

GEOL 1307

Sustainable Food Systems

Fall 2025

Instructor:

Corey S. Flynn, EdD
3708 Fifth Avenue, Suite 501
Ofc: 412-383-3506
Cell: 415-310-2225
coreyflynn@pitt.edu

Class meeting times & location:

Wednesdays 4 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. – 149 Cathedral of Learning

- Most of our class meetings will be outside. Please look at the schedule below for the location.

Course Description

Our food system is a multifaceted network of interconnected systems and relationships. A resilient and sustainable food system is a system in which healthy food is provided to people while balancing environmental, social, and economic impacts. These dynamics force stakeholders to confront synergies and tradeoffs in agricultural practices, harvesting, transportation, manufacturing and distribution, healthy diets, and a reduction in wasted food.

Goals

This course includes guest speakers, class discussions, news and journal articles, assignments, and a semester project to help guide students in developing their understanding of a sustainable food system and how they contribute through their choices. Upon the completion of the course, students should be able to define and describe the concepts of a sustainable food system and how it relates to politics, policy, community, and themselves.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course students will be able to:

- Understand sustainable agriculture in an urban setting
- Evaluate environmental and health impacts of food systems
- Engage with Community-Based Food Solutions
- Analyze Local and Food Systems and Food Justice Issues
- Provide examples of limits, synergies, and tradeoffs of Food Sustainability at multiple scales (e.g., individual, regional, national, and global)
- Recognize the value and necessity of working outside of one's primary discipline to achieving Sustainable Food Systems

Expectations: There are no prerequisites for this course. Students should be able to interpret and analyze quantitative information in the form of charts and tables. In class and assignments, students will be prompted to explore the limits of their understanding of food sustainability issues so that new knowledge can be formed.

Required Reading: Readings are provided on *Canvas*.

Grading

Critical Analysis Paper	10 points
Current Event	5 points
Discussion Board	5 points each
Food Carbon Footprint	5 points
Lifestyle Change Presentation	15 points
Policy Paper	10 points
Waste Audit	5 points
Zero Waste Challenge	5 points

Grading Scale

- A+ 100+%
- A 90-100%
- B 80-89%
- C 70-79%
- D 60-69%

Schedule

August 27	Plant 2 Plate Garden and the Healthy Home Lab <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 246 Oakland Ave. • <u>Discussion Board due 8/31</u>
September 3	Farmer Girl Eb's #1 Sound Farm in the West End <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3200 Universal St., 15204 • <u>Assignment: Waste Audit due 9/7</u>
September 10	Permaculture, Garfield Community Farm with John Creasy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 509 Wicklow St., 15224 • <u>Discussion Board due 9/14</u>
September 17	West View Urban Farm with Jodi McLaughlin <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 148 Georgetown Ave., 15229 • <u>Discussion Board due 9/21</u>
September 24	Urban Walking Lecture & Paw Paws with Dr. Patrick Shirey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet in front of the School of Public Health • <u>Discussion Board due 9/28</u>
October 1	Ms. Mary's Garden at the YMCA Homewood-Brushton <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7140 Bennett St., 15208 • <u>Discussion board due 10/5</u>
October 8	Hilltop Urban Farm with John Bixler <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 700 Cresswell St. 15210 • <u>Discussion board due 10/12</u>
October 15	Food Access - Pitt Pantry & Food Recovery Heroes – SNAP <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • O'Hara Student Center & Pitt Eats • <u>Discussion board due 10/19</u>
October 22	Hazelwood Food Recycling Site <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4501 Sylvan Avenue • <u>Assignment: Policy paper due 10/26</u>
October 29	Food Insecurity & Animal Ownership with Dr. Mary Rauktis, Department of Social Work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Discussion Board due 10/29</u>
November 5	Greater Pittsburgh Food Bank with Dr. Maria Montaro <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Assignment: Critical analysis paper due 11/9</u>
November 12	Changemakers – Discussion with Community Experts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eric Milliron, Mt Lebanon • Isabela Angelelli, Clinicians for Climate Action (C4CA) • Denel Hughson, Grow Pittsburgh • <u>Assignment: Zero Waste Challenge due 11/16</u>
November 19	Food and Climate in the News with Oliver Morrison, WESA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read <i>the NY Times</i> article and take the quiz. • Food carbon footprint info on Canvas. Due 11/19 • <u>Assignment: Current event assignment due 11/23</u>
November 26	Fall Recess
December 3	Final Class: Lifestyle Change Project Presentations

Assignments

Class Participation

Class participation will be based on participation in class as well as on the online discussion board. Your input and questions are valuable, and we hope you feel comfortable sharing them with the group.

Reading Responses & Discussion Boards

Articles will be posted on the online dashboard on a weekly basis that relates to and prepares you for class. Please read the articles before class. Some weeks include a discussion board, for those, please respond to the prompts and comment on each other's submissions.

Waste Audit

Conduct an audit of your current waste. How much trash goes to the landfill?

Food Carbon Footprint

Use the food carbon footprint calculator to measure your climate impact and bring it to class. Investigative journalist and climate reporter Oliver Morrison will lead a discussion on whether our diets are climate friendly.

Current Event

There is a lot of news that relates to sustainability and our food system. Share an article, podcast, journal article, or book that you find interesting and why.

Critical Analysis Paper

The critical analysis paper is a one-to-two-page, type-written critical, thoughtful review of a current, relevant problem related to sustainable food systems and how you would solve this issue. Key focus will be on synthesizing historical, quantitative (i.e., data on food), technological, political and community perspectives for their specific current issue.

Zero Waste Challenge

How many days can you go without creating landfill waste? Try it and write a one-page paper on what you learned.

Policy

Look at the environmental initiatives of a specific community (city, township, state) currently in place (or not). How can they be better? What policy would you propose? Write about that policy.

Lifestyle Change Project

Choose one thing in your life that you can measure (i.e., food waste, transportation, landfill waste, etc.) to develop and implement an action plan to decrease your ecological footprint. Collect and analyze pre and post data. Present your findings to the class.

Academic Integrity

Students in this course will be expected to comply with the [University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity](#). Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity. This may include, but is not limited to, the confiscation of the examination of any individual suspected of violating University Policy. Furthermore, no student may bring any unauthorized materials to an exam, including dictionaries and programmable calculators.

To learn more about Academic Integrity, visit the [Academic Integrity Guide](#) for an overview of the topic. For hands-on practice, complete the [Academic Integrity Modules](#).

Disability Services

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and [Disability Resources and Services](#) (DRS), 140 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890, drsrecep@pitt.edu, (412) 228-5347 for P3 ASL users, as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

Communication

The course will use *Canvas* for disseminating the syllabus, readings, homework, and related materials. You will submit your homework using *Canvas*.

Accessibility

The Canvas LMS platform was built using the most modern HTML and CSS technologies and is committed to W3C's Web Accessibility Initiative and [Section 508](#) guidelines. Specific details regarding individual [feature compliance](#) are documented and updated regularly.

Civil Rights & Title IX

The University of Pittsburgh does not tolerate any form of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation based on disability, race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, genetic information, marital status, familial status, sex, age, sexual orientation, veteran status or gender identity or other factors as stated in the University's Title IX policy. The University is committed to taking prompt action to end a hostile environment that interferes with the University's mission. For more information about policies, procedures, and practices, visit the [Civil Rights & Title IX Compliance web page](#).

I ask that everyone in the class strive to help ensure that other members of this class can learn in a supportive and respectful environment. If there are instances of the issues, please contact the Title IX Coordinator, by calling 412-648-7860, or e-mailing titleixcoordinator@pitt.edu. Reports can also be [filed online](#). You may also choose to report this to a faculty/staff member; they are required to communicate this to the University's Office of Institutional Engagement and Wellbeing. If you wish to maintain complete confidentiality, you may also contact the University Counseling Center (412-648-7930).

Classes Meeting During University-wide Closure

As articulated in the [University-wide Closure and Class Cancellation Policy](#), it is the policy of the University of Pittsburgh to remain open, but in rare instances, circumstances beyond the University's control may necessitate a closure of the University. Such circumstances may include severe weather, power outage, water main issues, and the like.

If feasible during the closure, I intend for our class to meet **remotely** at its regularly scheduled time. Refer to our class attendance policy if you are unable to attend.

Attendance, Participation, Computers, & Cell Phones

Class participation is highly encouraged. When in class, the use of cell phones and computers for non-class purposes is discouraged. Research has shown that learning is negatively affected by distractions from phones and computers.

Personal impact with sustainability on campus

Students are encouraged to look at their personal impact and examine the various ways to decrease their impact by using the student Green Guide which can be found on the Mascaro Center for Sustainable Innovation site [here](#) and by following Pitt Sustainability initiatives (<https://www.sustainable.pitt.edu/what-pitt-is-doing/campus-initiatives/>).

Statement on Student Wellness

The instructors care about your welfare, which means having balance in your life. Maintaining your physical, mental, and emotional health will help you handle stress and practice the balance you need to sustain success at and beyond your time as a student.

We all need support during stressful times in our lives. Use the student experience to practice asking for help when you need it. Please ask us how we can support you.

If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or feelings like anxiety or depression, we strongly encourage you to seek support. Consider reaching out to a friend, faculty or family member you trust for help getting connected to the support that can help or contact *Student Health Services* (STUDHLTH@PITT.EDU, 412-383-1800, <https://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/shs/Links to an external site.>).

Basic Needs Resources

Taking care of yourself is vital to gain the most out of your Pitt experience. That's why a site has been created to compile all the resources available to help you succeed! This site provides links to food, health, employment, housing, and support resources at Pitt and within the Pittsburgh Community: [Bit.ly/help-resources](https://bit.ly/help-resources)

E-mail Communication Policy

Each student is issued a University e-mail address (username@pitt.edu) upon admittance. This e-mail address may be used by the University for official communication with students. Students are expected to read e-mails sent to this account on a regular basis. Failure to read and react to university communications in a timely manner does not prevent the student from knowing and complying with the content of the communications. The University provides an e-mail forwarding service that allows students to read their e-mail via other service providers (e.g.,

Gmail, Microsoft, Apple, Yahoo). Students who choose to forward their e-mail from their pitt.edu address to another address do so at their own risk. If an e-mail is lost because of forwarding, it does not prevent the student from responding to official communications sent to their university's e-mail address. To forward e-mail sent to your university account, go to <http://accounts.pitt.edu>, log into your account, click on **Edit Forwarding Addresses**, and follow the instructions on the page. Be sure to log out of your account when you have finished. (For the full E-mail Communication Policy, go to www.bc.pitt.edu/policies/policy/09/09-10-01.html.)

Diversity Statement

Students, faculty, and guests represent diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences which enrich our research and educational environment. Individuals of all races, colors, ancestries, genders, marital status, familial status, ages, backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, gender identities and expressions, national origins, religious or political affiliations, sexual orientations, abilities, and other visible and nonvisible differences are welcomed in this class. We urge all to be mindful in this classroom and to feel responsible for creating a space that is intellectually rigorous and respectful, welcoming, and inclusive for everyone. No demeaning or discriminatory behavior will be permitted. If you feel uncomfortable, please feel free to approach me during or after class to discuss the situation.

In this class, we will have the chance to indicate the name that we prefer to be called and, if we choose, to identify pronouns with which we would like to be addressed. Please approach me if you have such preferences and I will do my best to address and refer to all students accordingly and support classmates in doing so as well. I will endeavor to use gender-inclusive and nondiscriminatory language in all course communication and materials. Your suggestions for how to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or other student groups are encouraged and appreciated. Our faculty is committed to communication with students without judgment. In addition, if any of our class meetings conflict with your religious events, please let me know so that arrangements can be made.

Statement on classroom recording

To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use. Please note that some lectures in this course are recorded to provide asynchronous access. If you do not wish to be recorded during a session, please refrain from using your camera or audio.

Religious observance

The observance of religious holidays (activities observed by a religious group of which a student is a member) and cultural practices are an important reflection of diversity. As your instructors, we are committed to providing equivalent educational opportunities to students of all belief systems. At the beginning of the semester, you should review the course requirements to identify foreseeable conflicts with assignments, exams, or other required attendance. If possible, please contact me within the first two weeks of the semester to allow time for us to discuss and make fair and reasonable adjustments to the schedule and/or tasks.

Communication to instructor pertaining illness

As in any situation regarding class absence (remote or in person), a student who becomes ill (albeit COVID-19 related or not) is responsible for communicating with us regarding course absences. Please contact one of the instructors and provide documentation when absences affect quizzes/exams. This should be done via email as soon as possible.

Copyright Notice

These materials may be protected by copyright. United States copyright law, 17 USC section 101, et seq., in addition to University policy and procedures, prohibit unauthorized duplication or retransmission of course materials.