

Learning through Story: Using Narrative Inquiry in a Graduate-Level Food Security Course

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- *Food Security* course objectives, topics, & assignments
- Narrative Inquiry & the practitioner narrative assignment
- Narrative themes and student insights
- Implications

A collaboration between NC State University, Virginia Tech, West Virginia University, and Community Stakeholders. Funded by a 2011 USDA NIFA-AFRI Grant (Award No. 2011-68004-30079)

ALCE 5984

Food Security & Resilient Communities:

Food Systems Theory & Praxis

Spring 2015

Virginia Tech; Kim Niewolny, PhD

Virginia Tech

**Food Security & Resilient Communities:
Food Systems Theory & Praxis**
ALCE 5984 Special Study
Spring 2015
CRN: 20247



Course Overview
This graduate-level course is a critical and interdisciplinary exploration of current issues related to food security and the emerging discourse of food systems. The course will focus on the concepts of food security, community food security, food sovereignty, resiliency, and agricultural sustainability from local, regional, and international perspectives. Topics include but are not limited to conceptual and programmatic approaches to addressing food security, food security policy, food system assessment, and the role of university-community partnerships to enhance food security and resiliency in communities. The Appalachian Foodshed Project (AFP) will provide course participants with a theoretical and practical backdrop for class discussion and coursework, including engaging with AFP scholar-practitioners and visiting the region. This course also involves collaborating with a partnering graduate course in food security being offered at North Carolina State University this spring. Participatory learning and issue-based community development are also relevant course themes. Graduate student standing only (MS, Ph.D.).

Schedule: Thursday 4-7 PM
Location: 244 Ligon Reeves Hall
Instructor: Dr. Kim L. Niewolny
Dept. of Agricultural, Leadership, & Community Education
202 Ligon Reeves Hall (2343)
Tel: 540-231-5754
Email: kniewoln@vt.edu



Course Content:
A major component of this course is to explore the practical applications of the Appalachian Foodshed Project (AFP), a USDA-NIFA, AFRI Grant Program (Award Number: 2011-68004-20079). The AFP is using a foodshed concept to address issues of community food security in West Virginia and the Appalachian region of North Carolina and Virginia. The AFP aims to facilitate a network of organizations and individuals working to address issues of community development, economic viability, health, nutrition, agricultural productivity, and social justice. By working collaboratively, the AFP hopes to build on the human and natural resources in the region to cultivate resilient food systems and vibrant, healthy communities. Visit the AFP at: www.appalachianfoodshedproject.org.



- Interdisciplinary exploration of issues related to food security and the emerging discourse(s) of food systems
- Address the interconnectedness of the complex issues related to food security—as a “wicked problem” (Hamm, 2009)
- Educational & development agendas at the heart of this dialogue
- The Appalachian Foodshed Project (AFP) provides a theoretical and practical backdrop

Learning Objectives

- Define, analyze, & articulate theories, practices, & discourses pertaining to food systems.
- Define & critique conceptual & programmatic definitions of & approaches to enhancing food security locally, regionally, & internationally.
- Define & critique scholar/ practitioner participation as change agents in the food system
- Incorporate food security concepts & strategies into personal & professional practice for socially just ends.

Course Concepts and Themes

- **Focused on the concepts of:**


- Food security & hunger
- Community food security
- Food sovereignty
- Resiliency
- Agricultural sustainability (local, regional, & international)

- **Topics included but were not limited to:**

- Food security definitions & policy
- Agroecology & sustainability
- Farm to School movement
- Community food assessments & “Whole Measures”
- Food justice
- Neoliberalism & globalization
- Critical strategies & approaches for social change


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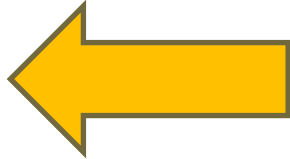
Schedule: Thursday 4-7 PM
Location: 244 Linton Reeves Hall
Instructor: Dr. Kim L. Newberry
Dept. of Agricultural, Leadership, & Community Education
202 Linton Reeves Hall (0243)
Tel. 540.231.5764
Email: newberry@vt.edu



Course Context
A major component of this course is to explore the practical applications of the Appalachian Foodshed Project (AFP), a USDA-NIFA, AFN Grant Program (Award Number: 2011-69004-20079). The AFP is using a foodshed concept to address issues of community food security in West Virginia and the Appalachian regions of North Carolina and Virginia. The AFP aims to facilitate a network of organizations and individuals working to address issues of community development, economic viability, health, nutrition, agricultural productivity, and social justice. By working collaboratively, the AFP hopes to build on the human and natural resources in the region to cultivate resilient food systems and vibrant, healthy communities. Visit the AFP at: www.appalachianfoodshedproject.org.



Assignments

- Weekly Critical Reflection Papers (25%)
- Student-led Facilitation (20%) (self-assessment)
- Practitioner Narrative Assignment (30%) 
- Participation Self-Assessment (25%)

Practitioner Narrative Assignment

- **Narrative Inquiry** (Connelly & Clandinin, 2005; Peters et al., 2004; Richmond, 2002)
 - Narratives as generative spaces of “process and product”
 - Semi-structured interviews; 90-120 minutes
 - AFP Practitioner Narrative Protocol (Niewolny, D’Adamo-Damery, N. D’Adamo-Damery, P. & Landis, 2014; Virginia Tech IRB #13-264)
 - Transcribed, edited, and analyzed using course concepts & literature
 - Vetted for public use
 - 12 narratives across 3 states
- **“Critical Practitioner”** (Wilson & Hayes, 2000; Brookfield, 2000)
 - Engendering critical reflection through storytelling

Practitioner Narrative Assignment

Integrative process of story telling and making:

- Begin with past experiences as practitioners working on community food security & food system issues
- Focus on current instance of practice: “*practice story*”
- Conclude with reflections-on-practice & future intentions for addressing food security in the community



Salient Themes from Narratives

- **Diverse illustrations of strategies across a number of programmatic areas**
 - Food hubs
 - Food councils
 - Community & school gardens
 - Farmer's markets
 - SNAP/WIC
- **Various “takes” on community food security**
 - Food access (e.g., individual health focused)
 - Increase availability of food (e.g., farmer focused)
 - Local food (e.g., enhance local economy and community)
 - Tensions with emergency food system (e.g., root causes vs charity)
 - Political considerations (e.g., justice and fairness)

Salient Themes from Narratives

Drawing upon social movement theory, illustrated how the stories were strategic orientations for change activities

(Stevenson, Ruhf, Lezberg, & Clancy, 2007)

- **Warrior work:** focuses on contesting inequitable, dominant structures (*the work of resistance*)
- **Builder work:** the creation of new initiatives, models, & programmatic possibilities (*the work of reconstruction*) 
- **Weaver work:** develops strategic & conceptual linkages between “warrior” & “builder” work (*the work of connection*) 

Student Reflections: Narratives as Sites of Learning

- Provided first-hand exposure to community food work ¹
- Enabled opportunities for community engagement ¹
- Culmination of all themes and discourses had read about over the semester¹
- New research approach for future application ²
- “Critical practitioner” thinking ²

¹ Solicited student comments

² IRB Course Evaluations (Virginia Tech IRB NUMBER: 10-1003)

Student Reflections:

Narratives as Sites of Learning

“The narrative assignment has been the most useful component of the course. I enjoyed having a larger assignment to dig my teeth into, and getting a real life experience, first hand.¹”

¹ IRB Course Evaluations (Virginia Tech IRB NUMBER: 10-1003)

Why use Narratives?

When facing a complex problem like community food insecurity, “seeing” the system “better” means reading a multiplicity of realities and generating new ways to engage them...

- **Student:** Fosters critical reflection through story making
- **Practitioner:** Stories inform and weave together the work in the Central Appalachian region
- **Community:** Stories humanize the “wicked problems” of food security and create new possibilities for social change

Sharing of Stories



Stories of Community Food Work in Appalachia

Opening Space for Storytelling and Learning

Posts Comments



« Jessica Crum- West Virginia University

Hello world! »

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Diana Manee- Youth Empowered Solutions

Diana Manee works for Youth Empowered Solutions in Asheville, NC. She guides groups of employed youth in various community-based projects they decide on. Recently they have been working to integrate healthy food into a corner store within walking distance to several public housing communities that do not have easy access to a grocery store. In a community where there is no grocery store and within walking distance to several public housing communities. She holds corner storeowners in high regards for the struggles it actually takes to run a viable business, and recognizes the challenges of transitioning to incorporate healthy food. Diana sees policy work as the driving force for food system change. She believes in the boundless potential of youth in affecting their communities.

To read Diana's full profile click [here](#).

Want to learn more about Youth Empowered Solutions? Visit their [website](#).



May 17th, 2015 | Tags: food policy, healthy corner store, North Carolina, youth | Category: North Carolina | [Edit this post](#)

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Questions

DOES POLICY AFFECT FOOD SECURITY IN TERM

the government delays in im
 established?

do you inspire someone to spea

does a good policy look-like
 they plan to implemant these policies.
 they going to ensure policy measures are followed through.

we improve food system to Alleviate hunger?
 CHANGE FOOD POLICY TO ACTUALLY HELP PEOPLE



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Thank you

www.appalachianfoodshedproject.org

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