COURSE OUTLINE

This course will explore the historical development and structure of Canadian agriculture, and the social organization and trends within the agro-food complex, and leading issues related to food and the food economy. We will examine such leading controversies as the environmental impacts of our meat-based diet, organic versus chemical-dependent conventional agriculture, debates around genetically modified foods, the shaping of our food environments and mass diets by corporate food giants, and animal welfare in the context of factory farming. Readings in this course should be seen as “windows” that help to provide a perspective on a range of what we will call “big ideas” related to how our society actually works. These ideas will form the basis of discussions throughout the course and will inform some of the questions on the mid-term and final exam.

Required readings: A. Winson, The Intimate Commodity: Food and the Development of the Agro-Industrial Complex in Canada. (Also check the Co-op bookstore for copies)

Library Electronic Reserve and/or CourseLink [Some readings may be found here, see your course outline for information]

Learning Objectives of the Course: In this course we will strive to (i) provide students with a basic knowledge of the historical development and current organization of the different components of the Canadian agro-food complex and, (ii) help students develop a sociological perspective on Canadian agrarian development, rural communities and the Canadian food system more generally. Specific issues raised in the course will be examined to see how they inform the discussion of wider issues affecting Canadian society.

Course Organization and Evaluation: The course will be organized around a mid-term exam that will focus principally on the first assigned text, a short writing assignment based on a topic the student selects from the course syllabus (Topic 5 and after), and a final exam. Core readings have been selected for each main topic area. All students will be responsible for these readings.

Mid-term exam........... 30%
Short research paper....30%
Final Exam .................40%
100%