Final syllabus

Citizenship for democracy: Systemic design and campus food systems

POLS 410-514A (2016)
University of Alberta
Course website: eclass.srv.ualberta.ca

David Kahane
cavid.kahane@ualberta.ca
Tory 10-27
780-492-2164

Office hours:
Mondays 10:30-noon and by appointment

Course description

Themes
The topic in POLS 410/514 this year is “Systemic Design and Campus Food Systems.” In our lives as members of communities and institutions and organizations, we try to influence complex systems—configurations of power, resources, rules, behaviors, cultures, identities, etc. that are interconnected in patterned but opaque ways. With others, we might try to resolve a difficult family dynamic; to get undergrads more engaged in student government; to eliminate homelessness in Edmonton; to challenge Islamophobia in Canada. All of these are attempts to intervene in complex systems. Activists, civil servants, politicians, bureaucrats, business people, and others devote energy and resources to bringing about particular outcomes, but often fail to grasp the complex dynamics of the systems in which they’re intervening. They may not even understand the systems that actually influence the issue they’re trying to address, and their interventions may not produce desired outcomes, or may aggravate the problem (think the war on drugs or a thousand other troubled policy interventions).

‘Systemic design’ is a set of collaborative approaches to support effective action in the world, drawing on both systems thinking and design thinking. Systemic design takes a diverse group of people aiming to achieve something together and offers tools and skills to map systems relevant to what they want to change; converge on the future state of affairs they want to bring about; reach out to others across the system to test and refine their thinking and goals; identify leverage points for change; prototype and test interventions; and iteratively build practices, policies, campaigns, and other levers of change that actually work.

The goal of this course is for you to learn systemic design by doing. There’ll be very little lecturing. Rather, you’ll be on your feet, clustered around flip charts and whiteboards, talking with one another, interacting with visitors, going out across campus to interview and observe.

The complex system we’ll think and learn about is how food is sourced, prepared, and consumed on campus. These food practices involve culture, economy, power, identity, spatial arrangements, and many
other interlocking forces and dynamics. And these food practices have all kinds of implications and outcomes we might want to affect, from economic inequality to international justice to local community to health to environment. Depending on what we care about and the perspectives we bring, we could draw the boundaries of relevant systems differently, understand causal patterns differently, and arrive at different ways of bringing about the cultural, economic, social, political, and environmental outcomes we desire.

Expectations

Because this is a highly participatory course, the recipe for doing well is attending every class and contributing to every class. Strong participation means listening fully, taking responsibility for keeping the conversation flowing constructively and on topic, leaving space for quiet people to speak, connecting your contributions to those of others, and so forth.

There also is a strong expectation that you will do the readings/viewings completely and carefully in advance of every class. This usually means at least three hours of reading and preparation, and as many as six.

Please be on time: show up before the start of class, stay until the end, and submit work by deadlines.

Use the course website (eClass), where you’ll find announcements, assignments, and links to other materials and activities.

And make use of my advice in a timely way to figure out how to organize your work and projects, especially if you find yourself struggling in the course.

Getting the course readings

The URLs (or when the article isn’t easily available, pdfs) are available on eClass.

Weekly breakdown

Please note that readings/viewings will change as the term develops. Listen in class and check eClass each Wednesday to know what’s assigned for the coming week.

**Week 1 | Introduction | September 12**

**Week 2 | Systemic design and campus food systems | September 19**

Visitor: Shannon Leblanc, Sustainability Coordinator, UAlberta Energy Management and Sustainable Operations.

**Week 3 | Digging into campus food systems | September 26**

**Week 4 | Systems thinking and mapping the future system | October 3**

**Week 5 | Ethnography/interviews | October 17**

**Week 6 | Journey mapping | October 24**

First participation self-evaluation due, using form available on eClass.
Week 7 | Prototyping | October 31

Reading week

Week 8 | Testing prototypes | November 14

Visitor: Alex Ryan, Systemic Designer and co-founder of Government of Alberta Colab

Week 9 | Refining ideas, preparing presentations | November 21

Week 10 | Presentations to stakeholders | November 28

Week 11 | What have we learned? What’s next? | December 5

No reading.
Second participation self-evaluation due, using form available on eClass.

Course requirements and evaluation

Policy regarding missed term work is outlined in Section 23.4(3) of the University Calendar. I will not ‘curve’ or adjust final grades according to any preset formula.

Weekly writing—30%

There will be brief written assignments just about every week, announced the week before. These will range from reflections on readings, to developing collective thinking from the previous class, to drawing in new perspectives and readings.

I will give you constructive feedback on the weekly writing assignments—we’ll experiment with the kinds of feedback that are most helpful to you. To keep things manageable for me, I won’t be giving precise grades on each piece of work; rather, I’ll give you a ✓-, ✓, or ✓+.

You will get a grade for your term’s worth of Weekly Writing at the end of the term, based on a portfolio of all the weekly writing you’ve done over the term (you’ll hand this in on Tuesday, December 6th).

Here are the standards I’ll apply in grading your portfolio of weekly writing:

4.0: You’ve wowed me. You submitted all of the assignments, and they show charitable, careful, insightful, intelligent engagement with individual readings, class discussions, and our systemic design work. You’ve developed your ideas over the term in light of what we’ve read and talked about in class. And you’ve improved your writing, taking my feedback seriously.

3.7: Still pretty wow, but there might be one or two missing assignments, and/or a few of the assignments may be good rather than great.

3.3: Means ‘very good’. You’re not only taking the assignments seriously and getting just about all of them in, but are capturing important details of readings and conversations, and showing thoughtfulness and insight in your reflections. Reading your work, I have the sense of someone who’s taking the course absolutely seriously, developing their ideas as the term proceeds, and improving their writing based on feedback.
3.0: You’re doing the work, with focus and skill. This grade might go to someone, for example, who worked super-hard but took a while to gain the requisite skills in reading and writing. Or it could go to someone who has great reading and writing skills but is doing some coasting when it comes to the inquiry of the class.

2.7: There are more than isolated problems here. You’ve been doing good work but missing more than a few assignments. Or I’ve pointed to significant areas for improvement in your work and you haven’t found ways to address these.

2.3 - 0.0: I’m not shy about using these grades! If you miss multiple assignments, please don’t be surprised if you’re in this zone. Or you could also end up in this zone if my feedback on assignments indicates real problems, and you don’t find ways to improve your work.

Oh, and one more important thing: your weekly writing will only be accepted if you submit it in person, in class, when it’s due (or electronically in advance of that class). I’m not a monster, and will accommodate genuinely extenuating circumstances—but you need to communicate these circumstances to me in a timely way, so that we can make alternate arrangements.

**Participation — 30%**

We’re a small group and the class will be participatory, which is to say that I will facilitate a scholarly discussion and contribute my share to this discussion. Our learning in the course will come from all of us, and will depend on how carefully we speak and listen.

Your participation mark will reflect:

- **Your attendance**: all of the following are premised on your actually being in class. Your participation grade will suffer dramatically if you don’t show up for all classes. **But there’s slack**: you may miss one class without penalty. After that, only serious extenuating circumstances will excuse absences without penalty.

- **How well prepared you are for the class** (Do your comments reflect careful reading of material? Are you able to draw connections, where relevant, to stuff we’ve been talking about in past weeks?)

- **How well your contributions help to move things forward and keep them on track with class themes** (you’re not simply making noise, but showing an awareness of what others have said and contributing to our understanding of course themes and questions. You’re staying focused on the critical questions and issues at hand, rather than taking us away to loosely related examples, anecdotes, etc.)

- **How mindful (and in some cases, courageous) you are in the quantity of your contributions.** The premium is on succinct, well-timed contributions that move things forward, and on carrying your share (and no more than your share) of the conversation. If you’re quiet or shy, you’ll need to navigate this. On the other hand, if you’re a talker, you’ll need to bring awareness to the flow of conversation and how you can be a good listener too.

- **Whether you use your screens (laptop, iPad, phone, etc.) to support the classroom experience.** Please don’t surf, text, etc. if it’s not directly connected to furthering class process.

Please feel free to talk to me at any point during the term if you want feedback on the quality of your participation.

As part of the evaluation process for participation you will submit a ‘Participation Self-Evaluation’ on October 24 and December 5: you’ll give your own reading of how well you’ve met the following criteria for participation and what grade you deserve. I’ll make a judgment about this and tell you. Your input will help me to recognize your best participation.
**Good/very good** participation (3.3/3.7) in class requires that you:

- Show up for all classes (unless you’ve communicated with me about extenuating circumstances and provided documentation where appropriate)
- Take part in whole-class and small group discussions, without dominating
- Offer contributions that relate to what we’re talking about, and connect with course themes
- Show awareness of the week’s readings in your contributions, and refer to them from time to time

The A range denotes ‘Excellent’. Excellent participation (more than 3.7):

- **Mobilizes a strong understanding of course readings and themes**: you’re not showing off about what you know, but are bringing in nuances from the week’s and the term’s readings where these help to focus or advance conversation.
- **Is critically complex**: you’re connecting with nuances of core issues in the course and advancing your own view with an awareness of strong arguments on different sides.
- **Is attuned to what others are saying and helps to draw connections with course themes**: your contributions show that you’ve listened well, and you help to clarify, focus, and move the conversation forward.

You probably merit 3.0 or less if you have missed classes without making arrangements in advance; obviously not done the readings well enough to participate; dominated discussions in ways that prevent others from having a say, or sat in resolute silence refusing to answer questions or venture ideas.

**Final oral exam — 15%**

The course as a whole is meant to support you in thinking in an informed, creative, synthetic way about systemic design and campus food systems. The oral exam is a chance for you to draw threads of the term together, to show how well you have absorbed the readings, systemic design work, and classroom conversations, and to demonstrate your ability to take smart, informed positions.

Oral exams will be scheduled individually for each student and will last 10-12 minutes.

You’re not making a prepared presentation; it’s not about memorizing spiels or speaking flawlessly. Rather, I will take the lead in hosting a conversation where we’ll go back and forth about the issues discussed during the term.

You’ll do well if you can draw on course materials and discussions, respond well to prompts and questions, and communicate clearly. Students who keep up with things during the term, do all the reading, take part energetically in class activities and discussions, do careful writing, and spend a few hours preparing for the oral should do well. On the other hand, I think it’ll be hard to do well if you try to learn the material by cramming.

You’ll get further information on how to prepare for the oral exam, and support in preparing, in the second half of the term.

The oral exam will be held between November 28 and December 2, with individual appointments scheduled about 2 weeks in advance. Failure to show up for your exam without a documented and weighty reason will result in a zero for this component of the course.

**Final paper—25%**

This final paper should be 3000-3500 words. It’s your chance to pull out a theme from the course that has gripped you, stake out a clear position, and use texts as well as our systemic design outcomes to develop this.
I urge you to find ways to communicate complexity in accessible and engaging ways. Don’t fall into stale academic prose. Strive for a lively intellectual voice, while bringing your best critical game.

**Calculation of final grade**

You will get a grade out of 4.0 for each of the above components, and a final grade point value will be calculated arithmetically using the above percentages for each assignment.

The final grade point mark will be converted to letter grades for reporting, using the university scheme (e.g. A = 4.0, A- = 3.7, B+ = 3.3, etc.), with cut-offs for rounding up or down (and for distinguishing between A and A+) to be decided on a class-wide basis by me at the end of term.

**Extenuating circumstances**

I know that two things are true:

1. Students get behind with work, stressed, overcommitted, etc. during their degrees. Their computers die, they miss buses, they’re asked to work overtime, their puppies gets sick, they get a bad cold. This is part of life as a student. It’s not a good enough reason for me to make allowances with assignments and grading (since if I do, it’ll tend to advantage students who are brashest or most entitled in asking for breaks, not necessarily those who face the greatest challenges.)
2. Sometimes exceptional circumstances do come up and deserve accommodation—you’re struggling with serious mental or physical illness, your child is ill, a member of your family is dying or dies. That level of trouble.

It’s your responsibility to plan your term so that stuff in category #1 doesn’t kill your grade—i.e. wash your hands often, do writing early in the term, don’t leave reading and written work to the night before it’s due, hit ‘save’ often and back up your data, see me for help/advice before things get serious, etc.

If stuff happens in category #2, speak to me, and please do this as soon as possible once you realize there’s a problem.

**Recording classes**

Audio or video recording of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Recorded material is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the instructor.

**Finding help**

The Student Distress Centre is there to listen, offer support, supply information and provide services:

- Call: 492-HELP (492-4357)
- Drop in: 2-707 in the Students’ Union Building
- Visit Peer Support Services: [http://www_su.ualberta.ca/services/psc/](http://www_su.ualberta.ca/services/psc/)
- Email psc@su.ualberta.ca
Other boilerplate

Learning and working environment

The Faculty of Arts is committed to ensuring that all students, faculty and staff are able to work and study in an environment that is safe and free from discrimination and harassment. It does not tolerate behaviour that undermines that environment. The department urges anyone who feels that this policy is being violated to:
- Discuss the matter with the person whose behaviour is causing concern; or
- If that discussion is unsatisfactory, or there is concern that direct discussion is inappropriate or threatening, discuss it with the Chair of the Department.

For additional advice or assistance regarding this policy you may contact the student ombuds office: (http://www.ombudservice.ualberta.ca/). Information about the University of Alberta Discrimination and Harassment Policy and Procedures is described in UAPPOL at https://policiesonline.ualberta.ca/PoliciesProcedures/Pages/DispPol.aspx?PID=110.

Policy on academic dishonesty:

“The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.”

Note that at the graduate level, academic dishonesty (the most common form of which is plagiarism, or representing the work of someone else as your own) is typically career-destroying. The department of Political Science has a bullish policy on plagiarism at the graduate level, and will normally de-fund any of our own students in receipt of department funding in addition to considering a recommendation to FGSR that a student withdraw if they are found through a proper discipline process to have violated standards of academic integrity. We always follow policy by forwarding suspected cases of academic dishonesty to the Faculty of Arts.

See: http://www.governance.ualberta.ca/CodesofConductandResidenceCommunityStandards/CodeofStudentBehaviour/3030OffencesUndertheCode/3032InappropriateAcademicBehav.aspx

Attendance, Absences, and Missed Grade Components:

Regular attendance is essential for optimal performance in any course. In cases of potentially excusable absences due to illness or domestic affliction, notify your instructor by e-mail within two days. Regarding absences that may be excusable and procedures for addressing course components missed as a result, consult sections 23.3(i) and 23.5.6 of the University Calendar. Be aware that unexcused absences will result in partial or total loss of the grade for the “attendance and participation” component(s) of a course, as well as for any assignments that are not handed-in or completed as a result.

Specialized Support & Disability Services:

If you have special needs that could affect your performance in this class, please let me know during the first week of the term so that appropriate arrangements can be made. If you are not already registered
with Specialized Support & Disability Services, contact their office immediately (2-800 SUB; Email ssdsrec@ualberta.ca; Email; phone 780-492-3381; WEB www.ssds.ualberta.ca).

“Policy about course outlines can be found in Section 23.4(2) of the University Calendar.”
Amendments to the Code of Student Behaviour occur throughout the year. For the most recent version of the Code, visit
http://www.governance.ualberta.ca/

NOTICE TO INSTRUCTORS REGARDING PLAGIARISM, CHEATING, MISREPRESENTATION OF FACTS
AND PARTICIPATION IN AN OFFENCE

The U of A considers plagiarism, cheating, misrepresentation of facts and participation in an offence to be serious academic offences. Plagiarism, cheating, misrepresentation of facts and participation in an offence can be avoided if students are told what these offences are and if possible sanctions are made clear at the outset. Instructors should understand that the principles embodied in the Code are essential to our academic purpose. For this reason, instructors will be fully supported by Departments, Faculties and the University in their endeavours to rightfully discover and pursue cases of academic dishonesty in accordance with the Code.

At the beginning of each term, we ask you to review with your students the definitions of plagiarism and cheating. We are now also asking you to review with your students the definition of Misrepresentation of Facts and Participation in an Offence. Your co-operation and assistance in this matter are much appreciated.

30.3.2(1) Plagiarism

No Student shall submit the words, ideas, images or data of another person as the Student’s own in any academic writing, essay, thesis, project, assignment, presentation or poster in a course or program of study.

30.3.2(2) Cheating

30.3.2(2)a No Student shall in the course of an examination or other similar activity, obtain or attempt to obtain information from another Student or other unauthorized source, give or attempt to give information to another Student, or use, attempt to use or possess for the purposes of use any unauthorized material.

30.3.2(2)b No Student shall represent or attempt to represent him or herself as another or have or attempt to have himself or herself represented by another in the taking of an examination, preparation of a paper or other similar activity. See also misrepresentation in 30.3.6(4).

Cheating (Continued)

30.3.2(2)c No Student shall represent another’s substantial editorial or compositional assistance on an assignment as the Student’s own work.

30.3.2(2)d No Student shall submit in any course or program of study, without the written approval of the course instructor, all or a substantial portion of any academic writing, essay, thesis, research report, project, assignment, presentation or poster for which credit has previously been obtained by the Student or which has been or is being submitted by the Student in another course or program of study in the University or elsewhere.

30.3.2(2)e No Student shall submit in any course or program of study any academic writing, essay, thesis, report, project, assignment, presentation or poster containing a statement of fact known by the Student to be false or a reference to a source the Student knows to contain fabricated claims (unless acknowledged by the Student), or a fabricated reference to a source.

30.3.6(4) Misrepresentation of Facts

No Student shall misrepresent pertinent facts to any member of the University community for the purpose of obtaining academic or other advantage. This includes such acts as the failure to provide pertinent information on an application for admission or the altering of an educational document/transfer.

30.3.6(5) Participation in an Offence

No Student shall counsel or encourage or knowingly aid or assist, directly or indirectly, another person in the commission of any offence under this Code.

More information can be found at: http://www.osja.ualberta.ca/en.aspx
EXCERPTS FROM THE CODE OF STUDENT BEHAVIOUR
FOR REVIEW WITH EACH CLASS AT THE BEGINNING OF EVERY TERM

Procedures for Instructors Regarding Plagiarism, Cheating,

Misrepresentation of Facts and Participation in an Offence

The following procedures are drawn from the Code of Student Behaviour as approved by GFC and the Board of Governors. The guidelines summarize what instructors must do when they have reason to believe that a student has plagiarized, cheated, misrepresented facts or participated in an offence. If you have questions about these guidelines, or about the policies, please talk with the senior administrator in your Faculty responsible for dealing with student discipline—usually an Associate Dean – or the Appeals and Compliance Officer (Appeals Coordinator), University Governance (2-2655).

30.5.4 Procedures for Instructors in Cases Respecting Inappropriate Academic Behaviour

30.5.4(1) When an Instructor believes that a Student may have committed an Inappropriate Academic Behaviour Offence [30.3.2] or that there has been Misrepresentation of Facts [30.3.6(4)] or Participation in an Offence [30.3.6(5)] in cases respecting Inappropriate Academic Behaviour in the course that he or she instructs, the Instructor will meet with the Student. Before such a meeting, the Instructor shall inform the Student of the purpose of the meeting. In the event that the Student refuses or fails to meet with the Instructor within a reasonable period of time specified by the Instructor, the Instructor shall, taking into account the available information, decide whether a report to the Dean is warranted.

30.5.4(2) If the Instructor believes there has been a violation of the Code, the Instructor shall, as soon as possible after the event occurred, report that violation to the Dean and provide a written statement of the details of the case. The instructor may also include a recommendation for sanction.

Possible Sanctions

One or more of the following sanctions given in 30.4.3 (2) and (3) of the Code are commonly used for plagiarism, cheating, participation in an offence, and misrepresentation of facts:

30.4.3(2) a.i a mark reduction or a mark of 0 on any term work or examination for reason of Inappropriate Academic Behaviour
30.4.3(2) a.ii Reduction of a grade in a course
30.4.3(2) a.iii a grade of F for a course
30.4.3(2) a.iv a remark on a transcript of 8 (or 9 for failing graduate student grades), indicating Inappropriate Academic Behaviour, in addition to 30.4.3(2)a.i, 30.4.3(2)a.ii or 30.4.3(2)a.iii
30.4.3(3) b Expulsion
30.4.3(3) c Suspension

The following sanctions may be used in rare cases:

30.4.3(3) e Suspension of a Degree already awarded
30.4.3(3) f Rescission of a Degree already awarded

30.6.1 Initiation of an Appeal

30.6.1(1) When a Student has been found to have committed an offence under the Code of Student Behaviour or an Applicant is found to have committed an offence under the Code of Applicant Behaviour, whether or not that Student or Applicant has been given a sanction, the Student or Applicant may appeal that decision, except in the case of a decision of the Discipline Officer under 30.5.6(2e.ii), which remains final and is not subject to appeal. In cases where a severe sanction has been recommended to the Discipline Officer, once the student receives the final decision of the Discipline Officer, the student can appeal the decisions of both Dean and the Discipline Officer at the same time. The written appeal must be presented to the Appeals Coordinator in University Governance within 15 Working Days of the deemed receipt of the decision by the Student or Applicant. The finding that an offence has been committed, the sanction imposed or both may form the basis of appeal. The written appeal must also state the full grounds of appeal and be signed by the Appellant. The appeal shall be heard by the UAB.

Professor Steven Penney
Chair, Campus Law Review Committee

Dr Steven Dew
Provost and Vice-President (Academic)

* The Campus Law Review Committee is a standing committee of General Faculties Council (GFC) responsible for the review of the Code of Student Behaviour and of student disciplinary procedures.

Updated: 27/08/2015

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