

Developing a Syllabus on Farmworker Advocacy

Below are topics, suggested readings, and films for a fourteen-week semester seminar. Note that this syllabus was developed prior to the release of this book, and therefore this volume does not appear in this sample. This work is very much intended for course use, and we hope that courses will be organized around the themes of the book, with a week devoted to each chapter/theme.

See the recommended reading list and works cited in this volume for further suggestions and full citations to supplemental materials. SAF houses readings and films related to farmworkers, which can be checked out through SAF's lending library.

Basic elements for a course on farmworkers and advocacy:

- History of farm work particular to the region where the course is offered. In the Southeast, any discussion of farm work must discuss links between current farmworker conditions and slavery, sharecropping, and tenant farming.
- Contextualization of farm work with region's agricultural crops. How did the crops that farmworkers prune, plant, and harvest in this region become popular here? Why these crops and not others? How are these crops transported to markets? How have these cropping patterns and crop selections changed over time?
- Changes in farmworker populations over time. Discuss the shifts of farmworker population ethnicities and countries of origin. Why do whites and African Americans make up only a small percentage of the farmworker population today, while Latinos make up the overwhelming majority?
- Push/pull factors that encourage or force farmworkers to enter farm work today. In the Southeast, discuss the vacuum created by the out-migration of the descendants of slaves and sharecroppers from agricultural communities. Also review the economic and social aspects of communities in Mexico, Central America, and elsewhere that create a climate where inhabitants must leave in order to survive. Discussions about NAFTA, other federal trade programs and how U.S. policy has helped create poverty in Latin America are also important.
- Patterns of farmworker travel and labor in the present. Where do farmworkers who work in the region studied stay in the winter? What months are they in your community? How long do they stay? From where do they come and to where do they go when they leave? Are there year-round workers in the area?
- Farmworker advocacy. What were the antecedents to present day farmworker advocacy? How do farmworker advocates of the past resemble those of the

present? Make the students familiar with various areas of advocacy including, education, legislation, housing, health, and immigration.

- Direct experience with farmworkers and advocates. While it may be difficult to work with farmworker communities during the academic year, students should have some contact with former farmworkers and farmworker advocates. This can come in the form of a field trip to a labor camp and farm, inviting farmworkers and advocates as guest speakers, or requiring students to volunteer with local farmworker organizations.
- Volunteer experience with farmworker advocacy organizations. Service-learning requirements can be a useful tool to involve students in the farmworking community. In lieu of writing academic papers, students can document their volunteer experiences as a means of conveying what they have learned through oral histories, photography, video, and/or ethnographies of the agency personnel/community members/farmworkers with whom they have worked. A journal is an effective means of documenting experiences and required presentations encourage students to convert journal writings into effective communication.
- Special reports by the students to expand upon topics only slightly covered by required readings. Depending upon the level of student experience and interest, students may have their own topics of interest to explore and present to the class.

Suggested Class Topics

Abbreviated citations (last name and page numbers) from the particular texts listed below appear in the syllabus as readings for each week:

- Brandt, Deborah (ed). 1999. Women Working the NAFTA Food Chain: Women, Food, and Globalization. Toronto: Second Story Press.
- Flowers, Linda. 1990. Thrown Away. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press.
- Hahamovitch, Cindy. 1999. The Fruits of their Labor: Atlantic Coast Farmworkers and the Making of Migrant Poverty, 1870-1945. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: UNC Press.
- Hellman, Judith Adler. 1994. Mexican Lives. New York: The New Press.
- Manly, Libby, Alejandra Okie, and Melinda Wiggins (eds). 1998. Fields without Borders/ Campos Sin Fronteras. Durham, NC: Student Action with Farmworkers.

- Rothenberg, Daniel. 1998. With These Hands: The Hidden World of Migrant Farmworkers Today. New York: Harcourt Brace and Company.
- Steinbeck, John. 1939, 1992. The Grapes of Wrath. New York: Penguin Books.
- Buss, Fran Leeper (ed). 1993. Forged Under the Sun/Forjada Bajo el Sol: The Life of Maria Elena Lucas. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

Week one: Introductions to the Course and Participants

Begin with students' experiences with farmworkers, agriculture, and advocacy and elicit the questions they want to explore in the course. By having students share these prior experiences during the first week, all members of the class begin learning from one another from the outset, and the instructor can design the course accordingly.

Activities: Introductions, including the professor's interest in the class; Service-Learning site descriptions; Course requirements; Journal guidelines

Film: "Harvest of Shame"-- CBS 1960 documentary on farmworkers aired on Thanksgiving Day.

Readings: Short clipping from local newspaper that can be read in class and discussed.

Week two: Slavery and its Recollections: the Origins of American Farm Poverty

Readings: Hahamovitch pp. 3-112

Special assignment for every class member: Research an aspect of slavery and its aftermath, particularly as forced labor relates to agriculture in the South.

See: Daniel, Pete. 1972/1990. The Shadow of Slavery: Peonage in the South 1901-1969. New York: Oxford University Press.

William Cohen. 1991. At Freedom's Edge: Black Mobility and the Southern White Quest for Racial Control. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.

Zora Neale Hurston. 1978. Their Eyes Were Watching God. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Leon F. Litwack. 1981. Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery. New York: Knopf.

Theodore Rosengarten. 1974. All God's Dangers: The Life of Nate Shaw. New York: Knopf.

_____ Charles H. Wesley. 1927. Negro Labor in the United States. New York: Vanguard.

Federal Writers Project Life Histories. Southern Historical Collection. Wilson Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Special report: Jim Crow South and Migrant Labor

See: C. Van Woodward. 1995. Strange Career of Jim Crow. New York: Oxford University Press.

Week three: Agrarianism, World War II, and the State

Readings: Hahamovitch pp. 113-181

Special report: Rise of textiles manufacturing and the shift from small farming to small town manufacturing in the South.

See: Hall, Jacquelyn, et al. 1987. Like a Family: The Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World. Chapel Hill: UNC Press.

Conway, Mimi. 1979. Rise Gonna Rise: A Portrait of Southern Textile Workers. Photographs by Earl Dotter. Garden City, NJ: Anchor Press.

Week four: Farm Labor and the Great Depression

Readings: Steinbeck Chapters 1-10

Special report: Southern Tenant Farmers Union

See: H.L. Mitchell. 1979. Mean Things Happening in This Land: The Life and Times of H.L. Mitchell, Cofounder of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union. Montclair, NJ.

Donald H. Grubbs. 1971. Cry from the Cotton: The Southern Tenant Farmers Union and the New Deal. Chapel Hill: UNC Press.

Howard Kester. 1969. Revolt among Sharecroppers. New York, NY.

Week five: Federal Policy and Farm Labor to the World War II

Readings: Steinbeck Especially Chapters 10-19
Hahamovitch pp. 182-204

Special report: Early federal relief in farm labor camps during the Great Depression

Week six: "Thrown Away": NC tenants and agricultural changes

Reading: Flowers Preface, Introduction, Parts One and Two

Special Report: Tobacco: The Program, the Industry, and Mechanization

See: Daniel, Pete. 1985. Breaking the Land: The Transformation of Cotton, Tobacco, and Rice Cultures since 1880. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Week seven: “Working and Living and Getting By”

Readings: Flowers Part 3 and Epilogue
 Hellman Introduction and Chapter Five

Special Report: Two U.S. Economies: Rural and Urban Comparisons

See endnotes to Chapter 9 in Flowers, also, statistics and studies pertinent to your region and state.

Week eight: Mexican Lives: Reasons why Mexicans Work on Farms in the U.S.

Readings: Hellman pp. 113-232
 Buss Introduction and pp. 1-44

Film: “Milagritos”

Week nine: Farmworker Lives

Readings: Rothenberg Chapters 1-3 (pp. 1-90)
 Buss Part 1 (pp. 45 - 104)

Speaker: Farmworker/ Advocate

Week ten: Contracts and Borders

Readings: Rothenberg Chapters 4-6 (pp. 91-180)
 Buss Part 1 (pp. 105 - 150)

Week eleven: Farmworker Lives Today

Readings: Rothenberg: Chapter 7 (pp. 181-204)
 SAF's Fields Without Borders all
 Buss Part 2 (pp. 151 - 260)

Film: “Cruceros y Caminos” (available through Student Action with Farmworkers)

Week twelve: Farmworker Politics and Unions

Readings: Rothenberg Chapters 8 & 9 (pp. 205-271)
 Buss Part 3 (pp. 261 - 302)

Also article on Mt. Olive Pickle Boycott and the Farm Labor Organizing Committee

Guest Speaker: Union organizer

Week thirteen: NAFTA, the Food Chain, and our Place in it

Readings: Rothenberg pp. 323-326
 Brandt pp. 36-58, 62-76, 238-247, 250-259

Week fourteen: Class Presentations of Documentary Projects and Journals

Reading: Steinbeck (remainder), especially chapters 28-30