

Food Studies Newsletter

November 2019

Welcome from Professor Molly Anderson

Welcome to the Food Studies Program Newsletter--- we're back, now that I have a new and competent assistant ([Suria Vanrajah](#) from the RCGA). I want to remind all of you that the Food Studies Minor is up and running --- please let students in your food-related classes know. The requirements are posted at <http://www.middlebury.edu/academics/food-studies/requirements> and I would be glad to talk with any interested students. I'll be on leave next fall (2020) and [Mike Sheridan](#) very generously offered to serve as Program Director for the Fall 2020 and Winter 2021 terms. Thanks to Mike, and thanks to Food Studies faculty for your vote of confidence in me by asking that I come back to the Food Studies Academic Director role when I return from leave!

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Faculty Updates

We are happy to report that Professor [Lana Povitz](#) of the Middlebury College Department of History has recently published a book on food justice activism. Entitled [Stirrings: How Activist New Yorkers Ignited a Movement for Food Justice](#), the book covers the efforts of New Yorkers to combat widespread hunger within their city. Povitz also takes a special look at the activists behind these projects, many of whom were female and involved in earlier social movements. Characterized as the first book to document food justice movements in a major U.S. city, [Stirrings](#) is sure to be of interest to Middlebury faculty, students, and staff in, and out, of the Food Studies program.

In other news, former Professor [Erica Morell](#), whom many of you will remember from food studies courses she taught as a C3 Postdoctoral Fellow, has recently begun teaching at St. Lawrence University in Canton, New York. Professor Morell told us that "I am just so happy and feel very lucky to have gotten my dream job. I am teaching Race, Class, and Environmental Justice right now, along with our intro Environment and Society course. These will be standard classes for me. We typically have a 3/3 load, so I'll be adding Consuming Food to my repertoire next semester, which is a community-based learning class. Next year I hope to offer a class on climate justice and then something more closely related to my research for an advanced topics seminar (maybe Boobs and Foods)... I also have a lot going on with a research project on lead contamination in the water in Milwaukee, which is a community action research project with the African American Breastfeeding Network there." She is also continuing her work on her first book concerning "first foods" (breastfeeding) among African-American, Navajo, and white mothers and its connections with food justice.

Student Spotlight: Sam Alexander ('20)

Sam Alexander ('20) is a Middlebury College senior who is about to finish his major in Critical Food Systems as a part of the Independent Scholar program. As Middlebury does not offer a Food Studies major, students, like Sam, who are particularly dedicated to the discipline, have chosen to pursue the field through the Independent Scholar program which allows students to design their own major under the advisement of Middlebury faculty. When asked about why he chose to pursue this major, what he has been studying as a part of this program, and how he will conclude his four years at Middlebury in a senior project, Sam shared the following:

“I decided to be an Independent Scholar focused on food studies because I wanted a more comprehensive understanding of how the food system worked than a single major would've have allowed. While food plays a huge role shaping the economy, the environment, cultures, and society as a whole, understanding the food system through one lens seemed a little limiting. Rather than choose a single track, an independent food studies major allowed me to utilize a variety of different disciplines to address multifaceted issues. An interdisciplinary approach has also pushed me to combine readings and concepts that I otherwise wouldn't have thought to put together, or wouldn't have come in contact with in the first place. I am currently finishing up my major in Critical Food Systems, which aims to understand food as it relates to systems of power and justice. This major has given me the flexibility to take courses on food, as well as courses in the Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies, Geography, Environmental Studies, and Biology departments. I have also had several experiential learning opportunities working at the Knoll, and Vermont Farm to Plate. For my senior work, I am researching regenerative agriculture programs in prisons, and how they relate to the food justice movement more broadly. By working on this paper, I've been able to analyze the circumstances required for food justice activism, and unpack the implicit assumptions embedded in these circumstances. For example, a lot of food justice work focuses on providing job training for underserved people. However, these types of activism can often overlook the ways work can be exploitative. This can be highlighted by the history of work done in prisons, specifically involving agriculture. While organizing the major took a lot of time and energy, I'm glad it has given me the opportunity to build a major that works for my interests.”

Stay tuned for our future newsletters for more student spotlights!

Spring 2020 Food Studies Courses

The following Food Studies courses will be offered in Spring 2020. Please refer to the Food Studies Minor page on Middlebury's website for information about which distribution requirement each course fulfills:

Food, Power, and Justice (FOOD0281), Instructor: Molly Anderson

History of U.S. Food Politics (HIST0209), Instructor: Lana Povitz

Health, Food, and Poverty: Critical Frameworks for Social Change (INTD0426), Instructors: Molly Anderson and Jason Duquette-Hoffman

Social Class and the Environment (WRPR0210), Instructor: Hector Vila

Natural Science and the Environment (ENVS 0112), Instructors: Peter Ryan, Marc Lapin

Global Political Ecology (ENVS0385), Instructor: Dan Suarez

Environmental Studies Senior Seminar (ENVS0401), Instructors: Multiple

Surface and Ground Water (GEOL0255), Instructor: Peter Ryan

Environmental Anthropology (ANTH0211), Instructor: Michael Sheridan

New Perennials Project

Just one of the many exciting food-related projects going on at Middlebury, the [New Perennials Project](#) has been making great strides in the field of sustainable agriculture. Headed by Middlebury Scholar in Residence and Clarkson University professor emeritus of philosophy [Bill Vitek](#), the [New Perennials Project](#) is exploring a shift towards natural systems agriculture, in which multiseason perennial crops and new planting methods will be able to accommodate large-scale agricultural production and replace the current monocrop production in the agriculture industry. The project will include a new course at Middlebury, lectures from guest speakers, crop testing at the organic garden on campus, community engagement projects, and engagement with various Middlebury departments and programs. For additional information on the project contact Bill Vitek at wvitek@middlebury.edu.



Upcoming Events

November 9th: [Empty Bowl Dinner](#) to benefit Middlebury food pantries (tickets available at Middlebury Natural Food Coop)

November 12th, 3-5 pm: [Addison County Hunger Council Meeting](#) (Catamount Park, Middlebury)

November 13th, 6-8 pm: [ACORN's Annual Meeting](#) (American Flatbread, RSVP at acornvt.org and indicate that you will pay at the door but note that the event is free with Middlebury College Student ID)

November 14th, 3-5 pm: [Visit Bee's Wrap and the Co-op Team with the Innovation Hub](#) (more information and RSVP at go/vvtBee)

November 15th, 9 a.m.-12:30 pm: ["Down to Earth: Nourishing Change in the Champlain Valley"](#) conference organized by the New Perennials Project (Wilson Hall)

If you have any information you would like shared in our next newsletter, please do not hesitate to reach out to Professor Molly Anderson (mollya@middlebury.edu) or RCGA Intern Suria Vanrajah (svanrajah@middlebury) directly.