# AGRICULTURE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN WESTERN HISTORY

Community and Environmental Sociology 230 / History of Science 230 Spring 2011

Professor: Jess Gilbert Teaching Assistant: Jacki Hartley

340B Agriculture Hall
Phone: 262-9530
Email: jhartley@wisc.edu
Office Hours: TH, 3-4.30

Office Hours: T, 2.30-3.30; W, 5.15-6.15.

This course introduces you to some core features of the social and political history of agriculture, mainly in the United States. First, though, we begin at the *agrarian* origins of Western civilization, glancing at classical Greece, ancient Israel/Palestine, medieval Europe, and early-capitalist England. The rest of the course focuses on the U. S. We shall compare and contrast several key events and episodes in our agrarian history, including the American Revolution, Civil War, radical-reformist farmer movements, and agricultural policy debates between 1880 and 1945 (Populism, Socialism, Progressivism, and the New Deal). Four interrelated themes will help guide us through all this history: agrarian democracy, family farming, public policy, and peasant/farmer protest movements in relation to larger social changes.

A major emphasis of this course is on the texts—reading, rereading, questioning, comprehending, and criticizing them. Class format will be largely lecture, with the addition of two films and a bit of music. Lectures will highlight the most important parts of the readings and also introduce additional relevant material. Discussion sections will focus on your questions, comments, and criticisms of the readings; this is your chance to really try to understand them. Since ours is an introductory-level course, you are not expected to know much at all about agricultural history, rural society, or sociology at the beginning. By semester's end, however, you will know a lot!

TEXTS--We shall read and discuss in detail the following four books, which will be available for purchase at Rainbow Bookstore Cooperative (426 W. Gilman, phone 257-6050):

Bissett, Jim. <u>Agrarian Socialism in America: Marx, Jefferson, and Jesus in the Oklahoma Countryside, 1904-1920.</u> Norman, OK: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1999.

Danbom, David B. <u>Born in the Country: A History of Rural America</u>. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2006 (2nd edn.).

Neth, Mary. <u>Preserving the Family Farm: Women, Community, and the Foundations of Agribusiness in the Midwest, 1900-1940.</u> Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1995.

Worster, Donald. <u>Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s</u>. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2004 (25<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition).

In addition, there is a packet of required readings for sale at Bob's Copy Shop (616 University Ave., open M-F, 9-5, and Sat., 10-3; phone 257-4536). This packet contains the readings for the first few weeks, so you should **buy it now**!

The four books and the reading packet are on Reserve at Steenbock Library.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:

- 1. **Exams:** There will be two (2) exams taken in class, the first on March 7, the second, May 4 (the last day of class). Each will include a combination of true/false, short-answer, and essay questions. It is not to your advantage to miss exams. Make-ups will consist of a single essay question.
- 2. **Paper:** You will write a paper of 6 8 pages (doubles-spaced, 12-point font), due on April 18. I'll say more about the paper assignment in class.
- 3. **Participation:** Participation is essential. We expect you to attend every lecture, which will cover much material that will be on the exams but is not in the readings. In order to do well in this course, you must practice "active listening" during the lectures. Come to lecture prepared, having read the assignment in advance. In lecture, I will often cite and read from the assigned texts, so bring them to class the day they'll be treated.

Attendance in discussion sections is mandatory. You are permitted to miss two (2) section meetings. In sections, you need to be able and willing to discuss the readings, raise questions about them, and bring up issues from the lectures that you don't fully understand. Your grade for "participation" will be based on your performance in section.

Grades will be determined as follows:

Exam #1	25%
Exam #2	35%
Paper	25%
Participation	<u>15%</u>
Total	100%

## **Tips on Close Reading**—Ask yourself these questions:

- 1. What is the author saying? What does the text mean?
- 2. How does the author know what s/he asserts? What are the claims based on?
- 3. So what? Who cares? Do you? Why?

# **Other Important Suggestions:**

- 1. Keep up with the readings. Do the assigned readings before the class session during which they will be discussed.
- 2. Take notes when you do the readings. What are the main points of the piece? Write down any questions you have about the readings or other course material, and bring them to class.
- 3. Attend lecture and section. Be prepared to raise questions and offer comments on the material.
- 4. Take notes in class. They will be a key basis for your study for the exams.
- 5. If you miss class, get notes for that day from another student. This is your responsibility; we will not repeat lectures for students who miss class.
- 6. Come to office hours. Both your professor and your Teaching Assistant are glad to meet with you during these times. Take advantage of them!

**Good Manners:** This is a big class, so please behave in a way that shows respect for other students and the rest of us. Please be settled in and ready to go at 6:30 p.m. every class meeting; be on time for your section, too. Late arrivals and early departures disturb everyone; if you find yourself having to engage in those activities, sit in the back on an aisle–quietly. Please *do not* start packing up before I finish lecturing. I will finish by 7:20. Please do not bring food to class, or chat with other students during it. Turn off cell phones; don't surf, text, watch video, play computer (or other) games etc.

#### COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS

#### I. Old World Agrarian Legacies: Ancient, Medieval, Early-Modern

- 1/19 Preview and Overview. *No Sections this week.*
- 1/24 V. D. Hanson, "Epilogue: World Beneath Our Feet." Pp. 405-33 in <u>The Other Greeks:</u> <u>The Family Farm and the Agrarian Roots of Western Civilization</u> (NY: Free Press, 1995).
- 1/26 N. C. Habel, "Land as Sabbath Bound: An Agrarian Ideology." Pp. 97-114 in <a href="The Land Is Mine: Six Biblical Land Ideologies">The Land Is Mine: Six Biblical Land Ideologies</a> (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), and:
  - Reading #3 *Document*: Leviticus, Chap. 25 (1 page).
- 1/31 R. A. Horsley and J. S. Hanson, "Ancient Jewish Social Banditry." Pp. 48-87 in <u>Bandits</u>, <u>Prophets</u>, and <u>Messiahs: Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus</u> (NY: HarperCollins, 1988), **and:**.
  - Reading #5: Ancient Jewish and Roman Dates; Map of Palestine (1 page).

- 2/2 R. H. Hilton, "Peasant Society, Peasant Movements and Feudalism in Medieval Europe." Pp. 67-94 in H. A. Landsberger, ed., <u>Rural Protest: Peasant Movements and Social Change</u> (London: Macmillan, 1974).
- 2/7 B. Moore, Jr., "England and the Contributions of Violence to Gradualism." Pp. 3-39 in Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World (Boston: Beacon, 1966).

## II. New World Invasion, Revolution, Civil War; Populists and Progressives, 1492-1917

- 2/9 Danbom, Born in the Country, *Prefaces*, Chaps. 1 and 3 [skip Chap. 2].
- 2/14 Danbom, Chaps. 4-5.
- 2/16 Danbom, Chap. 6, **and:** 
  - Reading #9–*Document*: A. Lincoln, "Free Labor Gives Hope to All," Speech in Milwaukee, 1859 (1 page), **and:**
  - B. Moore, Jr., "The American Civil War: The Last Capitalist Revolution." Pp. 111-55 in Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World (Boston: Beacon, 1966).
- 2/21 [continue] B. Moore, Jr., "The American Civil War: The Last Capitalist Revolution." Pp. 111-55 in Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World (Boston: Beacon, 1966).
- 2/23 Danbom, Chaps. 7-8, **and:** 
  - Reading #13–M. Isserman, "The Wizard of Oz"; Bascom Hall Plaque (1 page).
- 2/28 E. Sanders, "Farmers in Politics, 1873-1896." Pp. 101-47 in Roots of Reform: Farmers, Workers, and the American State, 1877-1917 (Chicago: U. of C., 1998), and:
  - Reading #10–Document: Populist Party Platform, July 4, 1892 (7 pages).
- E. Sanders, "Agrarian Politics and Parties after 1896" and "The Agrarian Statist Agenda." Pp. 148-77 in <u>ibid.</u>
- 3/7 *Exam #1*.

The Wisconsin Farm Woman [film will start right at 6.30; be on time or be in the dark!]

Reading #14–The Wisconsin Farm Woman Discussion Guide (1 page).

\*\*\*Spring Break\*\*\*

# III. U. S. Agriculture, Government, Environment, and Society, 1900-1960s: Socialists, Capitalists, New Dealers, and Family Farmers

- 3/21 Bissett, Agrarian Socialism in America, Preface, Introduction, and Chaps. 1-2.
- 3/23 Bissett, Chaps. 3-5.
- 3/28 Bissett, Chaps. 6-8.
- 3/30 Danbom, Chaps. 9-10.

Reading #15—"The Tradition of Institutionalist Agricultural Economics at the UW, 1892-1942"; "Intellectual and Professional Influences on New Deal Agrarian Reformers" (1 p.)

- 4/4 Worster, Dust Bowl, Preface, Introduction, Chaps. 1-2.
- 4/6 Worster, Chaps. 3-5.

The Plow That Broke the Plains [in-class film].

- 4/11 Worster, either Chaps. 6-8 or Chaps. 9-11-your choice.
- 4/13 Worster, Chaps. 12-14.
- 4/18 Paper due.

Neth, <u>Preserving the Family Farm</u>, Introduction, Chaps. 1-2.

- 4/20 Neth, Chaps. 3-5.
- 4/25 Neth, Chaps. 7-8 [skip Chap. 6 but see photos on pp. 164-69].
- 4/27 Neth, Chap. 9 and Conclusion.

5/2 Danbom, Chap. 11.

Wrap-Up.

5/4 *Exam #2*.

"We locate ourselves in society and thus recognize our own positions as we hang from its subtle strings. For a moment we see ourselves as puppets indeed. But then we grasp a decisive difference between the puppet theater and our own drama. Unlike the puppets, we have the possibility of stopping our movements, looking up and perceiving the machinery by which we have been moved. In this act lies the first step toward freedom."--P. L. Berger, <u>Invitation</u> to Sociology, 1963.

"The assumption of inertia, that cultural and social continuity do not require explanation, obliterates the fact that both have to be recreated anew in each generation, often with great pain and suffering. To maintain and transmit a value system, human beings are punched, bullied, sent to jail, thrown into concentration camps, cajoled, bribed, made into heroes, encouraged to read newspapers, stood up against a wall and shot, and sometimes even taught sociology."--B. Moore, Jr., Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy, 1966.

"Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

"Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

"But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate -- we can not consecrate -- we can not hallow -- this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us -- that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion -- that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain -- that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom -- and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

-A. Lincoln, Gettysburg Address, Nov. 19, 1863.

# Readings for CES/HS 230, "Agriculture and Social Change in Western History"

# Jess Gilbert, Spring 2011

- 1. V. D. Hanson, "Epilogue: World Beneath Our Feet." Pp. 405-33 in <u>The Other Greeks: The Family Farm and the Agrarian Roots of Western Civilization</u> (NY: Free Press, 1995).
- 2. N. C. Habel, "Land as Sabbath Bound: An Agrarian Ideology." Pp. 97-114 in <u>The Land Is Mine: Six Biblical Land Ideologies</u> (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995).
- 3. Document: Leviticus, Chap. 25 (1 page).
- 4. R. A. Horsley and J. S. Hanson, "Ancient Jewish Social Banditry." Pp. 48-87 in <u>Bandits</u>, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus (NY: HarperCollins, 1988).
- 5. Ancient Jewish and Roman Dates; Map of Palestine (1 page).
- 6. R. H. Hilton, "Peasant Society, Peasant Movements and Feudalism in Medieval Europe." Pp. 67-94 in H. A. Landsberger, ed., <u>Rural Protest: Peasant Movements and Social Change</u> (London: Macmillan, 1974).
- 7. B. Moore, Jr., "England and the Contributions of Violence to Gradualism." Pp. 3-39 in Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World (Boston: Beacon, 1966).
- 8. B. Moore, Jr., "The American Civil War: The Last Capitalist Revolution." Pp. 111-55, ibid.
- 9. *Document*: A. Lincoln, "Free Labor Gives Hope to All," Speech in Milwaukee, 1859 (1 p.).
- 10. Document: Populist Party Platform, July 4, 1892 (7 pages).
- 11. E. Sanders, "Farmers in Politics, 1873-1896." Pp. 101-47 in Roots of Reform: Farmers, Workders, and the American State, 1877-1917 (Chicago: UC Press, 1999).
- 12. E. Sanders, "Agrarian Politics and Parties after 1896." Pp. 148-77, ibid.
- 13. M. Isserman, "The Wizard of Oz"; Bascom Hall Plaque (1 page).
- 14. The Wisconsin Farm Woman Discussion Guide (1 page).
- 15. JG, "The Tradition of Institutionalist Agricultural Economics at the UW, 1892-1942"; "Intellectual and Professional Influences on New Deal Agrarian Reformers" (1 page).