

Reflections on Hearth and Home

Food, Place, and the Meaning of Community
Thoreau College 2023 Fall Semester Program

Dates: *Block 1 - September 6 - October 13*

Times: *MWF - 9-11 AM*

Instructors: *Jacob Hundt & Benjamin Bernard-Herman*

Course Overview:

During this six week course we will take a deep dive into some of the practical, ethical, aesthetic, and spiritual dimensions of what it means to live as an embodied human being here on Earth. This is harvest season here in Wisconsin, so the cornerstone of the course will be food - what we eat, how we procure it, what it means to us, and how our food interacts with ecology, economics, and culture. In the later weeks of the course, these discussions will blend into an exploration of community, family, and place. At this point in history, can we still build meaningful and sustaining lives together by working consciously with the deeper dimensions and rhythms of space, time, and human relationship? At the end of this course, we will draw all of these threads together by participating in the rejuvenated Viroqua Harvest Parade on Saturday, October 14.



Class Activities:

- Readings & discussion (see below)
- Harvest season labor - canning, pickling, preserving, harvesting, butchering
- Workshops - Spoon carving, parade puppet making, outdoor classroom building
- Ethnographic observations -
 - Driftless Spoon Gathering
 - Amish produce auction
 - Vernon County Fair
 - Interview practice?
- Final Project - Hunter's Moon Banquet - Saturday, October 28

Final Project: Hunter's Moon Banquet - Saturday October 28

For the final project for this block, you will plan and prepare a harvest banquet together, highlighting locally grown, produced, and/or foraged ingredients, including those that you've prepared in workshops and labor throughout the semester. The meal should tell a story about local produce, the Driftless Area, and your own experiences learning about these foodways. The meal should include a presentation about the cultural history of the spotlighted food items - are they native to this region? If not, how did they come to the area? What meanings have this food held for the various people who have grown/foraged/produced it, both historically and today? What meaning do these foods hold for you? How does being attentive to the histories of these foods and the conditions of their production change your relationship to them? This research can (and should!) take many forms - including (but not limited to!) interviews with the people who grew the produce; observations at farms, kitchens, and in the woods; book/internet research; and personal reflection.

Additionally, as you prepare this meal, take note of the food items used that are not local to the area (salt, for instance). How does the use of these ingredients shape the preparation of a "local" meal? Would it have been possible to not use them at all, or to use local substitutes? What does the use of products from across the country and world mean for the practice of imbuing food with a sense of place?

Readings:

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| 1. Weds. Sept 6: | Michael Pollan, <i>The Omnivore's Dilemma</i> , "Part 1: Corn" |
| 2. Friday. Sept 8: | Robin Wall Kimmerer, <i>Braiding Sweetgrass</i> :
a. "People of Corn, People of Light"
b. "Epiphany in the Beans"
c. "Three Sisters" |
| 3. Mon. Sept 11: | RW Kimmerer, <i>Braiding Sweetgrass</i> - "The Honorable Harvest" |
| 4. Weds. Sept 13: | Henry David Thoreau, <i>Walden</i> - "The Bean-Fields" |
| 5. Friday. Sept 15: | Henry David Thoreau, <i>Walden</i> - "Higher Laws" |
| 6. Mon. Sept 18: | Ellen Gaydos, <i>Pig Years</i> |
| 7. Weds. Sept 20: | Alex Blanchette, <i>Porkopolis</i> - "Preface," "Introduction" |
| 8. Friday. Sept 22: | (First Solo) |
| 9. Mon. Sept 25: | Warren Belasco, <i>Appetite for Change</i> - "Organic Force" |
| 10. Weds. Sept 27: | Janssen, <i>Making Local Food Work</i> - Chapters 1 & 2 |
| 11. Friday. Sept 29: | Annemarie Mol, <i>Eating in Theory</i> |
| 12. Mon. Oct 2: | Liz Rog, <i>We Belong</i> (Overnight Trip to Decorah) |
| 13. Weds. Oct 4: | Wendell Berry, <i>Unsettling of America</i> |
| 14. Friday. Oct 6: | Wendell Berry, <i>Unsettling of America</i> |
| 15. Mon. Oct 9: | bell hooks, <i>belonging: a culture of a place</i> |
| 16. Weds. Oct 11: | Vine Deloria, Jr. <i>God is Red: A Native View of Religion</i> |
| 17. Friday. Oct 13: | John Vervaeke, et al, <i>Zombies in Western Culture</i> |

Scheduled Activities & Workshops:

- September 5 & 7: Spoon Carving workshop with Tom Wheeler and Terry Beck
- September 8-10: Driftless Spoon Gathering
- September 12: Field Trip to Amish Produce Auction & Canning/Pickling day
- September 14-17: Vernon County Fair
- September 18: Chicken Butchering
- September 21-22: Autumnal Equinox - First Solo
- October 2-3: Overnight Trip to Decorah, Iowa - Center for Belonging Folk School, Seed Savers, Zen Monastery
- October 4-5: Hog butchering & sausage making
- October 14: Viroqua Harvest Parade
- October 16-20: Boundary Waters canoe expedition
- October 28: Hunter's Moon Banquet - Final Project Presentation