

**DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY  
UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA**

**ANTH 422 (001) (3 credits)  
MODES OF SUBSISTENCE**

Term 2 – Winter 2009  
Tue. & Thur. 15:30-17:00  
AnSo 202

Instructor: Dr. Rachel Black  
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Office: AnSo 3112  
Office hours: Thur. 14:00-15:00 or by appointment

**Course description:**

Human survival is largely based on complex relationships between biology, environment, culture and technology. Food and water are the most basic elements of human life but the way in which we go about accessing these basic needs has changed greatly throughout human evolution and history. This course will look at the development of modes of subsistence over time and throughout the globe. In the first portion of this class, we will begin by looking at hunting and gathering and see how human societies changed once agriculture and animal domestication were developed. There will be a strong emphasis on biocultural adaptations that were a major part of these shifts in modes of subsistence. In the second part of the class, we will see how once agriculture allowed for surplus and specialization, trade and social diversification developed through to present-day subsistence in complex societies. The last portion of the class looks at a variety of forms of contemporary subsistence from industrial agriculture and local sustainable farming to freegans, gleaners and urban foragers. Ultimately we will analyse how changing modes of subsistence have affected social and cultural relations as well as the environment.

**Course objectives:**

- Understand the evolution of human subsistence
- Learn key concepts and theories related to human subsistence practices with a focus on human ecology
- Analyse current modes of subsistence and propose new models for the future
- Develop critical thinking and writing skills
- Communicate, share and listen to others in order to build a productive learning environment
- Appreciate how eating is an agricultural and economic act

**Evaluation:**

Attendance & participation	15%
Group presentation	10%
Memos	10%
Essay	35%
Take-home exam	30%

**Assignments:**

**Group presentation:** Working in groups of 2-3, you will prepare a presentation (can include a debate, a visual presentation, group discussion, creation of a web page, etc.) on one of the topics broached in the course or a related topic of your choice (to be okayed by the instructor). Please do not summarise the course readings. You will be required to investigate further and present new material. All members of the group will share the same grade. Groups and date of presentation to be decided in class.

**Memos:** You will hand in 2 memos based on 2 of the readings or points raised in class (your choice). A memo is a two-page typed (double-spaced) reflection or comment on a course reading or content.

**Essay:** For this essay you should choose a food system or movement (micro or macro eg. the Vancouver Foodbank, a !Kung village, the Slow Food movement). First, research and describe this system or movement. Second, choose a focal point or argument to explore further (eg. the impact of the global economy on native knowledge of local food; the impact of the economic recession on international food aid; challenges to producing sustainable organic food). Your paper must include proper citations (APA or AAA citation in text) and a bibliography. The paper must be 12-15 pages (double-spaced), not including bibliography. It should be typed in 12-point font (Times New Roman or a similar size font) with regular 1-inch margins. **Due in class on Tue., March 31, 2009. Hard copies only** (electronic files upon request). Late essays will be penalized 10% per day.

**Exam:** The final exam will be a take-home exam with two essay questions that address the broad themes from the course. The exam must be **submitted via e-mail as a Word file** (.doc) to the instructor at [reblack@gmail.com](mailto:reblack@gmail.com). Submission date TBA.

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism will not be tolerated and all plagiarised work will be given a mark of zero. Please refer to UBC guidelines on plagiarism or ask the instructor if you have any doubts or questions

<http://www.vpacademic.ubc.ca/integrity/policies.htm>  
<http://www.library.ubc.ca/clc/airc.htm>

**Course outline:**

Jan. 6 – Course overview and defining modes of subsistence – relationships between humans, environment and culture

**Part I - from hunting and gathering to capitalist economy**

Jan. 8 Hunting and gathering

Outram, Alan. (2007). "Hunters-gathers and the first farmers: The evolution of taste in Prehistory" in P. Freedman (ed.) *Food: The history of taste*. Berkeley: University of California Press: 35-61

Jan. 13 Biocultural approaches to subsistence and the anthropology of food

Katz, Solomon. (1989). "The Biocultural Evolution of Cuisine" in R. Shepard. (ed.) *Handbook of the psychophysiology of human eating*. : 115-140.

Jan. 15 Discussion continued

Jan. 20 Cultivation – horticulture & agriculture

Ingold, Tim. (2000). "Making things, growing plants, raising animals and bringing up children" in *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. New York: Routledge: 77-88.

Jan. 22 More discussion on cultivation

Ingold, Tim. (2000). "From trust to domination: an alternative history of human-animal relations" in *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. New York: Routledge: 61-76.

Jan. 27 Subsistence, economy and social structures

Ingold, Tim. (2000). "The Optimal Forager & Economic Man" in *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill*. New York: Routledge: 27-39.

Jan. 29 More discussion

## **Part II Capitalist Modes of Subsistence**

Feb. 3 Subsistence, nature and technology

Pollan-"Introduction" & "Industrial Corn" pp. 1-119.

Feb. 5 Commercial agriculture

Pottier, Johan. (1999). "The Politics of Identity: Agri-business and Agri-culture" in *Anthropology of Food: The Social Dynamics of Food Security*. Cambridge: Polity Press: 123-141

Feb. 10 Film – *King Corn* (90 min.)

Feb. 12 Implications of agri-business – the GMO debate

Stone, Glenn Davis. (2007). "Agricultural Deskilling and the Spread of Genetically Modified Cotton in Warangal" *Current Anthropology*. Vol. 48 (1): 67-103

Reading Week Break

Feb. 24 High-protein desires and industrial meat production

Pollan-"Pastoral Grass" pp. 123-273

Feb. 26 More discussion on meat

March 3 Challenges to traditional foodways – hunting and gathering societies in a global economy? Managing common resources in the face of cultural diversity

McCay, Bonnie & James M. Acheson, (1987). "Human Ecology of the Commons" in McCay & Acheson, Eds. *The Question of the Commons: The Culture and Ecology of Communal Resources*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press: 1-34.

Fikret, Berkes. (1987). "Common-Property Resource Management and Cree Indian Fisheries in Subarctic Canada" in McCay & Acheson, Eds. *The Question of the Commons: The Culture and Ecology of Communal Resources*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press: 1-34.

March 5 Challenges to traditional foodways– changes in diet, social structures and traditional knowledge

Layton, Robert. (2001). "Hunter-gathers, their neighbours and the nation state" in Panter-Brick, Layton & Rowley-Conwy (eds.) *Hunter-Gathers: An interdisciplinary perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP: 292-321.

March 10 Food distribution & markets - global

Pottier, Johan. (1999). "Playing the Food Market" in *Anthropology of Food: The Social Dynamics of Food Security*. Cambridge: Polity Press: 98-122.  
The conflicting cultural politics of current modes of subsistence

March 12 Food distribution-local

Abbot Cone, C. & A. Myhre. (2000). "Community-supported agriculture: A sustainable alternative to industrial agriculture?" *Human Organization*: Vol. 59(2): 187-197.

March 17 Discussion continued

March 19 Film – *The Future of Food* or *The Real Dirt on Farmer John*

March 24 Alternate forms of urban subsistence-Urban foragers

Black, Rachel. (2007). "Eating Garbage: Socially Marginal Food Provisioning Practices" in MacClancy, et al. Eds. *Consuming the Inedible: Neglected Dimensions of Food Choice*. Oxford: Berghahn: 141-150.

Edwards, F. & D. Mercer. (2007). "Gleaning from gluttony: An Australian youth subculture confronts the ethics of waste" *Australian Geographer* Vol. 38(3): 279-296.

March 26 Urban agriculture-  
Possible field trip to the Strathcona Community garden  
or  
Film: *The Power of Community: How Cuba Survived Peak Oil* (53 min.)

March 31 Discussion

April 2 – Last class-take home exam

Pollan, Michael. (2008). "Farmer in Chief" *New York Times Magazine*, Oct. 12, 2008  
<http://www.michaelpollan.com/article.php?id=97>