

CORNELL UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEMS MINOR

Overview:

The Minor in Community Food Systems is a university-wide program enabling undergraduate students to learn about and engage with issues, problems, and questions related to food security, food sovereignty and food justice and the social organization of sustainable local food systems.

At a time of rising inequality, environmental uncertainty and health disparities, sustainable, equitable and healthy food systems are gaining recognition as a way to fix complex and challenging problems. Local food movements, farmers' markets, urban gardens and community-supported agriculture reduce the social distance between growers and consumers, with potential for strengthening community bonds and general responsibility for community health. Within localized food systems, organic and agro-ecological practices can enhance ecosystem services supporting food production and improve environmental quality. Understanding and collaboratively developing information to inform how communities manage these developments is key to this minor. The minor will explore questions such as: What makes a local food system equitable and sustainable? What do communities value in developing their food systems? What can students learn from local understandings, efforts and practices in supporting community food systems? How can students value experiential learning involved in community engagement? What lessons for practice and policy can be learned from local food systems?

Expected Learning Outcomes:

The CFS Minor has five specific educational objectives for students:

- 1) Understand the social and ecological dimensions of agri-food systems;
- 2) Learn how to analyze food systems from their social, ecological, political, and health dimensions and understand implications for sustainability and social justice;
- 3) Build knowledge and understanding of sustainable and just food system development, grounded in engagement with local communities and organizations;
- 4) Nurture skills and capacity for interacting with community partners in responsible, reciprocal, and respectful ways; and
- 5) Develop skills to identify, critically analyze current and historical food system controversies.

Requirements:

- Introductory course: DSOC 3400: Agriculture, Food, and Society (offered annually)
- Practicum: A structured opportunity to learn from and contribute to authentic local and regional food systems initiatives. Students are placed with a domestic or international community-based partner and provided with meaningful engaged-learning experiences. These experiences support the community partner's goals while providing students with opportunities to apply, critically evaluate, and build upon knowledge, skills, and attitudes developed through CFS Minor coursework. Possible forms of engagement include: interviews, data collection and analysis, recording local histories, policy analysis, helping with multi-media communication, etc.
- Capstone: This serves to bring closure to the Minor experience, encouraging student reflection, reporting, and integration of what they have learned both on and off campus. Guest speakers and webinars highlighting community/campus engagements enable students to situate their experience in the larger movement of local food system sustainability, and to build affinity networks.
- 3 electives on courses related to sustainability (from a pre-determined list)

Questions or for more information: Contact Professor Scott Peters (sp236@cornell.edu), Associate Professor Rachel Bezner Kerr (rbeznerkerr@cornell.edu), or Senior Extension Associate Heidi Mouillesseaux-Kunzman, the Community Food Systems Minor coordinator (communityfoodsystemsmminor@cornell.edu).