to use your books. It is a test of comprehension and critical thinking. Help yourself do best on quizzes by **annotating** your readings. You will be able to locate key points and arguments, examples and data, and perform much more effectively in a time-bound situation.

WBIS is also a writing class; expect to write both formal essays and a good deal of informal, in- class writing. *All rough drafts must be typed, and peer reviews count for part of the grade. Papers should be double spaced throughout, 12 size font in New Times Roman, with 1" margin on all sides, and have your name, class/section # and date on the upper* ***left*** *corner of the first page.*
Late papers will be lowered a grade by each day it is late. No instructor enjoys penalizing you! Please meet deadlines.
Students are encouraged to make use of the *office hours*. If you have a time conflict, let me know so you may make an appointment for a more convenient time. Please acquaint yourself with the facilities of the Writing Lab, the Radford computer teaching lab, the library www.uwosh.edu/library. Some classes may be held in the Radford teaching lab.

Class resources: Electronic Reserves and D2L reading supplements are intended to enhance your understanding of topics discussed in class. They will sometimes be assigned for class exercises, and sometimes recommended specifically for class discussion. In addition, some websites and online journals will be recommended for research topic ideas.

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense; you will learn in class *why* it is so, and *how* you must avoid it. Please consult the Student Handbook for University penalties.

General Goals and Objectives of WBIS: www.english.uwosh.edu/wbis

Freshman Essay Writing Contest: this is an opportunity for those who enjoy and excel in writing. For details go to: www.english.uwosh.edu/wbis/NevinJames.html

CLASS CALENDAR

Week 1 9/9-11

Measuring our eco-footprint: "meeting the needs of today without compromising future generations from meeting their own needs."
Play ONLINE Consumer Consequences: http://sustainablity.publicradio.org/consumerconsequences
Readings:

1. A Synopsis of Richard Heinberg's *The Party's Over: Oil, War and the Fate of Industrial Societies (online)*
2. CA AB32 factsheet (landmark legislation)
3. "Global Food Crisis: End of Plenty " National Geographic (ereserves)
4. "Could Food Shortages Bring Down Civilization?" (ereserves)
5. "The Oil We Eat" from *Harper's* online by Richard Manning
6. Tom Philpott (Grist .org) interviews David Pimental
7. www.postcarbon.org/manifesto; read the manifesto
8. Michael Klare: Resource Wars; "Oil Rules!" Tomgram
9. Tomgram: As the World Burns - How Dry We Are: A Question No One Wants to Raise About Drought, by Tom Englehardt
10. www.oilcrash.com (under Essays, read the Statement)

Week 2 9/14-18

FILM: *What A Way To Go: End of Empire*
Presentation on readings: sound arguments? Or is this the newest version of Apocalypse Now? The rhetoric of Endgame(check out PBS *Frontline:* the episode on the history of Apocalyptic ideas
Review essay basics
Behind the label: class exercise
Diagnostic Essay
Campus Tour : UW Oshkosh sustainablity goals and implementation(9/18)

Week 3 9/21-25

Odyssey text: *A Complicated Kindness* /reading and writing (thesis statements, topic sentences)
Essay # 1: Based on your eco-footprint, write an essay on any one aspect of your lifestyle that you would like to change(9/25)

Odyssey play: *Picasso at the Lapin Agile*(this week)

Week 4 9/28-10/2	**Debates**: Meat eating: good or bad for the environment Biofuels: sustainable or unsustainable alternative(10/2)
Week 5 10/5-9	Food and Social Justice: Readings: Pablo Neruda's "United Fruit Co." Food Inc. see trailer YOUTUBE Harvest of Shame("farmworkers claim slavery in Florida") An Oxfam America report released in 2004, Like Machines in the Fields: Workers Without Rights in American Agriculture Research some commercial food products eg. bananas and palm oil (sugar, rum and soy)**Poster** assignment: trace the product from farm to fork . Submit your bibliography(10/9) Earth Charter events and activities: tba
Week 6-7 10/12-23	**Essay # 2:** Review several green initiatives on college campuses. Think of your own campus tour. Write an essay in which you evaluate the response to ecological awareness in campus culture. You may read online David Orr's commencement address "What is Education For" (10/16) Read Michael Pollan: *The Omnivore's Dilemma* **Assignment** : Create a detailed outline for a comparison contrast analysis of industrial and alternative agriculture(10/23)
Week 8 10/26-30	The Rise of the Locavore, and local economies. Visit a Farmer's Market, or a Natural Foods Store (Red Radish, Neenah), Cattleana Ranch (check website, hours, etc and take permission) Will Allen's Growing Power in Milwaukee (see Will Allen on Youtube) or another outlet for local produce (check LocalHarvest). Go to Whole Foods website and read their *Mission Statement* and the section called *Values.* Readings: www.businessweek.com 2 articles " Rise of the Locavore"; "Innovation on the Farm" Michael Shuman's essays from *Yes*!magazine July 2009 : "Put your money where your life is" and "From rust belt to recovery" Edgar Cahn (Timebanks.org) in Yes! magazine Fall 2002 on Living Economies and "Unleashing Our Hidden Wealth" by Cahn Guest speaker: tba **Presentations**: Research the lives and contributions of these innovators and pioneers, focusing on their contribution to local economies and

sustainability: Mohammed Yunus, Susan Witt, Alice Waters, Fred Kirschenmann, Judy Wickes, Wangari Matthai, Vandana Shiva(10/30)

Week 9
11/2-6

Biodiversity: OR the fate of the Cavendish banana
Film: *Seeds of Tomorrow*
Readings: 1. Right Livelihood Award: Speech - Cary *Fowler* and Pat *Mooney* December 9th, 1985.
*www.rightlivelihood.org/**mooney_fowler**_speech.html*
2. "The Sterile Banana" by Fred Pearce, *Conservation Magazine*
3. Gary Nabhan "Fatherland of Apples" *Orion* Magazine
4.http://www.umsl.edu/~keelr/010/mcdonsoc.html
The McDonaldization of Society
5. "Family Values and Food Sustainabilty" by Carlo Petrini(online)
Essay # 3: Compare and Contrast Fast Food and Slow Food(11/6)

Week 10
and 11
11/9-23

Sustainable Consumption: the "New" American Dream

Readings and activities: read the transcript of: **A Better Life: Creating the American Dream** May 2009 from American radio works documentaries:
www.americanpublicradio.publicradio.org/documentaries.php

Take the quiz at **css.snre.umich.edu/facts/index.html (Center for Sustainable Systems)**
Youtube "The Story of Stuff"

Check the site on PBS.org "Affluenza"
Read a review of the film *Pig Business* by Tracy Worcester (an expose` of factory farming)

LIBRARY ORIENTATION (11/16)

Read online: "Why Consumption Matters"
www.sierraclub.org/sustainable_consumption/tilford.asp
by Dave Tilford

Youtube:William McDonough" the wisdom of designing cradle to cradle"
Read An interview with Janine Benyus about the field of *Biomimicry*.
*www.**biomimicry**institute.org/inst**biomimicry**.htm* -
Youtube: 12 sustainable design ideas from nature

Assignment: www.sustainablecity.org (San Francisco)
The project evaluated places according to nine criteria: air quality, energy production and conservation, environmental standards and participation, green building, green space, recycling, transportation, standard of living, and water quality and conservation. Choose one aspect and research what

aspect best applies to your home town or Oshkosh. Write a report on your findings. (11/20)

TOPIC AND BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE (11/23)

----------Thanksgiving Recess----------

Week 12-14 11/30-12/18 **Research paper** : Food in the age of climate change(12/16)

Bibliography exercises; MLA review

Quotations exercise; summary, paraphrase, avoiding plagiarism

Rough draft revision 12/7

Second rough draft revision 12/14

Final paper due 12/16