THE OBJECTIVES of this seminar are: (1) to provide participants a thorough grounding in some of the main debates in critical agrarian studies and a deepened appreciation for the connections between agriculture, trade, environment, climate, food, energy, water, health, technology, property, conflicts, governance, livelihoods, and rights; and (2) to develop and/or advance research projects with a focus on rural or rural-urban aspects of any of these or related issues.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EXPLANATIONS FOR THE REQUIREMENTS:

(1) **Active and informed participation** in class and Blackboard discussions of assigned readings and other participants’ research projects (See below on Blackboard). What you learn in this course (and your grade) will depend significantly on how deeply you engage with the material and with the other people in the course. If you are extremely shy or inhibited (as many of us are or once were), use this seminar as an opportunity to get over it, because it will only hold you back. Anthropologists need to be able to interact with people as part of their fieldwork and in academic and other professional settings. If you are not shy, it is very important that you contribute to creating a supportive environment for those who might be.

(2) A **statement (one page)** about a planned research project for the course, to be submitted via email no later than (and preferably before) February 28. Include a preliminary list of sources. The best research and writing have long gestation periods. You probably can’t produce a really good paper at the last minute. It is important that you begin thinking about a term paper topic early in the semester, that you discuss it with the instructor and with your classmates, and that you begin the research and writing well before the end-of-semester crunch.

(3) An **oral presentation** of approximately 30 minutes that outlines the approach and/or the main findings of the research for the course paper (presenters may assign a rough draft of their paper or other material in advance of the meeting). This will occur toward the end of the semester and is an opportunity to share with the rest of the group what you have been doing and to get feedback and suggestions. I understand that presentations will be of works-in-progress, not polished texts. This means that the findings may still be tentative and that some aspects of the planned paper may not be fully fleshed out. That is expected and perfectly okay.

And (4) a written **course paper** due at the end of the semester (by May 22 at 11:45AM). Writing and publishing excellent, original papers is the key to advancement in academia. Many (not all)
term papers in Graduate Center courses are publishable, even if the authors don’t always try to publish them. I always recommend that doctoral students publish something before they obtain the PhD. How else in this lousy job market can they obtain a full-time position or a post-doc? (See Lennard Davis’s article on this). As much as possible, term papers should be of professional quality in every sense. They should analyze a significant problem, be well organized, carefully proofread, and—hopefully—of publishable quality and exciting to read. I prefer lucid prose to academic “thick writing” and data-based arguments to unsupported assertions (this can be helpful in grant proposals too). Length is less important than content and clarity. Any system of citation (AAA, APA, Chicago, etc.) is fine, as long as it is used consistently. I welcome papers that express views or use approaches different than my own. Late papers will be accepted only under unusual circumstances. Papers must be submitted as Word (not pdf) email attachments. This will facilitate commenting and editing.

For the nine weeks when there are assigned readings (and not presentations of participants’ research), each student will submit one question about the week’s readings to the Blackboard “Discussion Board.” Each student will also respond (in one very brief paragraph) to one question posted by another student or by the instructor. Blackboard submissions should be completed by 9:00PM on the evening before the class meeting. This will allow a brief time for the instructor and your classmates to review the comments. On weeks when participants will be presenting their papers, students will not be expected to post questions or responses on BB; they will be expected to contribute suggestions to presenters during and after the presentations. This may be done by contacting the presenter individually, by posting a comment on BB, or by emailing the entire group via the BB site. This syllabus may be modified during the semester.

We will read the following BOOKS, as well as articles and other documents listed in the schedule below:


COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS

January 31: Introduction and discussion of “the agrarian question”

February 7: Agrarian classes and sociopolitical outcomes

Moore, Social origins of dictatorship and democracy, read pp. xi-xix, 413-508 AND AT LEAST ONE CHAPTER EACH FROM PART ONE AND PART TWO.
February 14: The differentiation debate and its consequences


“Throw the Kulaks Out of the Collective Farms!”

February 21: NO CLASS. CUNY Follows a Monday Schedule

February 28: After the first peasant revolution of the twentieth century (Mexico) ONE-PAGE PAPER PROPOSAL DUE

Becker, Setting the virgin on fire, entire book.

Lázaro Cárdenas

Virgen de Guadalupe

March 6: Agrarian reform debates, then and now


March 13: Liberalization of the agricultural sector


Masked protesters lead the flag-waving march from Hong Kong's Victoria Park towards the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre in a continuing protest against the sixth World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference, 2005. Photo: AP
March 20: Land grabbing, past and present


March 27: Food regimes and industrial agriculture versus agroecology


April 3: Contemporary peasant and farmer movements


April 10: NO CLASS. SPRING BREAK.

April 17: An anti-state perspective (*International Day of Peasant Struggle*)

April 24: Student presentations

May 1: Student presentations (May Day)

May 8: Student presentations

May 15: Student presentations

May 22: NO CLASS MEETING. COURSE PAPERS DUE (via email submission)
A very short and eclectic list of RECOMMENDED READINGS (to complement the lectures and required readings):


De Schutter, Olivier. 2010. Food commodities speculation and food price crises: Regulation to reduce the risks of price volatility. UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, September.


Duncan, Kenneth, and Ian Rutledge, eds. 1978. Land and labour in Latin America: essays on the
development of agrarian capitalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.


