

## **A Complex Systems Approach to Food Insecurity in the Town of Bennington**

Fall 2019 | Mondays and Thursdays: 3:40 – 5:30 PM

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Location: CAPA Symposium

Bennington College and the Center for the Advancement of Public Action have begun an initiative to address the systemic causes of the problem of food insecurity in Bennington County. We will center our practice-based research and teaching on topics of Food Justice, Food Sovereignty and Food Insecurity in our community, in collaboration with a talented and committed group of community, health, and public K-12 education partners who have been working on the frontlines of this issue for many years: Southwestern Vermont Health Care, an integrated medical health system that includes a 99-bed community hospital; Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union, the local public school district; and Greater Bennington Interfaith Community Services (GBICS), which runs Kitchen Cupboard, a food distribution program that serves over 1,300 families in Bennington (one in four) per year. We aim to engage the pressing problem of food insecurity in this community, and to create a model from which other institutions of higher education can learn and build. We are hoping, based on our existing and past partnerships, by bringing the capacities of the arts and humanities to bear on this issue, we can fill a critical gap by connecting specific responses to a broader, systems-based approach to the problem.

### **Texts for the class:**

- *Cultivating Food Justice: Race, Class and Sustainability*, Edited by Alison Hope Alkon and Julian Agyeman
- *Rebuilding the Foodshed: How to Create Local, Sustainable and Secure Food Systems* by Philip Ackerman-Leist
- *The Town That Food Saved: How One Community Found Vitality in Local Food* by Ben Hewitt

Guests for each class come from 4:00 PM to 5:00 PM unless otherwise noted.

Subject to change based on unforeseen circumstances.

### **Thursday, Sept. 5**

- First Cup of Tea
- What is a Food System?
- What is a Complex System?
- Assign Student Task Forces and identify Goals
  1. Data Collection for Town of Bennington
  2. Best Practices for Food Systems in Rural Towns, National and International
  3. Purple Carrot Farm, Robert Frost House and Soup Suppers
  4. Food Resource Guide
  5. Local Farms, Regenerative Soils, Permaculture
  6. Community Gardens
  7. Public Policy, Legislation, Farm to Table

**Monday, Sept. 9**

- What is Food Insecurity? What Causes Food Insecurity?
  - Sue Andrews, Executive Director, GBICS/Kitchen Cupboard
  - Tatiana Abatemarco, Faculty, Bennington College

**Thursday, Sept. 12**

- From the Town Perspective
  - Don Campbell, President of Vermont Land Trust, Chair, Town Selectman, Bennington
  - Bill Colvin, Program Director, Community and Economic Development, Bennington County Regional Commission

**Monday, Sept. 16**

- From the Regional Perspective
  - Jim Sullivan, Director Bennington County Regional Commission
- From the Vermont State Perspective
  - Brian Campion, State Senator and Vermont Farm to Table Legislation

**Thursday, Sept. 19**

- From the Local Perspective on Food Insecurity: the work of GBICS and Kitchen Cupboard
  - Sue Andrews, Director, Kitchen Cupboard, part of Greater Bennington Interfaith Council Services

**Monday, Sept. 23**

- From the Schools Perspective on Food Systems
  - Maureen O'Neil, Director of Food Services, The Abbey Group
  - Laura Boudreau, Assistant Superintendent, SVSU, Director of Curriculum and Act 77: The Personal Learning Plan

**Thursday, Sept. 26**

- From the Local Hospital Perspective
  - Jim Trimarchi, Director of Planning, SV Healthcare
  - Tiffany Tobin, SV Healthcare Food Program
  - Kristi Cross, DNP, RN, Director of Bennington Blueprint, Project Director, Opioid Response Plan

**Monday, Sept. 30**

- New Medical Perspectives:
    - Megan Herrington, Vermont Department of Health, Bennington Director, recently worked on food issues in New Orleans, Louisiana
- Reading for Class:* [New Orleans Small Box Retail Diversity](#)

**Thursday, Oct. 3**

- Social Kitchen and Empty Bowls
  - Yoko Inoue, Sue Andrews, Michelle Freeman

**Monday, Oct. 7**

- Food Entrepreneurship: The Role of Chefs and Restaurants and Food Policy
  - Ben Hall, visiting faculty

**Tuesday, Oct. 8** Soup Supper with Greater Peace and Justice Center

**Thursday, Oct. 10**

- Second Cup of Tea
- Community Development: New ideas
  - Shannon Barsotti, Bennington Community Development Director

**Monday, Oct. 14**

- Student Task Force Reports

**Thursday, Oct. 17**

- Film: *A Place At The Table*, Visit from Karen Trubitt. True Love Farm

**Monday, Oct. 21** — No Class (Long Weekend)

**Thursday, Oct. 24**

- Visit from Local Farmers

**Monday, Oct. 28**

- Regenerative Soils: Senator Campion on legislation (possible visit Jesse McDougall on regenerative soil practices on his farm)

**Thursday, Oct. 31** — No Class (Plan Day)

**Monday, Nov. 4**

- Create Visual Map of Research on Current Landscape of Bennington on Food Insecurity
- Possible Visit from Chris Callahan, UVM Extension Service

**Thursday, Nov. 7**

- Visit from Dr. Avery Wood and Dane Whitman on Permaculture

**Monday, Nov. 11**

- Possible Visits from Hannaford and Price Chopper Managers, Small Markets

**Thursday, Nov. 14**

- Land Use at Bennington College
  - Andy Schlatter, Associate VP for Facilities & Planning, Bennington College
- Art as Social Practice and Food
  - Anne Thompson, Marina Zurkow, and Kenneth Bailey
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**Sunday, Nov. 17**

- Empty Bowls Community Supper, Middle School

**Monday, Nov. 18**

- Visit from Leah Penniman, Soul Fire Farm, author, “Farming While Black”.

**Thursday, Nov. 21**

- What is a Best Practice in a Rural Community on Food Insecurity?
- Report from Task Force
- Discuss Texts for Class

**Monday, Nov. 25**

- A Review of Best Practices in the United States and Internationally
- Discuss Texts for Class

**Thursday, Nov. 28 - No Class (Thanksgiving)**

**Monday, Dec. 2**

- Third Cup of Tea
- Present Final Research
- Discuss Texts for Class

**Thursday, Dec. 5**

- Present Final Research
- Discuss Texts for Class

**Monday, Dec. 9**

- Present Final Research
- Draw Visual Map for Next Year

**Thursday, Dec. 12**

- Discuss Next Steps