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Stories of Community Food Work: Community-University Dialogue for Transformative Learning

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HALE COMMUNITY GARDEN

Framing the Issues

- Food Security as Wicked Problem (Hamm, 2009; Hamm & Bellows, 2003)
 - Community-university engagement (National Academies of Science, 2009; Stevenson, Ruhf, & Clancy, 2007)
 - Transformative learning and food systems (Etmanski, 2017; Flowers, & Swan, 2015; Sumner, 2016)
 - Storytelling as pedagogy for transformative learning (Dixon, 2018; Newman, 2006; Niewolny & D'Adamo-Damery, 2016; Solinger, Fox, & Irani, 2018)
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Community Food Work (Slocum, 2007)

Holds an inclusive meaning that reflects:

- *farm sustainability* – related to connecting small-scale farmers to markets
 - *nutrition and health* – with emphases on the prevention of diet-related illnesses
 - *environmental sustainability* – related to the development and support of more ecologically sound agricultural production
 - *social justice* – which consists of a bifurcated approach—producer/worker rights and hunger/food insecurity
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ALCE 5614


POLITICS & PRACTICE OF FOOD SECURITY & SOCIAL JUSTICE

- Critique food security definitions, discourses, and policies from interdisciplinary and intersectional perspectives.
- Compare and analyze community food security and food sovereignty as domestic and international social movements.
- Evaluate community food work in the Appalachian region pertaining to food security, resiliency, and social equity.
- Examine the role of social justice in community food work initiatives.
- Apply participatory community development strategies to a community-based research project with food and farming practitioners.

POLITICS AND PRACTICE OF FOOD SECURITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

ALCE 5984
VIRGINIA TECH
SPRING 2019
CRN: 20204

THURSDAY: 4-6:50 PM
232 LITTON REAVES HALL





This course is an interdisciplinary and intersectional exploration of current issues related to the politics and practice of food security for social equity. From a community development perspective, this investigation includes understanding and critiquing the ways in which we define and address "food security" as rooted in social movement and development discourses, including: community food security, food sovereignty, food justice, and agroecology. The course will also be a space to explore food security policies and food system change frameworks that not only inform organizing strategies and community development agendas but also emphasize the everyday experiences of struggle and oppression that intersect with the complexity of our food security and food system politics. Students will build upon the Stories of Community Food Work in Appalachia initiative as a community-based research project that illustrates the diverse experiences of organizers and change agents addressing health equity, community resiliency, farm sustainability, and environmental and social justice in their communities. Students will continue this work by reading and learning from these narratives while also collaborating with community stakeholders to create new ones using narrative inquiry methodology. Participatory learning and critical pedagogy are core course approaches.

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ALCE 5984_K. Niewolny_Spring 2019

Storytelling Assignments

- Weekly Critical Reflection Papers (25%)
- Student-led Facilitation (25%)
- Community Food Work Narrative Assignment (30%) 
- Participation Self-Assessment (25%)
--*Hale Community Garden Storytelling Event* 



History of the Hale Community Garden



- 1970's town wide community gardens
- 2009 – Partnership with Virginia Tech begins
- 2010 – Garden plots open
- 2019 – Transition the organizational structure





Proposed Ownership, Operations, Funding



Garden Operator/Manager

Live, Work, Eat, Gather, Inc., a non-profit corporation, with a contract with the Town. The operator may change over time as needed.



Garden Property Owner

Town of Blacksburg
A Virginia Municipality



Garden Operations Funding

An endowment created by Arlean Hale Lambert through the Community Foundation to provide annual funding to operate the garden.



The Hale Community Garden Transition



* Acknowledge * Inform * Celebrate *



The Hale Community Garden: Virginia Tech Connection



Storytelling & the Hale Community Garden: Narratives of Community Food Work



- Create and share narratives that illustrate the lived experiences of community food work in the central Appalachian region
- Focus on the experiences of educators, practitioners, and ‘every day’ change agents
- Initially funded through the USDA NIFA Appalachian Foodshed Project
- Digitally archived and shared through public readings (n= 50 narratives)
- Facilitated through graduate course (2013, 2015,2017, 2019)
- Narratives as both a *process* and the *product*

Connelly & Clandinin, 2005; Niewolny & D’Adamo-Damery, 2016; Peters & Hittleman, 2003; Peters et al., 2004; Richmond, 2002

Storytelling & the Hale Community Garden: Narratives of Community Food Work

- Explored the community food work experiences of Hale Community Garden participants (n=8) and organizers (n=1)
- 90-120 minute semi-structured interview with focus on a “story” of the garden
- Included reflections on the community garden as a place of learning for addressing food security
- Transcribed, edited, & read/analyzed
- Member checked and vetted for public sharing

Storytelling & the Hale Community Garden: Story Circle (Modified)



- A Story Circle is a small group of people sitting in a circle telling stories or remembrances
- A story is a personal memory, a dream, a reflection, a moment in time
- Each Story Circle is different according to its purpose
- Story circles are as much about listening as about telling.
- Stories are told without interruption
- Cross talk or discussion may follow a full round of story telling.

Roadside Theater Story Circles: <https://roadside.org/asset/story-circle-guidelines>

Hale Community Garden WELCOME TO THE NEW SEASON *~Come grow with us~*



“Please come celebrate the Hale Community Garden as we begin anew. Learn about and share stories about the impact of the garden on our selves, our families, and our community as we cultivate our future together.”

Hale Community Garden WELCOME TO THE NEW SEASON *~Come grow with us~*

- Share time or memory when the garden made an impact on your life, their family, or community?
- *Do you have a favorite garden memory?*
- *What makes this community garden special to you?*
- *What are your favorite things to grow?*
- *How is growing food important to you or your family?*



Stories as Spaces for Transformative Learning

- Humanizes the “wicked problems” of our food system
- Challenges assumptions and knowledge claims for new ways of knowing
- Helps generate new possibilities for social change



Dixon, 2018; Newman, 2006; Niewolny & D’Adamo-Damery, 2016; Solinger, Fox, & Irani, 2008

Thank you

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