

COMMUNITY-UNIVERSITY ENGAGEMENT  
SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS MINOR



JULY-SEPTEMBER 2013

Phil McMichael // [pdm1@cornell.edu](mailto:pdm1@cornell.edu)

Carrie Freshour // [crf64@cornell.edu](mailto:crf64@cornell.edu)

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# Introduction

## Background

This report is an analysis of interviews conducted with university members (faculty, staff, graduate students) and community partners involved in sustainable food-related minors, majors, and programs throughout the country. It draws from and builds upon research conducted last summer by Justine Lindemann and Marion Dixon, who gathered data on (a) possible courses (and structure) to include from the Cornell curriculum, in addition to a comparative survey of US academic programs in sustainable food/agriculture systems (with goals, requirements and community engagement initiatives); and (b) a 'Food Initiative Database' identifying cities/regions with local food system initiatives specifying mission, objectives, funding sources, and targeted populations. This data has since been complemented with information from U/Wyoming and other sources.

This report serves as preparation for a workshop series the Food Dignity Project (FDP) will hold in the coming year to address and fertilize the academic/community relation. We will invite sets of engaged community and academic organizers from some key sites that are already up and running with similar food justice initiatives to present and reflect on their process with members of our community/academy. We hope that we will accomplish two objectives here: (1) to learn from other initiatives, and (2) to develop a joint appreciation among our own attendees that will serve to inform and build relationships that can underpin an Advisory Board and a continuing and evolving trust in mutual engagement.



## Dignity in the Sustainable Food Systems Minor (SFS)

This preliminary report attempts to address concerns about how best to involve community organizer input in shaping the objectives and outcomes of the SFS Minor in such a way as to privilege community knowledge of immediate and long-term needs, including what is to be sustained. We have one key university-level partner in Virginia Tech's Civic Agriculture and Food

Systems Minor. This program truly centered community partner input at every step in the creation of the minor. Interviews with other community partners and university members in this report do not reflect such high-levels of engagement, but are useful in thinking through community-engagement, particularly at the classroom level.

# VT: Rachael Budowle: 6/26/13

Community Partner/Dining Services/Virginia Tech Civic Agriculture and Food Systems Minor

## Rachael Budowle

Sustainable coordinator at VT Dining Services

540.842.9128

[rbudowle@uwyo.edu](mailto:rbudowle@uwyo.edu)

## Background on Minor

CAFS developed and approved via university governance as part of the **USDA Higher Education Grant**, "Restoring Community Foodsheds: A Multidisciplinary Curriculum Translating Science into Practical, Innovative and Sustainable Solutions for Economic Viability, Food Security and Health." Minor was approved in 2010.

18 Credit minor within CALS.

"It is designed to promote academic enhancement, personal growth, and civic engagement while strengthening student's capacity to learn about civic agriculture and food systems through reflection and experiential practice to solve "real-world" problems. A common theme threaded throughout the required courses is an interdisciplinary teaching approach plus an *"integrated experiential learning activity to allow collaboration with university and community partners to enhance understanding and application of civic agriculture and food system concepts"* (CAFS Minor White Paper, Oct 2011).



## Collaborators

- CALS faculty
- VT Dining Services: delivery and service of student-grown produce to dining services
- Heifer International: non profit humanitarian organization
- YMCA: organic gardening, work with Virginians in local gardens

"Together these entities are committed to helping students learn about sustainable agriculture to combat poverty and hunger while caring for the environment" (CAFS Minor White Paper, Oct 2011).

## Curriculum Structure

18 credit minor, four 3-credit required ALS courses, 6-credits from a list of cross-disciplinary CALS dept courses. **Step-wise fashion to prepare a senior for a culminating experiential course, ALS 4214 Capstone: Civic Agriculture-Food Systems where students formalize community**

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partnerships that enable the student a “real-world” application of ideas, concepts, and skill sets. Students’ capstone projects could even serve an inter-generational role, with students passing down projects to younger cohorts; this additionally allowed for community-university longevity (Rachael).

REQUIRED COURSES (complete the following 12 credits)

Course	Course Name	Credits
ALS 2204	Introduction to Civic Agriculture	3
ALS 3404	Ecological Agriculture: Theory and Practice (Pre: ALS 2204)	3
ALS 4204	Concepts in Community Food Systems (Pre: ALS 2204)	3
ALS 4214	Capstone: Civic Agriculture and Food Systems (Pre: ALS 2204, 3404, 4204)	3
	<i>Total Required Courses</i>	<b>12</b>

**Minor Construction Process**

A group of faculty, staff and students from CALS departments plus several community partners (selected through groups/organizations that were already loosely affiliated with VT: dining services, YMCA, Heifer International) collaborated to conceptualize, develop, and propose undergraduate curriculum for an interdisciplinary and experiential-based minor in Civic Agriculture and Food Systems (CAFS). What was most important for Rachael was the active involvement of community partners from the beginning, at the development and proposal stage. Also, the USDA grant provided salaries for the community partners’ participation. The goal is to develop a curriculum that provided students with foundation knowledge and skills to identify, examine, strategize, and incorporate agriculture and food system sustainability philosophies and activities into personal and professional practice. Throughout the conceptual process, the framework for the civic agriculture and food systems curriculum was built around knowledge and skills prospective employers seek

(AACY 2008 Report: College Learning for the New Global Century) and six core values that embody the definition of civic agriculture and food systems:

1. food security-sovereignty
2. civic engagement and democratic participation
3. strong local economies
4. ecological stewardship
5. healthy people and communities
6. collaborative teaching and experiential learning

A program assessment plan was developed and included program goals and learning outcomes that allow for assessment of student learning and programmatic evaluation (CAFS Minor White Paper, Oct 2011).

**Civic Agriculture and Food Systems (CAFS) Program Goals**

1. Provide a foundation of knowledge consistent with entry-level civic agriculture, food systems education.
2. Develop effective broad-based communication skills in civic agriculture food systems education.
3. Provide a learning environment that fosters critical thinking skills in civic agriculture food systems education.

### **Student Learning Outcomes**

1. Demonstrate interdisciplinary knowledge in the policies and practices of civic agriculture and food systems by developing and implementing an educational strategy through community partnerships.
2. Apply effective communication, leadership, and teamwork skills to develop programs to enhance civic agriculture in diverse communities.
3. Apply reflective and articulated learning to conceptualize, develop, propose, and implement civic agriculture system projects through community partnerships.

\*\* Unique to CAFS, VT was able to create four brand new courses (Rachael).

More on process: everyone literally were brought to the same room, had post-its with values that were categorized together among faculty, staff, and community partners. Learning objectives, outcomes. Each of the values and outcomes were clearly articulated in each course (Rachael).

### **Task Force Team**

- *CALS Representatives*: 10 faculty, 1 undergrad, 1 grad
- *Other Units*: University Honors, CAFS Farm Educator Coordinator, CSECP, Student Farm Manager, Dining Garden
- *Formal Community Partners*: VT Dining, YMCA, Heifer International

*More on Community Partners: CPs were selected to serve multiple roles. CPs participated on task force teams and were active in the development of the minor at the university level, but they also served as site partners for students working on capstone projects (Rachael).*

All community partners had some relationship with the university. For example, the Y is stand alone but also received additional university funding. Rachael's role developed out of campus dining services with a garden at the university farm. Formally the minor has focused on "farming stuff," but has since expanded to other community partners: stand-alone farmers, student org "VT Food Poor," and student farms. CAFS also works closely with Heifer International, Arkansas- students can go to alternative spring break at Heifer in "village model." Principles from Heifer also served as guideposts for VT CAFS (Rachael).

Also worked closely with the Center for Engagement and Service Learning (similar to CELR at Cornell).

### **Examples of CAFS Capstone Projects, Cohort 1 (2011-2012)**

- Student Demonstration Garden (Kentland, YMCA)

- Campus Composting (VT Dining)
- Agroecology Heifer Ranch Curriculum (Heifer International)
- Community Garden (YMCA)
- Farmscaping at Community Garden (YMCA)
- Sustainable FoodCorps Garden at Smithfield
- Wine Community Supported Agriculture at Rolling Rock Farm
- School Gardening and Nutrition Curriculum with Plenty!, Floyd, VA
- Kentland Farm and VT Dining Garden at Kentland Anthology



## Interview

The Good: Being involved from the beginning, invited to the table. This process was really good, but not always valued by academics. CAFS minor has a great community partner in Jenny Schwanke (YMCA). She is an amazing gatekeeper to the community, knew everyone. The Task Force knew she would be inclusive but also easy to work with. She was the farmers' market director. It's really important to carefully choose these people.

The Bad: So many meetings and committees, like the minor committee, course teaching teams, intro to civic ag course, even planned syllabus together. **Be wary of too many cooks in the kitchen, can't get every community partner there.** Isn't as inclusive.

University of Wyoming: Different from VT in that there was no stand-alone sustainable food systems minor, but rather the program is embedded in sustainability minor under a food systems track. Not ideal to Food Dignity project, more expedient.

They're in the process of creating **Academic-community advisory boards** for food system track, carefully selecting who they work with. Here, these folks are able to focus is on capstone project if not entire curriculum. Incentive to participate for effective project that doesn't waste time. Susan Clark at VT is also working on reassessing the program. University of Wyoming is also working closely with a community partner, Gayle, who is involved in the Food Dignity Project. The group met with her and got input on what she would like to see on community-academic joint food systems track. Academic side- identified who we would want involved, having both



undergrad and graduate student representative. Gayle would identify community partners to serve on the board.

#### Board would develop:

- 1 credit seminar series or colloquium series for undergrad students on food systems track to hear directly from community members in speaker series way. Through FD grant could pay CP for speaking. Positive outcome for students, but also need community members to feel that time is not being wasted, both measurable outcomes? Start to assess with students through series.
- Also create a concurrent series for community members, a sort of “training” or rather “best practices” for how to work with students... how to ensure that students aren’t just coming to sites/wasting time, reaching community goals.

The service learning office would have to pick right people to do this so that it’s not academics telling community members what to do, but there also may be academics that are really good at this?

Rachael is currently working on a survey of other programs and how they’re engaging/have engaged community partners, similar to CU RAship.

#### **Resources**

CAFS Minor Homepage

<http://www.cals.vt.edu/prospective/majors/civic-ag-minor/index.html>

Community Partners

<http://gladepathgrowing.com/>

[http://www.vtymca.org/2012gardenhome\\_page.html](http://www.vtymca.org/2012gardenhome_page.html)

<http://www.dining.vt.edu/sustainability/garden.php>

<http://www.heifer.org/>

Capstone Projects

<http://www.cals.vt.edu/prospective/majors/civic-ag-minor/news-multimedia.html>

Interview with Rachael

<http://www.foodservicedirector.com/people/five-questions/articles/five-questions-rachael-budowle>

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University of Wyoming Minor in Sustainability Homepage

<http://www.uwyo.edu/haub/academics/undergraduate-students/sustainability.html>

## VT: Kim Niewolny: 7/26/13

Instructor of Record: Intro to Civic Agriculture/CAFS Task Force Team/Virginia Tech, CAFS Minor

### **Kim Niewolny**

Assistant Professor, Extension Specialist  
Director, Virginia Beginning Farmer & Rancher Coalition Program  
Department of Agricultural and Extension Education

540-231-5784  
niewolny@vt.edu



Kim Niewolny is an assistant professor and extension specialist in the Department of Agricultural and Extension Education at Virginia Tech. Kim's extension, teaching, and research responsibilities center on the role adult and community education plays in agricultural and community development practice with a specific focus on the development of community-based food systems. Her scholarship emphasizes community-based education, and asset-based community development; community-based participatory research (CBPR); and experiential, transformative, and social movement frameworks. Current funded research and extension initiatives focus on beginning farmer training and program development, community food security, and farm-to-school program development. Kim serves as the Director of the Virginia Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coalition Program (VBFRCP), a state-wide coalition-based Extension program that aims to improve opportunities for viable farm start-up and sustainability. Additionally, she is a co-director of the USDA AFRI funded Appalachian Foodshed Project (AFP), a multi-state initiative focusing on enhancing community food security in the Appalachian regions of Virginia, North Carolina, and West Virginia. Kim provides teaching leadership in Virginia Tech's interdisciplinary, undergraduate minor in Civic Agriculture and Food Systems (CAFS). Kim received her Ph.D. and M.S. degrees in Adult and Extension Education from Cornell University. She also received a M.P.S degree in Community and Rural Development from Cornell's Development Sociology Department.

## Courses Taught

- AEE 6984, Non-formal Learning for Adult and Community Education
- AEE 5014 Principles & Methods of Non-Formal Teaching and Learning
  - Course Description
    - This introductory level graduate course covers principles and methods associated with non-formal teaching and learning for adult, extension, and community based education as well as further settings such as agricultural education.
    - Major course aims include gaining understanding of concepts and practical knowledge for designing, integrating, and justifying non-formal educational experiences for learners.
    - Specific attention will be given to learning frameworks and approaches that emphasize the role of participation, facilitation, and other student-centered teaching and learning approaches in agriculture and life science professions.
  - Learning Objectives
    - Compare and critique learning theories, principles, and their educational implications for non-formal teaching and learning.
    - Identify, critique, and give explanation for best educational practices that facilitate good teaching and learning in non-formal settings with emphasis on agricultural and extension settings.
    - Integrate non-formal teaching and learning principles and approaches into agriculture and life science professional practice.
  - Course Evaluation
    - Educational Design Paper 30% This paper allows students to analyze existing or proposed educational practice and should focus on a specific educational context that will comprise non-formal teaching and learning and include: 1) brief description of the social setting; 2) review of the literature; 3) description of specific educational practices and objectives; 4) justifications for these practices; and 5) a critique of what you expect to work and why, as well as what you expect to be problematic and why.
    - Educational Design Paper Peer Review 10% one-page double spaced review focusing on grammar, APA formatting, structure, concepts.
    - Weekly Reflection Statements (5 at 6 points) 30% two-pages double spaced, papers should capture the main points of the readings as well as additional points of view, ideas, and commentary that illustrate course learning.
    - Discussion Forum Posts 20% once per week, students must contribute at least two discussion posts, 100 words each, one to instructor's prompt and one to a colleague's post.
    - Participation Evaluation 5%
    - Personal Bio Page 5%
- AEE 6984, Theory and Practice of Community-based Participatory Research
- AEE 4304/5304G Community Education and Development
  - Course Description

- This course examines the social context of community education and development. Course participants are expected to investigate historical and contemporary definitions of community development, key principles of community education for sustainable community development, practical and ethical issues in organizing and evaluating educational experiences from community-based perspectives, and strategies for mobilizing social change in/with communities. Major educational approaches this course aims to explore follow in the tradition of the “critical practitioner.” These approaches include but are not limited to asset-based community development and critical pedagogy. Opportunities to learn and practice participatory processes are also essential learning aims. Globalization, sustainability, and social justice movement discourses provide the contextual boundaries for course activities and discussion with emphasis given to agricultural, food system, and environmental cases. (3H, 3C)
  - Learning Objectives
    - Describe the concepts of community education and community development from historical and contemporary perspectives with emphasis on the role of education as a social practice.
    - Define sustainable community development.
    - Identify, critique, and implement principles and processes of community education that pertain to community analysis, implementation, and evaluation.
    - Compare and critique examples of community development across different threads of educational theory and practice: participatory, critical pedagogy, and social movement learning.
    - Identify and describe the sociopolitical challenges and implications of community education as applied to community development practice.
  - Course Evaluation
    - Participation 10%
    - Student Led Facilitation 20% Course participants will be expected to lead a portion of class by directly relating weekly readings and thematic issues relevant to the course. Participants will be expected to draw upon newly learned facilitation skills and strategies to lead the class in an interactive, 45-60 minute session.
    - Critical Reflection Responses 30% Course participants will develop weekly reflective responses to the topic of discussion. These reflective responses should capture the main points of the readings; however, participants are strongly encouraged to bring in points of view, ideas, and commentary that captures learning that is taking place from one week to the next in order to build on course material. Students are also encouraged to pose questions, which may be used to stimulate group dialogue. These responses will be collected each week listed on the calendar for review and returned the following week. On any given day, students might be asked to share responses with other students as part of class activities.

- Literature Review Paper 40% Each course participant will develop a final review paper of the theoretical and empirical literature (beyond that covered in the course). Participants are encouraged to focus on issues, principles, and educational approaches to community development to best support their research interests and questions. This assignment will contribute to 40% of the final grade. Participants will be given opportunity to share working drafts of their papers in class. A final, one-page critical reflection statement will be turned in with the completion of this final paper. It will be graded as part of this final assignment.

➤ ALS 2204, Introduction to Civic Agriculture

This course is taught through a collaborative teaching team, although Kim is the principle instructor. The team includes Susan Clark (director of CAFS), Jenny Schwanke (community partner), and Jennifer Helms (graduate TA). It is *the* required introductory course for the CAFS minor.

○ Course Description



- This introductory course explores the economic, social, and ecological foundations of civic agriculture, a broad based and interdisciplinary framework that is associated with the revitalization of local and regional food systems. Students will explore issues relevant to the emergence of civic agriculture in the United States, including industrialization, community food system development, and citizen participation in agriculture. Emphasis will be given to a range of civic agriculture models, strategies, and hands-on approaches to establish, retain and strengthen community-based food and agriculture systems (syllabus).

▪ The course is designed to help students gain interdisciplinary knowledge and skills about civic agriculture, using an experiential learning format (syllabus). There are a variety of teaching/learning formats, including: small/large group discussion, critical reflective writing, case studies, guest speaker dialogue, collaborative work, and hands-on fieldwork activities/field trips.

- Throughout the duration of the course students will make multiple site visits, including: Smithfield Student Garden, Glade Road Growing, Hale-Y Community Garden, Kentland Farm, among others.
- Learning Objectives
  - Describe history of agriculture and food production, distribution, and consumption in the United States.
  - Analyze, define, and articulate the concept of civic agriculture.
  - Identify and critically evaluate civic agriculture models and approaches.

- Identify and explore approaches to establish, retain, and expand civic agriculture models.
    - Incorporate civic agriculture concepts and activities into personal and professional practice.
  - Course Evaluation
    - Participation 5%
    - Weekly Writing 5%, eight, 500 word response papers.
    - Critical Reflection Statement 10%, two, 750 word statements looking back over previous writings making connections across activities, experiences, and readings.
    - ePortfolio 15%
    - Literature Review Paper: Defining Civic Agriculture 20%, 4-5 pages
    - Fieldwork Experience 15%- service-oriented experiences with community partners, at least 20 hours of fieldwork experience using civic engagement protocol (this was increased from 10 hours in 2013).
    - Co-curricular fieldwork, encouraged but not required, providing the option for students to make additional site visits with community partners.
    - Final Project Proposal 20% and Presentation 10%, 6-7 page proposal which articulates a plan for developing and conducting a research, education, and/or outreach project in collaboration with their ALS 2204 partner. This is a first step in preparing students for a culminating experiential learning experience in the capstone course at the completion of the CAFS minor. Students will present their project proposal as part of the course final.
- ALS 5234G, Advanced Concepts in Community Food Systems
  - Course Description
    - This is the graduate level class partner to ALS 4204, Concepts in Community Food Systems, part of the CAFS minor at VT.
    - Focusing on the USDA-AFRI funded Appalachian Foodshed Project, the course provides a “comprehensive & interdisciplinary examination of current issues related to the emerging study of community food systems” (Niewolny presentation).
    - There is a strong philosophical and practical emphasis on action research principles.
    - Pedagogical Framework & Guiding Concepts: Community Food Security; Community Food Systems; and Course-based Action Research.
  - Learning Objectives
    - Define, analyze, and articulate development agendas, discourses, and policies pertaining to community food systems.
    - Critique conceptual and programmatic approaches to enhancing community food security.
    - Define and critique educator participation as change agents in the food system.
    - Evaluate a community food system partnership.

- Incorporate community food system concepts and strategies into professional and scholarly practice (from syllabus).
- Course Evaluation
  - Participation 50%, Student Mid-term 25%, Student Final 25%. Mid-term and Final assignments are collaboratively decided upon by the students at the beginning of the semester.

## Interview

### Kim's Role at VT

Kim focuses on adult and community-based education and the relationship of education and agriculture to community development, particularly looking at the larger social/political implications of civic engagement for educators and practitioners. Her work in the CAFS minor fits closely with her broader cares and interests. She sees the CAFS minor as providing a means to establish and develop relationships between the university and the town. Importantly, she defines **both "university" and "town" as both community partners**, changing the perspective of university-community engagement.

Before her position at VT, Kim worked at Cornell in the department of Horticulture. She went on to earn her PhD in Adult and Extension Education, in the department of Education. She is familiar with Ithaca and the Tomkins County area, and can speak with some knowledge on civic engagement at CU.

### CAFS Minor Construction

In Fall 2009, Susan Clark and colleagues wrote a grant for the minor. The creation of the minor was largely student led, coming from students who had participated in the Alternative Spring Break with Heifer International. Kim was introduced to the task force in its early stages by a graduate student, Carmen Byker, who contacted Kim directly after learning about Kim's interest in "civic agriculture and food systems." Kim was familiar with the literature and concepts through her graduate school experiences at Cornell, where she worked with Tom Lyson. The task force team started by developing cornerstones, which were a mix of Heifer Community Development cornerstones and Lyson's cornerstones for civic agriculture. Particularly, the group focused on Heifer International's concept of "passing on the gift," and redistribution of throughout the community. The group submitted the check sheets for the minor in Spring 2010. Susan's leadership was key to making the minor happen.

Kim spoke at length to the role of the CAFS Task Force team in the larger context of the university. Although it's been challenging, building the academic support for the minor, she believes that Susan Clark and others have been pragmatic while keeping cornerstones central. They have focused on improving content and students' learning outcomes. She clearly prioritizes students, "if we don't have good results with our students then nothing else matters, that's the product we're creating" (interview).

In constructing the minor, Kim believes that the task force team was very strategic. The CAFS minor purposefully does not belong to any department, therefore when CAFS faculty teach a course they are providing a service to the college, without the threat of competing for resources as a stand-alone-department. Importantly, the minor brings people together across the university, in order to gain broad-based support. Although there is a strong social science foundation to the minor, they are trying to strengthen other disciplines represented (especially Horticulture). The Associate Dean of the College of Ag and Life Sciences has been very supportive and continues to see the value and need of the minor.

Finally, the minor is more practical from the students' perspective as students can graduate with any degree with the added benefit of learning applicable skills from CAFS rather than establishing CAFS as a major with the larger world asking "what is your major? What are you going to do with that? What are you going to contribute?" **The CAFS minor, as it stands, may translate in a more practical and applicable way to other professions and established CALS majors.**



Kim provided advice for our process at CU when thinking about the credential-driven interests of CU students (from her experience teaching at CU). She suggests we emphasize the practicality of the minor, with a focus on writing grants and project proposals ("real-life" applicability).



## Teaching Intro to Civic Agriculture

Although courses are taught collaboratively, it is important to have someone take responsibility of the course, i.e. claim the role of the “instructor of record,” someone who is administratively responsible for meeting intellectual criteria. It is important not to be “naive about responsibility.” Kim has been teaching this course for three years. At the university level, Kim, Susan Clark, and a graduate TA co-teach the course, in addition to Jenny Schwanke, the community partner. Jenny’s grant funding will be up this year, so Susan is working out what will happen next.

The teaching team collaboratively works on curriculum design, implementation, and evaluation. They teach the course from a sociological perspective, addressing politics and power. The intro course is the most explicitly politicized of the required courses. This course lays the foundations for service learning and community partnerships, focusing on establishing relationships in and outside of the classroom.

The course follows a sort of Farm-to-Table layout with an emphasis on food and agricultural policy at the end. They spend an entire week on democratic political action, asking questions like, “how do you mobilize? What does advocacy look like and why would you do that? What is the role of community activists and policy practitioners?” Although the course brings in guest speakers from a whole list of community partners, the students work most closely with the four mentioned above for the service learning aspect of the course, because there is more manageability.

At the end of the course students write a proposal draft with a budget for a project they would like to implement with the community partner. This provides a premature foundation of the capstone project that gets them thinking early in their undergrad career about their project as soon as possible. Kim provides a grant-writing formula that is very useful in and of itself, a skill they will need in many arenas outside of the CAFS minor. Most students work with one of the pre-determined community partners (Hale-Y, Ketland Farm Garden, Blacksburg Farm, and Dining services), but they have the option to reach out to new community partners after submitting an abstract to the teaching team. The dining services option provides a nice “indoor” partner for students who may be wary of working outside, doing lots of physical labor.

Although she enjoys teaching the course, personally and professionally, she does find it difficult at times to balance teaching and civic engagement her own academic community needs. She sees this challenge as the “biggest hurdle,” and finds it important to not get too idealistic but to

take a practical and pragmatic approach to teaching. Logistics and pragmatism of social change are the most challenging part of her work as, “ideas are great, but to have actual social change [you must ask] how do you actually create a fabric and then help create larger fabrics based on what you’ve done” (interview).

### Civic Engagement

The Intro course provides the initial contact for many of the students with community partnerships. She believes that establishing relationships with community partners is essential as the instructor of the Intro course. This is work, it takes a lot of time and energy, but can be done in the most everyday of spaces (buying tomatoes at the community garden, etc.). Communication is so central to the intro course. Jenny



Schwanke and a grad student TA developed a “**Community Partner Packet**” that is distributed to both the student and the community partner. This packet provides basic background and best practices to aid with communication. Kim didn’t see the same sort of challenges at Cornell that she sees with VT students, in their difficulty communicating with people outside of the classroom.

Although students can be physically “in” the field, making site visits, these interactions are less impactful if you’re not addressing critical responsiveness and action. This is where **reflexivity** comes in, as it’s important to ask: what are you doing this for? why are you here? This helps students to make sense of the learning process, and to struggle with the “hard questions.” This is an ongoing process for Kim, and sees reflexivity developing mostly through weekly writing assignments.

Students are required to do 20 hours of service learning over the course of the semester. This is an increase from 10 hours in previous years. There are always students who struggle with this requirement, so it is important for instructors to emphasize that they do not wait until the end.

Kim suggests we utilize the strength of CU's Public Service Center.

### **Resources**

Kim Niewolny Bio Page

<http://www.aee.vt.edu/people/faculty-staff/niewolny/niewolny-bio.html>

Virginia Beginning Farmer & Rancher Coalition Program

[www.vabeginningfarmer.org](http://www.vabeginningfarmer.org)

Appalachian Foodshed Project

[www.appalachianfoodshedproject.org](http://www.appalachianfoodshedproject.org)

Syllabi available upon request

## UCSC: Kate Pearl: 7/2/13

Volunteer and Community Outreach Manager/Homeless Garden Project/  
UCSC Center for Agroecology & Sustainable Food Systems

### Kate Pearl

Volunteer Community Outreach  
Manager

(831) 426-3609, ext 13

[katep@homelessgardenproject.org](mailto:katep@homelessgardenproject.org)

Originally a volunteer, Kate came to the Homeless Garden Project interested in learning more about food and farming in Santa Cruz. Kate graduated from UCSC with a degree in Environmental Studies and Economics, and after working two years in conserva-



tion realized that her true passion was for food systems and community development. As Volunteer and Outreach Coordinator, she hopes to grow and strengthen the strong community support the HGP has generated over the past two decades. Kate works 2-3 days on site, facilitating volunteers, giving tours of the farm, and assigning tasks. She also makes sure that people are keeping track of their volunteer hours. Her office work includes reaching out to community orgs, churches, and schools to recruit more volunteers and maintain the volunteer base. Beginning to find more groups to reach out to, and reach back out to former volunteers. She also recruits at local events and presents around for the certification program.

### Background: Homeless Garden Project

1,200 volunteers have participated, and logged in over 13,555 hours. The HGP provides homeless people “the means to help themselves.”

50/50, male/female; 70% white, 5% Latino, 20% Black, 5% Native American ranging in age from 25-60 years old. 43% have mental health diagnosis, 14% recovery/struggling with substances. 9% veterans. 25% have been in jail. Members face all of these challenges in a very expensive city, where the average rent in 2009 was \$1,287.

### History

Food Dignity Project

Community-University Engagement

- In May of 1990, the Citizens Committee for the Homeless, a Santa Cruz County non-profit, began a new project by opening the gates of an organic garden on Pelton Avenue. The Homeless Garden Project would provide job-training and meaningful work in a therapeutic environment. The Project began as a place to provide sanctuary, refuge and meaningful work within the healing environment of the organic farm (website).

“The purpose of our programs and activities is to foster connections among all the members of our community. When you visit the farm, you are likely to see a diversity of people” (from website).

HGP provides a way to breakdown social barriers, build community bridges, and reduce stereotypes of homeless people. They utilize a strength-based approach, encouraging solidarity, and self-determination.

Sustainability- not only with their agriculture but also the need for sustainable work, meaningful work, unsubsidized, sufficient for housing/ advancement opportunities.

#### Job-training and Transitional Employment

- Homeless or formerly homeless, barriers to employment.
- Natural Bridges Farm program- sow, cultivate, harvest organic produce and cut flowers, sold through CSA. Are they paid?? Value added products.
  - Up to two year commitment, 15 trainees, \$8/hour for 20 hour, four day a week = \$160/week.

#### Cultivating Community

- Century Certificate Program- lunch, lecture, food stamp employment training hours, reference, network, job interviews 101.
  - get around limits of funding, 100 hours of volunteer training. Also beyond high-functioning homeless.
- UCSC internships: managing 22 week CSA program, kitchen garden, nutrition, building nursery.

#### Connecting with Community

- Housing, food stamps, drug rehab, counseling, low-cost physical and mental health services.
- Kitchen and Resource Center- Tues-Fri hot meal for volunteers. San Jose State university Social Work Interns.

#### Who does Kate work with?

- Students from San Jose State University, Social Work interns, other area students
  - Students are sometimes some of the wealthiest people who live in SC, working alongside people who have the least in the community. This provides a point of contact that helps people who have been isolated due to homelessness. It also fosters

community, as regular volunteers could see participants downtown, community recognition is important.

- Food What?! Teenage youth to grow, cook, eat and distribute healthy sustainably raised food. They join HGP every Thursday.
- Community volunteers
- Autistic youth and adults with disabilities also volunteer a few hours a week.

\*\*Intersection of very different populations, builds acceptance and tolerance.

Kate has never seen any conflict, everyone does really well. HGP is a safe space for anyone who wants to come. A place to get away, away from downtown, hustle/bustle and where the homeless scene is. Volunteers bike, take public buses, or walk. The site is a few miles from downtown. One staff member also gives rides on Friday from shelter out to farm, and back.

HGP has a partnership with Homeless Services Center as well as staff at various organizations, homeless persons' health project, shelters. Most of the groups are aware of HGP, although there may not be a not direct partnership. Occasionally, Kate presents at the homeless services center to bolster participation.

The HGP employs 5 full-time staff, 3-4 part-time staff. They host up to 15 participants in the training program. Currently there are 13.

### University Engagement

- Apprentices volunteer with the potential to partner more.
- Kate would like to see more research on the farm by university faculty /staff with a focus on how to grow things well organically.
  - Their staff come work with HGP on farm as a part of their rotation, rotations on farm and in gardens on campus. One-Third to On-Half of volunteers have been students.
- There are also field trips to see the farm, walking tours, but not a lot of contact.
- Some internships, some classes, Service Learning Class. Students have a general familiarity, their friends have worked, read description of options on internship.



\*\*Kate has only experienced “great volunteers, with no issues.” Generally really positive.

### What would be helpful?

Kate thinks interactions would be better if she were more aware of where the students are coming from. She would also like to cultivate relationships with internship programs so that the staff would encourage the students to work with the HGP. She would also like to see **HGP get-**

ting more involved with the farm on campus, in order to use their knowledge and skills to help HGP with what they're doing. This would provide a sort of trade in skills/knowledge sets/ time, and would, "make a lot of sense, we would give their apprenticeship some community based experiences."

## Resources

HGP Homepage

<http://www.homelessgardenproject.org/>

HGP Application

[http://www.homelessgardenproject.org/getinvolved/volunteer\\_application.php](http://www.homelessgardenproject.org/getinvolved/volunteer_application.php)

Interview with Darrie Ganzhort, Director of Program and Operations

<http://farmforklife.com/darrie-ganzhorn>

Huffington Post article

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/julie-brothers/farm-to-fork-across-america\\_b\\_1685051.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/julie-brothers/farm-to-fork-across-america_b_1685051.html)

HGP Photo Blog

<http://myemail.constantcontact.com/A-look-back-at-2012-and-our-dreams-for-2013.html?soid=1102861932411aid=UOk1pNxN-xI>

# PSU: Joy Cartier: 7/7/13

Kitchen and Food Program Coordinator / p:ear / Portland State University Sustainability Studies Minor

## **Joy Cartier**

[joy@pearmentor.org](mailto:joy@pearmentor.org)

Director of p:ear Kitchen and Food Program

## **Background on p:ear Kitchen and Food Program**

The p:ear Kitchen and Food Program was developed to provide homeless young people with the opportunity to eat fresh, nourishing meals in a community setting. It also strives to provide the opportunity for homeless youth to learn how to prepare meals and develop a deeper understanding of the cultural, economic and social importance of food in our shared culture.

p:ear's innovative food program is one of the cornerstone's of our philosophy about working with homeless and transitional youth. Through healthy cooking, p:ear's meals help youth learn how to take care of their bodies with balance and nutritious meals. The kitchen at p:ear is a place of conversation where young people can have the time to learn about food and nutrition in contrast to being in survival mode out on the streets. We rely on many volunteer cooks and local restaurants, farms and food producers to help provide daily hot meals for p:ear's youth. And to keep p:ear's food program running, p:ear needs your help! If you are interested in cooking or have a restaurant connection, please contact [joy@pearmentor.org](mailto:joy@pearmentor.org).

- In 2011 they provided 12,000 meals to 900 homeless and parentless youth.
- p:ear builds positive relationships with homeless and transitional youth through education, art and recreation to affirm personal worth and create more meaning and healthier lives.
- Food seems central to programs at p:ear, calling on the community to provide food for recreation trips, Whole Foods gift certificates, and volunteers for the lunch program.
- From Chef Robert Reynolds, who was influential in shaping the Kitchen and Food Program: It is important to think about "The Table" - who sits, who gets, who has to, and why. What can happen, what it means to be invited, what it means to bring food, what we talk about when cooking and eating together at the table.
- The Kitchen and Food Program is sponsored in part by the Safeway Foundation- health and human services/hunger relief.

## **Interview**

### General Info

There are 6 staff, around 36 kids a day, 1500 actively enrolled who haven't aged out, and 800 who are actively present, sometimes 60 kids, sometimes 20.



Who does p:ear serve? Not at-risk, post-risk kids. Trying to get the kids at the level of at-risk so they have something to live for.

**The Kitchen and Food Program most importantly provides a nutritious meal, twice a day, of good food.**

“Probably the best food from an agency in the city.” p:ear has a residential kitchen, and they have cooks come in twice a week to prepare meals. These are cooks who have their own catering businesses, people who have restaurants in the city, to “darn good home cooks.” Sometimes kids help/learn and sometimes they don’t. Twice a week, food is provided by a restaurant. Volunteers go pick up food and bring it back to p:ear. It’s a good community builder. They’ve been able to establish relationships since opening, 11 years ago.

p:ear also has community partnerships with farmers’ markets. Volunteers go at the end of the market, and people who want to donate do. Sometimes they receive crates and crates of food. They also have a relationship with B-Line, urban cyclers, who pick up food from New Seasons (grocery store that sales all organic) and bring it to p:ear (established by Sarah’s class). A local Raises farmer also butchers a pig for them every year which is key because kids don’t get very much meat at all, just tons of carbs. At the KFP, they try to move away from carbs as much as possible.

### **Relationship with PSU Food Systems Course**

Cooks come in, during the fall, and partner with **Sarah Dougher’s capstone Food Sustainability** class. Joy does an hour and a half training with the students providing an overview of p:ear as an org, its history and mission. She goes over the policies for volunteers and who the population is as well as tips for interacting with this population.

Her classes come and cook a meal at p:ear for kids once a week. Only about 5 people in kitchen at once, 3-5 students come and cook, once a week. Students are paired up with an experienced



cook. They are responsible for determining the menu, using the food that's available at p:ear, and sourcing any other food that they have decided to make. The collaboration has been ongoing for about 4 years.

The relationship was established because Sarah worked at p:ear for a year or so. Then she decided she wanted to go into full-time teaching. **Meals are central to p:ear because, "having a meal together levels the playing field. Everybody comes down and eats at the same time. Staff comes down, all volunteers eat lunch, all eat together. Nobody eats any place separate."** When students from PSU come down, they make the meal and sit down and eat it with everybody. Some PSU students even go on to volunteer outside of the class. Insurance requirements are pretty stiff so they require a 15 hour training to work with kids on a weekly basis doing mentoring.

Sarah approached p:ear for the capstone class. She tried a number of things. She held a fundraiser for p:ear, did things connected with development as fundraising is a huge need for any non-profit. She went with cooking because that seemed to be the **most satisfying for students and most useful for p:ear.**

## Problems and Tips

**"It's attention to the small things so that people don't have unfortunate interactions."**

- Sometimes volunteers inadvertently ask questions like, "where did you sleep last night?" People don't think twice about asking these sorts of questions, they just need to be educated so that they're not so invasive.
- Instead of having community partners come to you, "come to them. It shows respect." Keep people at their home base where they're comfortable.
- Joy stresses the need to really understand your population. Joy believes that it's not the university's job, but the job of the agency / community partner that they are working with. By and large she's had good experiences. She mentioned one negative experience with interns who were less accountable to the organization and the community, "we've had more problems with interns than with groups of people. Volunteers come in for a day and are gone, the interns are here for a semester, and if it's not a good match it's really problematic."

- To avoid problems that Joy experienced with out-of-state interns, she stresses that organizations need to be able to meet and talk with possible volunteers in person. Also, they need to have the right to send volunteers, students, elsewhere if there is not a good fit, so that the community organization does not feel “stuck” with students.

## Resources

p:ear Homepage

<http://pearmentor.org/>

Kitchen and Food Program in the News

<http://pearmentor.org/category/food/>

PSU Student’s Reflections on p:ear

<http://pearmentor.org/without-pear-there-would-be-more-young-adults-struggling-to-carve-a-niche-in-the-world-for-themselves-alone/>

# PSU: Sarah Dougher: 7/7/13

Assistant Professor/Sustainable Food Course/Portland State University

## Sarah Dougher

Assistant Professor in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

503-715-6731

[sarahdougher@gmail.com](mailto:sarahdougher@gmail.com)

### Research Interests

Historical and sociological perspectives on the relationships of American girls to popular culture; American women and girls' participation in popular music cultures; Women's music and culture in separatist communities; Riot Grrrl; Feminist principals and practices in community organizing; Food justice for marginalized communities; Youth homelessness; American women's social and educational history in the early 20th century.

Capstone courses are designed by Portland State University's faculty to build cooperative learning communities by taking students out of the classroom and into the field. In Capstone courses, students bring together the knowledge, skills, and interests developed to this point through all aspects of their education, to work on a community project. Students from a variety of majors and backgrounds work as a team, pooling resources, and collaborating with faculty and community leaders to understand and find solutions for issues that are important to them as literate and engaged citizens.

### **Background on Course: *Addressing the Food Gap at p:ear***

This course is part of a university studies (liberal arts track) capstone course at Portland State University (PSU). [Capstone courses](#) allow students to partner with community groups. There are over 250 capstones at PSU. CU was initially interested in PSU for their Sustainability Studies Minor.

From website:

"[Food](#)" searchable capstone courses:

- [Addressing the Food Gap at Rose Haven](#), Sarah Dougher
- [Natural Food Industry](#), Pedro Ferbel-Azcarate
- [Urban Agriculture and Food Systems](#), Nathan McClintock
- [Addressing the Food Gap at p:ear](#), Sarah Dougher
- [Indigenous Gardens and Food Justice](#), Judy Bluehorse Skelton
- [Sustainable Food Systems and Educational Farms](#), Megan Hubbs

### Participation in the course

Sarah had been volunteering with p:ear for three years, developing the organization's **Food and Kitchen Program** before she was asked to teach the class. She didn't have training or specialized knowledge, but she did have a very deep interest in the organization and in getting students to think critically about charity. She went through an application process to approve the course for the capstone program.

The course is really designed for people who are just encountering food systems and critical food studies to begin with at a very entry level.

### Course Logistics

15-20 students. Wouldn't recommend more than that, maybe 25.

Ideally, have them read texts about charity:

- **Sweet Charity: Emergency Food and the End of Entitlement, Janet Poppendieck**
- **Closing the food Gap: Resetting the Table in the Land of Plenty, Mark Winne.**

### *Instructor/Organization Role*

The instructor really has to take this on and connect with the organization because staff members often don't have the time/energy. The instructor takes on a sort of **Volunteer management** role, keeping close tabs on what everybody is doing all the time. Prepping for the course is not as much work, but during the quarter this is very intense.

The second class meeting is held at p:ear, required to come to training. If students miss the second class, they have to drop the class.

This is the "Orientation" that Joy Cartier mentions in her interview. It's about an hour and a half, and is led by Joy. She talks specifically about the background of the program, the youth entering p:ear, special needs of that population, things to be conscious of... i.e. "no you cannot take pictures of the students, this is not a zoo," and things to be sensitive of, "do not ask the students where they slept last night..."



## What do students do?

Students cook and work normal volunteer hours at p:ear. They work together/collaborate with the staff at p:ear to put on a variety of projects. They are not assigned a particular project, but

### General group project guidelines

- Make a plan and create both objectives and outcomes
- Create a list of guiding questions your group would like to answer through the project.
- Divide responsibilities and create individual and group work plans
- Create an accountability plan -- who checks on whom?
- Create a timeline
- Revisit objectives and outcomes half-way through
- Ask for help and clarification

instead she wants the students to work with the staff. If the staff thinks they're capable/they're comfortable with the youth (homeless between 18-24), they then work with those folks to develop a project. This depends largely on the maturity of the students. This is a judgment call for Sarah, an important role of the professor. Students have, over the years, conducted different projects with p:ear, and this has depended on the work that Sarah has found them capable of doing.

#### *Past examples include:*

There are many issues that need to be addressed on an on-going basis, particularly with respect to food sourcing. For example, once the freezer broke

so all the donated proteins were lost. Students worked to get a new freezer and stock it. Students work with the staff, determine what the problems are, and come up with solutions that bring in other community partners like food sourcing farmers, etc. Sometimes students work on fundraising projects with educational elements for their peers and the wider Portland State community. One year, students had 600 pounds of cranberries donated, and sold cranberry sauce (which they made and canned) to people on the PSU campus, as well as friends and family. One class had a number of Pacific Islander students who decided to raise money by putting on a luau at p:ear. One year they did a collaborative cooking zine with the students at p:ear. Students are encouraged to think about ways they can communicate issues of homelessness and food systems to their peers and communities, bringing the resources that they already have to the table.

Another project the students worked on was the problem of food transportation. Lots of people wanted to give food to p:ear. p:ear needed food, but there were no staff people who could get off the floor to actually go get the food. So, students collaborated with [B-Line](#) (bike freight company). B-Line is now on call for p:ear. Read more about B-Line in this NYT [article](#).

Students are helpful in being able to focus on logistical infrastructural things that the staff can't do/don't have time to do.

## Best Practices: Thinking + Acting/Doing

Course goals as outlined in the syllabus:

- Get students to **think critically** about charity as a **concept**. Where does your idea about charity come from, church, family, did you receive charity as a child? **Autoethnographic** thinking and writing has to happen.
- For example, Sarah pushes students, asking, “You had food scarcity as a child, but when you’re working with students who are asking for food, why do you freak out?” Courses have to start with each person and their story, and the students have to be given the tools to think critically about their story. People need a safe space to talk about issues they have with food (eating disorders, using food stamps), especially things that might feel very personal. How you think about food changes at different ages. Different from

“Personal experience and critical thinking about personal experience is really important and should be in any model about food systems.”

when 6, 12, 4, etc. **have to account for time/space** to get to the point to really say how they feel about food banks. ➤ Hands on work in a social service agency, preferably a progressive, non-echelons of hierarchy kind of ss agency. This is why Sarah has chosen organizations like p:ear and Rose Haven, but not some of the bigger ones. She wants to teach students about progressive models of social service and provide them a chance to do hands on work in the style of that social service agency.

They also need to have a project that really **identifies a need and tries to solve it**. Sometimes they take on projects and totally fail. They realize they were too slow, but they gain a great deal by building a team, working collaboratively, identifying an issue, and working to solve that issue. This is important learning anyway, and students don’t fail the course if their projects “fail”.

Autoethnography is really important! It is essential that instructors build this in. In Sarah’s course, the students were able to focus on this through weekly reflection papers. She suggests that it is important to not paint too broad a stroke, stereotyping students, even at Cornell. There may be people who may have had experiences with different relationships to food and deprivation in a variety of ways that you don’t even know, i.e. not all students at Cornell are middle/upper-middle class. It is crucial to do careful work with an examination of people’s relationship to food and to charity and be able to have them think critically about *how* data is collected about people they are working with.

Focus on one demographic group, or hone focus. Do not have students just serve a general underserved population. This doesn’t allow for stu-



dents to understand the **systemic** causes of food insecurity in that population. If your class is able to focus on say, homeless youth, or homeless women and their children, you may begin to better address the needs **specific** to that population. Sarah suggests instructors work with groups already at Cornell working with community groups, as they will have a broad base of experience/knowledge about local populations, critical to orienting students beforehand.

### **Future projects, Rose Haven**

This year, Sarah is switching community partners, from p:ear to Rose Haven, an org that works with homeless women and kids. RH doesn't even have a real kitchen, only a hot plate and microwave. There are new interesting problems, a lot of chronic mental illness in this population, so the students will now be encountering a whole new set of issues. Rose Haven is based on a Catholic charities model and has a progressive style. There is a much more formal relationship with the people who come into the organization. The women are considered "Guests" rather than "students" (as at p:ear). The guests can't touch the food, have to be served, reinforcing a guest-host relationship. More peer-to-peer as both server/served are adults, rather than the mom and kid relationship fostered at p:ear. More uptight about hygiene, as many chronically homeless people who come in are extremely dirty. Whereas, most of the homeless kids, you could just say, "go wash your hands."

*From email: 7/9/13*

One thing I forgot to mention in our conversation today was that an important piece of the whole food puzzle here in Portland is the vivid food scene which many people are either obsessed with or at least take some pride in. There is a lot of really great food that grows right here. But the creativity that has exploded around food culture here has not gone into solving social problems in relation to food. Now granted, there are some great things happening here -- gardens (Village Gardens), markets (<http://www.portlandpublicmarket.com>), the Portland Fruit Tree Project ([portlandfruit.org](http://portlandfruit.org)) -- and our food bank has actual people doing actual lobbying about issues of systemic poverty at the state level but still the problems are very large and complex. But I guess what the takeaway here is that part of the process of reflecting on personal relationships with food/food culture has to do with also assessing community-wide values associated with food and food access.

### **Resources**

Addressing the Food Gap at p:ear

<http://capstone.unst.pdx.edu/courses/addressing-the-food-gap-at-pear>

Syllabus:

[http://capstone.unst.pdx.edu/sites/default/files/Addressing%20the%20Food%20Gap%20at%20pear Dougher fall12.pdf](http://capstone.unst.pdx.edu/sites/default/files/Addressing%20the%20Food%20Gap%20at%20pear%20Dougher%20fall12.pdf)

Capstone Project Community Partners

<http://capstone.unst.pdx.edu/community-partners>



Addressing the Food Gap at Rose Haven

<http://capstone.unst.pdx.edu/courses/addressing-the-food-gap-at-rose-haven>

B-Line Bike Company

<http://b-linepdx.com/>

Overview Article of Autoethnography

<http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1589/3095#gref>

Poppendieck, J. 1999. *Sweet Charity?: Emergency Food and the End of Entitlement*. New York: Penguin Books.

Winne, M. 2009. *Closing the Food Gap: Resetting the Table in the Land of Plenty*. Boston: Beacon Press.

# PSU: Nathan McClintock: 9/13/13

Assistant Professor / Urban Agriculture and Food Systems / Portland State University

## Nathan McClintock

Assistant Professor in Urban Studies and Planning  
(503) 725-4064  
[n.mcclintock@pdx.edu](mailto:n.mcclintock@pdx.edu)  
[www.urbanfood.org](http://www.urbanfood.org)

## Research Interests

Urban agriculture and food systems, food justice / environmental justice, and urban political ecology.

Professor Nathan McClintock bridges the university and community in matters of urban agriculture and sustainable food production. He teaches courses in urban political ecology, sustainable cities and regions, and urban agriculture and food systems. His current research involves examining the origins of contemporary urban agriculture movements, obstacles to food access, and the possibilities of scaling up food production in the city.

Prior to his appointment at PSU in 2012, Dr. McClintock earned his doctorate at the University of California at Berkeley where his research focused both on the origins of Oakland's urban agriculture movement and obstacles to its expansion. Using GIS and participatory research methods, he inventoried the city's vacant land, determined how much food could be grown, and assessed soil contamination at over a hundred potential garden sites. He was also a founding member of the Oakland Food Council where he worked closely with city officials on urban agriculture zoning. He is expanding his research to Portland and other cities, and tracks his progress at [Urbanfood.org](http://Urbanfood.org).



The Toulan School's "food systems guy," Dr. McClintock employs participatory, hands-on, and experiential teaching practices. He delights in getting students out of the classroom and into the soil. He is actively building partnerships with the Urban Farm Collective and the Portland Multnomah Food Policy Council to expand learning opportunities into the local community (from website).

### Courses Taught

- UNST 421: Senior Capstone: Urban Ag and Food Systems
  - Course Description
    - This course revolves around a fundamental question: How do we mend the "metabolic rift" between city dwellers and the food they consume? Urban agriculture has been promoted as an alternative to the industrial food system and its detrimental impacts (obesity, farmworker exploitation, pesticides/GMOs, etc.). However, its possibilities are limited for a number of reasons, ranging from the availability and cost of land, to the alienation of most city-dwellers from manual labor and the biophysical environment. In this Capstone, we use a twin lens of social science and agroecology to critically examine the limits and possibilities of urban agriculture's contribution to the food system and to food justice in Portland and beyond, while providing you with the necessary hands-on skills for conducting action research and growing food yourselves.
    - Central to the course is our collaboration with our community partner, the Urban Farm Collective (UFC), an organization whose mission is "to transform vacant lots in N and NE Portland into productive food gardens" and to "build community by providing educational opportunities, improving access to healthy, local food and empowering neighbors with food self-reliance."
  - Learning Objectives
    - Understand urban ag, why it occurs where it does, who practices it, and for what reasons
    - Think critically about the possibilities and limits of urban ag and food system localization
    - Identify opportunities for improving urban ag programs using a FJ lens
    - Understand fundamental agroecological principles and hands-on management skills related to urban food production
  - Student teams will create a toolkit for UFC:
    - Assess the current reach of the UFC
    - Identify the needs/obstacles faced by old/new UFC nodes
    - Lay out the framework of what might be needed for the development of future UFC nodes, materially and in terms of community engagement.

\*Each group's toolkit will include the following:

**Impact**, what it's doing, how it's serving, who? (Survey, block-level census data, food bank recipients, analyze production, distribution)

**Obstacles**- main obstacles to creating new UFC nodes. (interview participants, identify assets, physical/networks, etc).

**Pathways**- possible expansion, what is needed up to start a new node; community engagement-how to get community participation, best practices, assets, collaborators, recommendations!

**Engagement**- lit review, asset map of community partners, recommendations/protocol for recruitment and engagement of community members

○ Evaluation

- Capstone Project (40%) working in teams, students will complete an interdisciplinary project that addresses the needs expressed by our community partner, the UFC, to help them better serve North and Northeast Portland and to expand into other parts of the city.
- Reflection (30%) students are required to turn in eight written reflections plus a garden journal.
- Discussion Leader (5%)
- Participation (25%) attendance, discussion participation, and volunteer gardening hours (a total of 5 hours over 1-2 sessions) outside of class.



## Interview

### Background on capstone

Nathan McClintock's capstone course *Urban Agriculture and Food System* serves a wide-range of senior-level students from across disciplines at Portland State University (PSU) in the University Studies Program. Students in the University Studies Program come from a variety of majors and backgrounds, meaning that often Nathan is "starting from scratch." Often, students have no previous knowledge base about the course material (issues of food justice, food access, and equity).

As part of a University Studies requirement, the capstone course has to meet four main goals of the program. It has to address **inquiry and critical thinking; communication; variety of human experience (diversity); and ethical and social responsibility**. These goals are meant to provide both a service to the broader community while also learning about food justice.

The course is only 10 weeks long, so this can be difficult for Nathan in providing as much content as he'd like and in ensuring deeper relationships with community partners. He thinks that it's definitely an advantage to start with students familiar with the course material, who have a general knowledge base, as students in the proposed CU minor will have. He believes that there would be more productive community engagement if the students taking the course were already more aware of the key issues.

### Community Partner- United Farm Collective

Nathan met with possible community partners when he arrived in Portland to get a sense of what their needs were. He chose to work with Urban Farm Collective (UFC) within a time crunch of ten weeks after asking around (he was new to Portland, from Berkeley), what organizations were doing interesting stuff? He liked that UFC was working from a collective model and was not a non-profit. He was able to initiate contact by simply emailing UFC asking if they would be okay with 15 students coming to the garden each week. UFC was receptive as they are volunteer run anyway, and could always use the extra help. So, Nathan found an organization with a model he thought exhibited a form of food justice that also was in need of what the students could offer.

UFC is a collection of community gardens throughout North and Northeast Portland that runs by collective labor. Volunteers plant, grow, and harvest the gardens and then trade the food in a central location for hours worked in the gardens.

Throughout the course, the students have 5 site visit days. For the first 10 minutes, Nathan gives a short agroecology talk where he discusses topics like soil quality, composting, transplanting. He focuses on a topic that is related to what needs to be done. Then the students just work, helping the UFC volunteers do whatever needs to be done. Next year he might split up the class with 15 students to make sure people have things to do. Some days there are lots of people standing around waiting around what to do.

In addition to the site visits and volunteer work, students in the course collaborate on creating a “toolkit” for the community partner. The first year the class used some of Nathan’s personal grant money to do soil samples. Students learned sampling techniques, methods, and analysis, while providing a service that helped UFC write a \$10,000 grant. Although UFC was able to use some of the students’ data for the grant, overall they were underwhelmed with the students’ work.

The second year, the students were able to accomplish a lot. They collected survey data, constructed maps of the gardens, and interviewed food bank representatives. The second year students were able to produce a more rigorous “toolkit” for UFC and put together a really high quality report. UFC was more excited about the work the students did the second year. Nathan believes this had a lot to do with his approach the second year. He provided more “hand holding” to ensure a better project, while being more realistic about what the students could accomplish in the amount of time they had. Nathan thinks this is a key point, being **realistic** in assessing the capabilities of your students, especially if they are coming from a variety of majors.

This year the capstone will be going in to its third year. Nathan hopes that they will be able to create something more hands-on and action-research oriented. Rather than providing critical suggestions of *how* the UFC needs to change, he hopes that the students can actually put together an event or community outreach drive. At the minimum he is hoping the students can come up with an action plan, although in 10 weeks it is really difficult.

### Race-Class and Food Justice

Portland provides a very different community-environment than Nathan experienced in the Bay area, when doing his dissertation work on ur-

Sometimes students leave confused thinking, “wait, well, it’s good what they’re doing but at the same time it is just serving white people who are affluent.” To Nathan, this is a very educational experience.

ban ag in Oakland. “Here, you can very much talk about class and not talk about race. A lot of the students are working class too. Talking to them about white privilege is very hard to do.” This is a very different challenge to his food justice work, but one that he is interested in exploring through this capstone course. The fact that Portland has a lot of economic diversity without as much racial diversity provides new complexities for students coming to food justice work “bright eyed and bushy tailed.” Nathan compared his work on urban ag in the Bay, to work in Portland. In the Bay, many of the urban ag movements were led by radicalized POC community leaders with progressive ideas about food justice that easily meshed with Nathan’s and his students. Coming to Portland, there are many more rural white folks who may agree with growing your own food, but often differ drastically in other political realms.

Nathan posed some difficult questions during the interview, ones that facilitators of a similar food justice class at Cornell may need to ask.

- “How do you address class dynamics?”
- “How do you work with a community in a respectful way, that’s not colonizing?” The colonial metaphor doesn’t just have to be associated with race, but also “telling poor people what they should do.”

### Critical Thinking as Take-away

Nathan hopes that his students are able to take away the ability to think critically about structural issues surrounding notions of food justice. He pushes them to think about the global food system, structural racism, and the oppressiveness of local food movement discourse. In creating this environment of critical thinking, students in the capstone course have often left the course being critical of the community partner! Students have recognized the UFC’s role in gentrification of Northeast Portland. Although students are able to be critical of the organization, it does not prohibit them from trying to figure out how to help the UFC move forward, especially in connecting with community members.

### Future Plans for Capstone

Although Nathan has enjoyed working with UFC, he would like to connect to another organization. He is particularly interested in working with an environmental justice group in NE Portland that serves a majority Latino population. This group created a park, part of which would be a community garden. He was also recommended to another group in the same neighborhood trying to do urban ag, but who are in the very initial stages. There might be room for the capstone class to do some surveying. In East Portland, there are also two different organizations that farm with refugees, which is another possibility for the capstone.

In the next capstone Nathan would like to have more of a lab component, and hopes to be able to teach students about agroecology at same time. At UC Berkeley, Nathan worked on a project, where students were able to have a more holistic experience of food production in addition to understanding the social science context. The capstone at PSU is less hands on than he had hoped, although the community engagement focus is more strong. Logistically though, integrating agroecology to the level Nathan would like was too hard and there was not enough time.

Portland State University is also trying to put together a minor in sustainable food systems and a graduate certificate program. They are currently pulling people from different parts of campus together, but the Sustainable Solutions Institute has been leading the way (sustainability minor).



## Resources

Nathan McClintock faculty website

<http://www.pdx.edu/usp/profile/meet-assistant-professor-nathan-mcclintock>

Research website

<http://www.urbanfood.org/>

Urban Ag and Food Systems Course

<http://capstone.unst.pdx.edu/courses/urban-agriculture-and-food-systems>

Course [Syllabus](#)

Urban Farm Collective

<http://urbanfarmcollective.com/>



# UC-D: Ryan Galt: 7/11/13

Master Advisor/Food Systems Course/UC Davis Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems Major



## Ryan Galt

Associate Professor of Agricultural Sustainability and Society  
Dept of Human Ecology, Community and Regional Development

(530) 752-5660  
[regalt@ucdavis.edu](mailto:regalt@ucdavis.edu)

Ryan Galt is a geographer- with a focus on society, agriculture, food, and the environment, cultural-historical ecology, cultural ecology, and political ecology. Regional focus on the Americas, Costa Rica, Midwest, CA, multi-scalar approaches.

“My research mostly focuses on the governance of agrifood systems. To date I have primarily used the framework of geographical political ecology to understand agriculture and food systems. I also use theoretical perspectives from geographical and sociological work in the political economy of agriculture. I am increasingly interested in the philosophical foundations of interdisciplinary learning aimed at enhancing sustainability, especially the philosophy of critical realism; the facilitation of competency development; and the praxis of critical pedagogy based in social constructivism. I remain dedicated to cartographic and visual explanations based on graphic design principles” (from website).

Desire to teach values other than efficiency. “Education is fundamentally linked to participatory democracy, in which informed citizens together make decisions about the future of society” (syllabus).

### Research and Pedagogy

- Transformative Food Systems Education: A Praxis of Critical Social Constructivism
  - Working towards creating a food systems pedagogy embedded in a practice of freedom.
  - Researchers involved: Heidi Ballard, Jessy Beckett, Janaki Jagannath, Maggie Lickter, **Damian Parr\***, Julia Van Soelen Kim
- Social constructivist learning theory- students best develop new knowledge by building on or renovating their existing conceptual understandings. Interactive social settings.
  - SCLT- Ryan had no idea there was SCLT when got to UC Davis. He had gone through a number of experiences largely based on SCLT and really identified this style as crucial to learning experiences for better, deeper, learning, but he didn’t know there was a formal theory.
  - During his formal disciplinary training he used Social Constructivism in an approach to understand concepts, phenomena, theories. Debating what is nature/ wilderness were prominent in readings in grad school. But SCLT is a different kind of social constructivism, which is not about learning but how we make ideas/ operationalize. There are parallels in terms of the ways that SCLT and SC in geography or sociology inform the way we think about things.
  - The theory provides a tight-knit approach, thinking through theory-practice all the time, iterative with much quicker checks/ revisions or tests of theory when actually doing it very regularly, as practitioner in classroom. Rather than as academic, where theory is primary as research. When teaching, he uses theory to make sense of practice.

### Published articles:

- Galt, R. E., D. Parr, J. Van Soeken Kim, J. Beckett, M. Lickter, and H. Ballard. 2012. “Transformative food systems education in a land-grant college of agriculture: the importance of learner-centered inquiries.” in *Agriculture and Human Values*. 23 June: 129-142.
- Galt, R. E., D. Parr, and J. Jagannath. 2012. “Facilitating competency development in sustainable agriculture and food systems education: a self-assessment approach.” in *International Journal of Agricultural Sustainability*. 11(1): 69-88.

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\*Ryan developed the course with Damian Parr around social constructivist learning theory. Damian is now the Research and Education Coordinator, UCSC- Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems.

- <sup>1</sup>Galt, R.E., S. Clark, and D. Parr. 2012. “Engaging values in sustainable agriculture and food systems education: Toward an explicitly values-based pedagogical approach.” in *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*. 2(3): 43-54.

### Courses Taught

- Food Systems, Community and Regional Development, one quarter (10 weeks)
  - [http://hcd.ucdavis.edu/faculty/webpages/galt/personal/Galt\\_Faculty\\_Page/CRD\\_20.html](http://hcd.ucdavis.edu/faculty/webpages/galt/personal/Galt_Faculty_Page/CRD_20.html)
  - Course Description
    - “Food is life, and life can be studied and understood through food” (Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, 1997:1).
    - Possibilities for sustainability and equity, while understanding the framework created through a capitalist economy.
    - “aim to understand the dialectic between food systems and producers’ livelihoods, communities, and the environment” (from website).
    - Labs, fieldwork- “explore the positions of different people in the food system, for participatory activities, and for presentations and wide-ranging discussion. We will visit farms, food processors, and distributors, retail locations, and places of consumption and disposal, most of which are determined by student input” (from website).
    - Questionnaire- similar to **Dougher’s** autoethnography concept.
  - Course Requirements
    - Food Diary: contact food companies, create a global food map, find out who prepared your food, assess the social and environmental impacts, labor conditions, class, race/ethnicity, nationality, working conditions, environmental impacts...
    - Reflective Essay: 1) connect theoretical and fieldwork, 2) reflect on personal growth. Students have the opportunity to draw from several rhetorical situations in order to make connections and reflections on course. Not a complete free-for-all, but there are required components: a) describe the food system, b) background of self, c) reflection diagram
    - Midterm and Final Exam
    - Labs (site visits)
  - Syllabus:
    - [http://hcd.ucdavis.edu/faculty/webpages/galt/personal/Galt\\_Faculty\\_Page/CRD\\_20\\_files/CRD%2020%202012%20Syllabus-09\\_28.pdf](http://hcd.ucdavis.edu/faculty/webpages/galt/personal/Galt_Faculty_Page/CRD_20_files/CRD%2020%202012%20Syllabus-09_28.pdf)




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<sup>1</sup> This volume of *Journal of Ag, Food Systems, and Community Development* is dedicated to sustainable agriculture and food systems education at land-grant universities developed out of a pre-meeting about LGUs at the Sustainable Agriculture Education Association in Kentucky in 2011. Ryan suggested looking into this journal for further reading material (email 11 June 2013).

## Background on Major (from website)

### Three tracks

- Agriculture and Ecology; crop and animal production systems, ecology, and practices that mitigate negative impacts while producing environmental and social benefits.
- Food and Society; social, cultural, political, and community development aspects of agriculture and food systems.
- Economics and Policy; agriculture and resource economics, policy, and management.

\*\*Courses are cross-listed across these departments: Plant Sciences, Community and Regional Development, Ag and Resource Economics, Environmental Science and Policy

### Required Courses

- Introduction to Sustainable Agriculture (*Plant Sciences*)
- Food Systems (*Community and Regional Development*)
- Sustainability and Agroecosystem Management (*Plant Sciences*)
- Economics of Agricultural Sustainability (*Agricultural and Resource Economics*)
- Capstone: Workshop on Food System Sustainability (*Environmental Science and Policy*)

“Real World” component (website)- Prepares students for jobs in agricultural production/food system management, rural and urban community services, education and development, agriculture, environment, and economic policy analysis.

## Interview

### Community Partners in Structuring the Major

Community engagement serves as two “bookends” for the major. In the Food Systems course, students are introduced to potential community partners but do not engage in any projects together. Through the Food Systems, and other courses, students are able to identify potential clients, non profits, NGOs, new organizations, that may become community partners. Students are also required to do internships, building relationships with community partners along the way. Towards the end of the minor, students enroll in a capstone course where they produce something of value/use to those partners. The capstone course is 2 quarters long, 20 weeks.

Faculty and staff established internship-partners through the creation of the major, at the earliest stages, asking what community orgs/ members/practitioners needed/wanted of the students and the university. This occurred at the initial research process, where faculty and staff were actually approached by community mem-

**“If you throw freshman to partnerships where a lot is expected bridges burn quickly.”**

bers who *wanted* the major. The list of community partners is growing each year as students, faculty, staff, and TAs are allowed to expand the list, which is maintained as a google doc.

### Food Systems Course

For a year, Damian Parr, PhD student in education, critical theory, pedagogy, and Ryan worked on the course. Each were coming from different places through disciplinary training, and Ryan had not received any formal educational training. They wanted to stress experiential learning, which requires reflection on learning to be really meaningful, to really take away and create change as a result of the experiences. This is a crucial portion of what students need to go through.

This is an introductory course with a lot of freshman, so when constructing the course, Ryan and Damian were wary of a service-learning component that placed a significant amount of responsibility on the students to *produce* something for community partners, students who were not quite “there” conceptually / developmentally.

Rather than service-learning, the Food Systems course became more about exploration of different sectors of the food system: production, processing, distribution, retail, consumption, disposal, governance. This setup allows students to choose places they want to go with community partners, in a “low key kind of way.” It provides them an intro level feel for an entity, business, or organization.

**\*Food Diary**- this is the first assignment and allows students to understand much broader geographical and social, patterns of food provisioning. Often students have not thought about their food in these ways. Mostly what they find is a complete lack of transparency in food system. Typical response, “man this is really messed up because we can’t actually find out anything about our food.” This assignment always provides an interesting discussion. Very thought provoking.



\***Labs**- serve as an intro to “social science field research,” which gives them a number of theoretical lenses to think through, such as: political economy, feminist theory, geography, ecology. 3-5 students are assigned a lens to try to understand with the fieldtrips serving as a way to operationalize these ways of seeing in those contexts. Each week, one group is put in charge of the fieldtrip for that week. They decide which place they want to visit and every team has to come up with research questions, interview questions, and strategies which allow them to answer those research questions. Each group provides their own analysis, through their assigned lens, and presents back at the following lab.

Important to this process is that the course has established a large group of possible community partners for site visits so that they **do not burn partners out!**

- First day of lab: CAMPUS: in this lab students learn what lab is, what it means, and what it involves. All of these sites are toured in a span of 3 hours, and for most students, provides the first behind-the-scenes tour of these places, places in which they’ve probably visited before, but they’re now seeing them through a different lens.
  - Student farm- provides a quick view of parts of food system on campus.
  - Campus coffee house (largest student run, dining services facility in US)
  - Dining commons- largely fast food
  - Dairy/meat lab on campus
- Off-campus labs:
  - Farm field trip: students choose from a big list of farmers that have an established relationship with the major.
  - Food industry- retail and distribution, processing, both large-scale and local.
  - Consumption/disposal.
  - Governance- USDA office, cooperative extension, places that are not in the commodity chain but influential.

\***Reflection essay**- this is the last assignment. Reflection essay serves a **vital** purpose in the learning process. It causes students to ask, “what were these experiences and what did they mean to me. How did they influence me or not?” When read after the first year, Ryan learned so much in terms of how students experienced the class. It allows the instructor to gauge: what they are feeling, experiencing, encountering. Damian and Ryan are reworking these every year to facilitate this reflective process on their part. The first year there were 3 out of the 21 students who didn’t reflect at all, completely descriptive- went here, here, then we did this...

Many students never had to write any sort of reflection essay in college, the I, first person perspective, is out of them, so many are not comfortable with this assignment. Ryan sees this assignment as a way of giving that back to them, reminding students that, “it matters what you feel, what you experience, and have to process.” Students struggle with this, but it is very posi-

tive for them. Ryan noted one powerful student transformation in which the course completely changed how she interacted with people, and she was able to reflect on this change in her essay.

\***Logistics**- Number of students: 21 first year, 45-50 second year. Probably 80+ this year. One TA assigned to every 20 students. Ryan lectures twice a week and TAs lead lab excursions once a week.

## Capstone

Ryan's involvement has been limited with the capstone classes. He has facilitated with conceptualizing but Tom Tomich is the one that taught it last year. It runs over two quarters. 10 weeks per quarter, 20 weeks.

Last year there were nine students who brainstormed ideas about projects/people and organizations they might want to work with. After brainstorming, they approached those potential partners to see if they have needs the students might be able to help with. In some cases, the students were approached by the organization. As a class they developed a nicely facilitated process. They created two teams, and each team had a client. One was a fibershed company (wools, wines, consumption). Ryan is not sure of other one, but will follow up with the TA, Maggie La Rochelle on this. Each team engaged in a collaborative process of setting goals, expectations, measurements/assessment. They worked mostly with organizing process for first 10 weeks, and the second 10 weeks were focused on completing the project itself. At the end of the course, they presented their findings to partners.\*\*

## **Resources**

UC Davis Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems Major homepage

<http://asi.ucdavis.edu/students/about-major>

Ryan Galt website

[http://hcd.ucdavis.edu/faculty/webpages/galt/personal/Galt\\_Faculty\\_Page/About\\_me.html](http://hcd.ucdavis.edu/faculty/webpages/galt/personal/Galt_Faculty_Page/About_me.html)

Food Systems Course

[http://hcd.ucdavis.edu/faculty/webpages/galt/personal/Galt\\_Faculty\\_Page/CRD\\_20.html](http://hcd.ucdavis.edu/faculty/webpages/galt/personal/Galt_Faculty_Page/CRD_20.html)

Sustainable Agriculture Education Association homepage

<http://sustainableaged.org/>

Database of curriculum (Mann Library)

<http://locale.mannlib.cornell.edu/saem>

<http://sustainableaged.org/Projects/AcademicPrograms/tabid/86/Default.aspx>

\*\* This reminds me of a CRP grad-level course where student teams would establish clients, who they worked with all year. Will research this. Maybe Mildred could help us out with this?

# UC-D: Maggie La Rochelle: 7/29/13

Graduate TA / Capstone on Food System Sustainability / UC Davis Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems Major

## Maggie La Rochelle

PhD Student, Dept. of Geography  
UC Davis  
[mlarochelle@ucdavis.edu](mailto:mlarochelle@ucdavis.edu)

Maggie La Rochelle is a graduate student in the Geography Department at UC Davis. Her research interests include:

- place-based and experiential learning
- environmental justice
- political ecology
- community identity, meaning, and engagement
- arts activism

### Courses TA'd (with Dr. Tom Tomich)

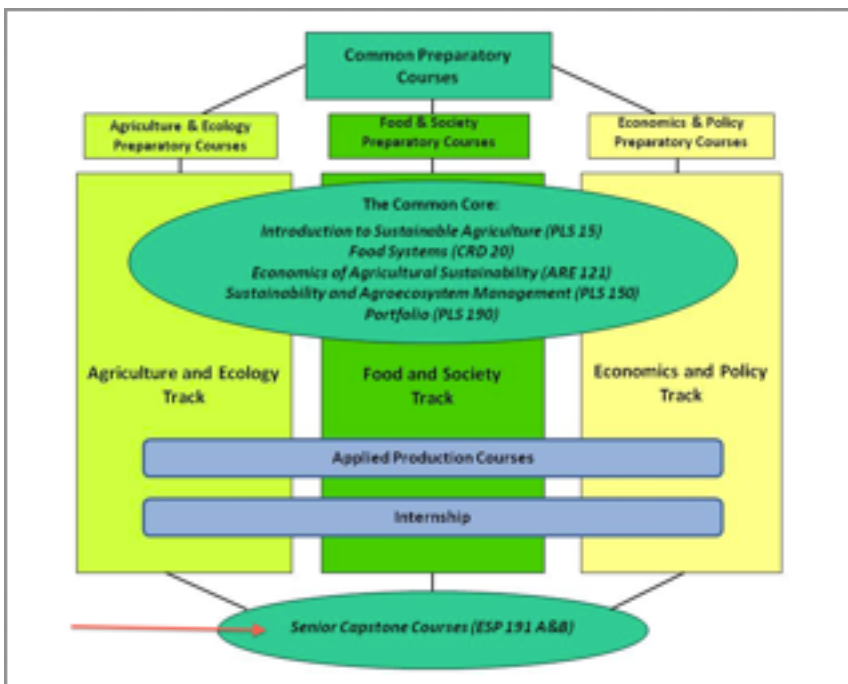
- ESP 191A/B: Two part Capstone Workshop on Food Systems Sustainability

#### ○ Course Description

■ Designed to be a culminating experience for seniors in the undergraduate major in Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems (SA&FS), this course is a two-quarter series. Students must take ESP 191A in the quarter immediately before enrolling in ESP 191B. This course format will allow for comprehensive projects that require more time to develop, implement, and critique.

■ In the SA&FS capstone, students will conduct and complete professional projects that meet the needs of a client working in some aspect of the food system. The course will involve a significant amount of professional skills development, including ongoing development of SA&FS competency portfolios, particularly skills in facilitation, communication, project management, and team-

work. The course activities will be aligned with the competencies of the SA&FS major.





- SA&FS learning objectives: systems thinking, experimentation and inquiry, interpersonal communication, understanding values, strategic management, civic engagement, and personal development.
- Course Overview 191A (first quarter)
  - Part I: students assess competency, collecting materials for portfolios, learning of strengths as members of a team.
  - Part II: student teams will be presented with project management frameworks and a tool kit of engagement strategies. Teams will practice using these tools and frameworks to identify and provide solutions for a range of sustainability issues.
  - Part III: students complete initial consultations with stakeholders, identifying a project to meet their needs, and begin creating project goals.
  - Part IV: students analyze client's problems and opportunities to identify strategies to fulfill project goals, understanding their client's needs through food systems research.
- Learning Objectives 191A
  - Work in multidisciplinary teams to identify / analyze specific problems and opportunities from the perspectives of various stakeholders, with an emphasis on your clients as key decision-makers.
  - Synthesize the information you collect and assess strengths/weaknesses of possible actions from your client's perspective.
  - Put into practice the knowledge / skills you've gained from your major and apply those to your team of professionals, producing useful results for your client.
- Evaluation 191A
  - Participation
  - Problem/Opportunity Statement
  - Project Proposal
  - Individual Written Reflections

- 
- Course Overview 191B (second quarter)
    - This course will be collectively planned based upon our experiences in ESP 191A.
    - Team project proposals completed in ESP 191A should serve as the primary roadmap for student teams throughout the quarter.
    - Reflection is also an important part of ESP 191B. Individual reflections and group discussions allow us to critically consider the work we're doing in order to build professional skills and key competencies.
  - Learning Objectives 191B
    - Same as 191A.
  - Evaluation 191B
    - Participation
    - Team Deliverables: progress check, presentations, and reports/other materials
    - Individual Written Reflections

## Interview

### Establishing Community Partners

In establishing community partners, Maggie arrived later in the process. She worked with Dr. Tom Tomich on the capstone course, who established the initial meetings with the incoming capstone students in the Spring quarter of the previous year. These meetings had the goal of identifying potential clients based upon student interests. Maggie facilitated this process last Spring for the second year of the capstone course.

This past Spring, Maggie and Tom held two meetings. In the first meeting they explained the structure of the course to the students in order to give them time to generate ideas. The second meeting focused on identifying potential clients or projects. Maggie suggests this two meeting structure, a semester before, as it gives the students **more time to get used to the structure** of the course. To many students, this is the first time students are involved in a project/client-based course. Introducing the course early is useful to get students to buy-in early and to overcome hesitations that may arise.

Maggie and Tom asked students to generate ideas for potential clients *or* potential projects in an open brainstorm meeting, and then presented those ideas to the group. Students were encouraged to think about an issue they were passionate about, share that with the group, and then together they would brainstorm potential organizations or community actors to work with to address that issue. This process was more informal, and provided a good start for the selection process.

During the summer, students are able to investigate clients informally. Clients are formally chosen at the beginning of the Fall semester, and student groups are formed thereafter.

### 2012-2013 Clients

The first year, students worked with Don Saylor, a Yolo County Supervisor ([www.donsaylor.org](http://www.donsaylor.org)) and Rebecca

“Essentially we all made a list on the board over the course of 5-10 minutes and then sat down and went through each idea one by one, with the author of the idea presenting it however they wanted to the group.”

Burgess, the Marin County-based Fibershed<sup>2</sup> founder / educator ([www.fibershed.com](http://www.fibershed.com)).



These clients were established through professional relationships that Tom had developed through the Agriculture Sustainability Institute and other professional relationships the students themselves had established. One student in particular, had worked closely with a client and really championed to facilitate that relationship with close advising from Tom.

After these clients were established, each presents to the whole group of students, after which students create their own teams. Then students contact the clients for their first meeting. Over the fall quarter the students develop their project ideas in discussion with their clients over phone and skype calls and in person when possible. By the end of the first quarter, the group presents the project to the client that is to be completed in the Winter. This gives the clients time to respond and advise and ensures that there is a lot of back and forth during project formation.

### First-year Experiences



The first capstone course had 10 students. When initiating contact with clients, there was an assumption that each client would have 4-5 student-interns each. However, once groups were formed, students were unevenly split. Eight students decided to work on the fibershed and two students worked on food insecurity in Yolo County. Although the disparity in group size gave Maggie and Tom concern, the students emphasized their need to have the power to determine their own groups.

Although each group managed well with their group

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<sup>2</sup> The mission of Fibershed is to change the way we clothe ourselves by supporting the creation of local textile cultures that enhance the ecological balance, and utilize regional agriculture while strengthening local economies and communities.

size, Maggie, Tom, and the students took away two main points from this experience. First, the students in the group of two recommended that the instructors require more than two students in future groups to help manage workload. The second take away was the need to establish transparent and open relationships with the clients from the start. Maggie emphasized this in the interview, “I think in the future it’s a good policy to be as transparent with the clients as possible about the process by which the students are self-organizing/being organized, so there aren’t any surprises.”

Openness in regards to the student-client relationship was important as was ensuring student flexibility and a healthy amount of independence, as Maggie suggests, **“I’d also say that requesting more openness from the client at the outset while maintaining enough flexibility for the students to really organize themselves is totally worth it--I’d say this is a better call than being more strict with organizing requirements for the students at the beginning (i.e. restricting group sizes and assigning groups), because feeling ownership over the project was so important for the student motivation and willingness to work through challenges.”**

### Length vs. Depth of Relationship

Maggie found it really helpful to work with clients with whom there was already some foundation for a relationship, especially considering the relatively short amount of time for the projects. The capstone projects thus served as a “continuation or a new chapter of a relationship rather than a foundational building process.” Many relationships were extended beyond the scope of the course on a one on one basis. Some students actually strategically selected a client with whom they wanted to work with post-graduation!

But again, clarity is key in these university-community relationships. Maggie and Tom were very clear with *both* students and clients that the project/formal working relationship was only for the time of the internship. Although the course could possibly open up an opportunity to extend the working relationship, that would be developed independent of the course. This transparency from the start helped student-client teams develop projects that could be completed successfully in the time they had, which was gratifying for all involved.

After some reflection, Maggie stressed the importance of quality relationships. She found the length wasn’t as important as the quality of the relationship over the course of the project. Quality matters to ensure expectations are being met and that both clients and teams are able to work toward a successful end point.

Overall, Maggie was impressed by her students’ abilities.

She felt that the student teams really met their clients' needs. Importantly, they provided a critical yet clarifying eye for the client's work that they had already been pursuing. One particular project, in which students created a business plan for a "microfarm<sup>3</sup>" to be used for growing food for the Yolo County Food Bank led students to determine the viability of attempting to address food insecurity through philanthropic channels. Through this project the students were able to speak to a very wide variety of stakeholders including food bank representatives, land-holding farmers, members of a new farmer training program, and political officials. The students asked these stakeholders what they would actually *need* to happen to ensure the project's success.

The students' research brought into actuality a project that had only been in the idea stage! Because of the students' unique political position, they were able to make the project feasible. The students, "by virtue of being outsiders with time to reflect and four years of theoretical knowledge under their belts, not only gave their time and effort to what the clients asked them to do, but brought a fresh critical perspective that ended up helping the clients take more successful approaches to their work."

*"It is hard to design doable projects and control expectations, and I think the students really did a fabulous job using the time that they had."*

## Resources

UC Davis Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems Major homepage

<http://asi.ucdavis.edu/students/about-major>

Tom Tomich Faculty Page

<http://asi.ucdavis.edu/about/staff/tptomich>

Don Saylor "Farm to Every Fork" homepage

[http://www.donsaylor.org/yolo\\_county\\_farm\\_to\\_every\\_fork](http://www.donsaylor.org/yolo_county_farm_to_every_fork)

Fibershed homepage

<http://www.fibershed.com>

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<sup>3</sup> A small, often triangular parcel of good, unused land on the property of larger farmers who don't utilize it based on machinery/equipment needs.

# Preliminary Findings

## Choosing and Working with Community Partners

The interview with Rachael was extremely helpful in understanding how the CAFS minor at VT was created. Rachael served as a community partner (working with VT Dining Services) and really appreciated being included from the beginning. She was part of a Task-Force team of faculty, staff, students, and other community partners to first develop the values of the minor, out of which the team was able to develop the program goals and the student learning outcomes/objectives. For the CAFS minor at VT, community partners were already loosely affiliated with the university, making it easier for university members to build off of already established relationships. Rachael stressed the importance of understanding that in the early stages of minor construction, the task force teams cannot possibly have nor want every community partner involved. Teams should be careful of “too many cooks in the kitchen.” At VT, the task force team chose one community partner in particular, Jenny Schwanke, who was especially plugged into the community. Jenny had already established herself working with the University-affiliated YMCA and the local farmers markets. It should be noted that community partners involved at VT were salaried through a USDA grant.

At other institutions (University of Wyoming and UC Davis), community members may not have been as influential in constructing the minor, but were key participants in creating the capstone courses and serving as important points of contact for students in the course. At the University of Wyoming, these members were part of the “Academic-Community” advisory boards. Although they did not receive salaries, the incentive for active community partners was projects-based, and an assurance that student-collaborations would be beneficial rather than a waste of time.

At UC Davis, community partnerships were also established in the initial stages in creating the major. Faculty members reached out to community members, NGOs, practitioners, and other organizations asking what they needed and wanted from the students and the university. There are some instances of community partners initiating contact with the major who wanted help from students/faculty. The team at UC Davis created and have since maintained a google doc of active community partners, which is open to faculty, staff, and TAs, to expand upon. In Tom Tomich’s capstone course, students strategically added organizations that they hoped to work with after graduation. These members are contacted for student internships, labs as seen in the

Food Systems course taught by Dr. Galt, and as potential capstone course partners. It is important for this list to be extensive, as to avoid “burnout” of community partners.

## **Curriculum Development**

Rachael was the only interviewee who was active in developing the core curriculum from the start (although I think Susan Clark and Damian Parr will be helpful in this area). Members of the Task Force team at VT started by developing core values, really keeping these central throughout the process. From these six core values they created the program goals and student learning outcomes. VT was also unique in that they were able to create four totally new courses, and involved community partners along the way, even down to creating the syllabus in some cases.

Ryan Galt discussed creating curriculum with Damian Parr, then a grad student in Education, for the Food Systems course (a required course within the Sustainable Ag and Food Systems major), and stressed the importance of developing curriculum with someone experienced in pedagogy. If it weren't for Damian, Ryan would not have included the reflection essay component of the course, which he now finds invaluable.

## **Autoethnography, Experiential Learning, and Reflection**

Some self-reflection component was important for several of the professors interviewed, as particularly key to experiential learning. For Sarah Dougher at PSU, autoethnography is critical, not only personal experience but also critical thinking *about* personal experience. She strongly suggests that an autoethnographic model should be in any course about food systems as it allows students to think more critically about *how* data is collected about the people they are working with. This raises important questions that are often overlooked, for her course, through autoethnography, students were able to think very differently about charity and thus interact differently with the students they were working with at p:ear.

Ryan Galt sees self-reflection as the other side of experiential learning. As part of his pedagogical outlook, from the standpoint of Social Constructionist Learning Theory, his students are required to write a reflection essay on the entire course. This allows the students to really think deeply not only about what they did (labs/fieldtrips), but also to make connections to lecture/course readings and their own daily lives. The reflection essay ensures the students are able to truly “digest” the course, while also serving as a gauge for Ryan and his TAs as to the effectiveness of their learning outcomes.

Maggie La Rochelle found reflection essential to the SA&FS capstone course, not only for student growth, but for student-led teams to receive feedback from their community partners. This required a sort of back-and-forth ongoing interaction between teams and partners to ensure that not only their goals were being met, but also that they were clear and transparent on what those goals were and the best way to achieve them.

### **Capstone Course**

For all the program affiliates interviewed, capstone courses were a major component of community-university engagement, providing a space for students to become more deeply involved with the surrounding community, while attempting to ensure a positive relationship for the community partner. At all the universities, capstone courses are only taken at the end of the student's undergraduate career, and last for 20 weeks (UC Davis) up to an entire academic year.

Prior to the capstone course at UC Davis, Dr. Galt spoke about required internships and introductory courses which provided the means for students to reach out and establish/build relationships with community partners. The Food Systems course required labs provided a kind of "trial" site visit, where interaction was really limited, but students were able to meet various community members. Dr. Galt describes these visits as "low key," without uninformed students getting in the way of the community partner. Having the capstone at the end of the students' career allows faculty and staff to make sure the students are "there" conceptually and developmentally, as an intense partnership with freshman is probably not a great idea.

The capstone course taught by Tom Tomich and Maggie La Rochelle at UC Davis provided a culminating project for the students in the SA&FS major. This course allowed them to deeply apply the knowledge they had gained throughout their four years at UC Davis, while also providing a tangible service to their community partner, establishing a professional project team-client relationship.

### **Best Practices from Community Partners**

Many community partners institute and require an orientation in order to familiarize students with often underserved/marginalized populations (p:ear). Although an intersection of very different populations may build acceptance/tolerance, it is important to ensure students are aware of do's/don'ts, and to have a sort of sensitivity training. Joy Cartier, who leads orientation at p:ear stressed in her interview that it is the responsibility of the organization/community partner to know their population, and not the job of the university. Therefore, the faculty/staff should focus on ensuring proper translation, from the community member/expert to the stu-



dents. She also encourages university groups to go to community partners in order to show respect. Dr. Dougher's class has been working with p:ear for four years, and prior to that Dr. Dougher had volunteered at p:ear for many years. Although this sort of long-term relationship may be unique to their case, it is important to try and maintain and build longevity with a community partner once contact is initiated.

Interestingly, Kate Pearl from the Homeless Garden Project provided insight on how to think about student-community interaction, as students are not the only beneficiaries. Underserved populations are often isolated in various ways, so contact with students may be very beneficial in bridging societal divides that are maintained elsewhere. Additionally, students may provide energy, assistance, and skill sets that community members/staff are in desperate need of; so, it is useful to provide projects in capstone courses that allow collaboration, but essentially have students doing all the leg work.

Many community practitioners would like to see faculty and staff share their knowledge and skills with their organizations (Homeless Garden Project) in order to provide a sort of trade in skills/knowledge sets/time.

It is helpful for the community members to know their "rights" in working and dealing with students. For example, Joy Cartier from p:ear would like to have had the option to send student interns elsewhere since the interns she received were an awful fit.

### **Best Practices from the Faculty**

Capstone courses can be structured closely in partnership with the community organization (Dr. Dougher's course). Instructors should serve as "volunteer managers" over their students, keeping close tabs on what students are doing throughout the course.

15-20 students is ideal for the capstone course, with 25 being the max.

Orientations are key to familiarize students with the population they are working with. It is useful to have students work with staff and meet their needs, but the professor must determine if students are capable/mature enough to work with community partners, depending on needs of group. As community groups know and translate the needs of the populations they serve, professors should be able to gauge whether or not students are ready to do the work and hold them accountable. Have students bring the resources they have to the table, the things they can do that the staff doesn't necessarily have time for. They can create projects that identify an immediate need and tries to solve it.

It is important to hone your focus and work with a particular population so that your students are able to understand specific structural causes of that population's food insecurity (in the case of peer course). It may be helpful for faculty/staff to work with groups at Cornell already working with that underserved local population, who may know the local history and situation more intimately.

As Maggie La Rochelle cogently points out, the quality of relationships often matters much more than the length. If student-interns maintain a long relationship without ever really serving their partner's needs, then nothing is really gained on either side. The shortened timeframe can actually benefit community partners, as students have an allotted amount of time to complete a project with an established end goal. In her experiences at UC Davis, the students worked exceedingly well to meet these expectations.

## Further Contacts

**Susan Clark-** suggested by both Rachael Budowle and Ryan Galt

[clark55@vt.edu](mailto:clark55@vt.edu)

Director of CAFS, VT

Phone interview scheduled for Friday, July 19, 2013

<http://www.hort.vt.edu/People/Clark.html>

**Alicia Woodbury-** suggested by Sarah Dougher

[alicia.woodbury@asu.edu](mailto:alicia.woodbury@asu.edu)

Arizona State University's School of Social Transformation

Emailed on 7/9/13, waiting for reply

<https://sst.clas.asu.edu/alicia-woodbury>

**Damian Parr-** suggested by Ryan Galt and Marion Dixon **in process**

[dmparr@ucsc.edu](mailto:dmparr@ucsc.edu)

Research and Education Coordinator, The Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems worked with Ryan in creation of the Food Systems Course, interviewed last summer by MD.

Interview scheduled for week of 9/23/13

**Jenny Schwanke-** suggested by Kim Niewolny **in process**

[jenny@vtymca.org](mailto:jenny@vtymca.org)

Community Partner with VT Community Agriculture and Food Systems minor. Jenny was influential in constructing the minor and co-teaches with the VT faculty. She is the director of the local YMCA, Hale-Y Community Gardens.

Interview scheduled for week of 9/23/13

**Mark Vanhorn-** suggested by Kim Niewolny

UC Davis, first chair of SAEA

**Krista Jacobson-** suggested by Kim Niewolny

Co-chair of SAEA and chair next year.

**Iowa State-** graduate program and an interesting model from a LGU point of view.

**Don Saylor-** suggested by Maggie La Rochelle

**Rebecca Burgess-** suggested by Maggie La Rochelle

[www.fibershed.org](http://www.fibershed.org)

Marin County-based Fibershed founder and educator. Rebecca worked with the UC Davis students in the initial capstone course.