



# The Political Ecology of Pandemics

**GLOBAL IMPACTS OF INDUSTRIAL  
FOOD SYSTEMS**

PhD course organised by  
SUM Research School at the Centre for Development  
and the Environment

**9- 11 August 2021**  
**Application deadline: 15 march 2021**



UiO : Centre for Development and the Environment  
University of Oslo

## Course Description

The objective of this interdisciplinary PhD course is to critically approach the relationship between food production and food consumption and pandemics in an environmental perspective. This involves addressing issues like the links between global food and fodder production and the transformation of rural areas. We will focus on how ecosystems and small-scale food production have changed to industrial and hyper-industrial scales; explore the aspirations of consumers in the West and in countries with emerging economies; address the ongoing changes in the global organization of labor, and focus on its environmental impacts.

The Covid-19 pandemic has made governments, health organizations and citizens in general painfully aware of the entanglement of changing patterns of food production and consumption and lethal pathogens. Problematizing evolving ideas regarding the relationship between food and pandemics, both communicable and non-communicable, can open new ways to understand global capitalism and its effects. Accordingly, pandemics are a highly relevant starting point to study the global political and economic systems related to the food industry. As food production, and particularly meat production, turns ever-more global, new relationships between humans, animals and, increasingly, pathogens evolve. The social, economic and environmental impact is high, and future sustainability depends on how these relationships are managed.

Against this backdrop the course will address questions such as:

- What are the relations between the global food system and pandemics?
- How can perspectives from political ecology and environmental humanities contribute to new ways of thinking about non-humans in the relationship between food production and pandemic entanglements?
- How have local and national environmental histories shaped and been shaped by industrial systems for food production (and meat in particular), and what are the consequences for animal and human health, welfare and wellbeing at large?
- How are food production systems organized in terms of labor and how do workers in industrial food production cope with pandemic outbreaks and their aftermaths?

SUM is organizing this course in cooperation with the Norwegian Researcher School in Environmental Humanities ([NoRS-EH](#)), and the Norwegian [Political Ecology Network](#) (POLLEN-Norway).





## Learning outcomes

Students will:

- Obtain a nuanced understanding of the links between food production and – consumption and pandemics both empirically and theoretically;
- Be well acquainted with the major theoretical and empirical approaches to studying food production and consumption at local, national and global levels;
- Engage in critical discussion, become acquainted with the work of others on food production and food consumption and build networks within their chosen field of research.

## Lecturers

- **Tony Weis**, Western University, Canada
- **Frédéric Keck**, Fellow, CNRF, France
- **Karen Lykke Syse**, SUM, University of Oslo, Norway
- **Timothy Pachirat**, University of Massachusetts, US

## Objectives and Focus

The course will enable doctoral students to better understand key concepts, debates and perspectives.

In addition to lectures, the course will allow those conducting Ph.D. research to present their own work and comment on that of others, guided by senior experienced academics who are themselves working in this field.

Course capacity: 20 students

Language of instruction: English

Syllabus: Approximately 1000 pages of compulsory readings.



# Application

## Who may apply?

The interdisciplinary nature of the course will be most suitable for doctoral students engaging with different disciplines within the social sciences – such as anthropology, sociology, political science, geography, and development studies, as well as doctoral students working within the various branches of environmental humanities.

Doctoral students will be prioritized, although other applicants may be considered *if space permits*.

## Funding

The course is free.  
Lunches will be provided.

The organisers have some funds available to cover the cost of accommodation (meals not included) for selected students from outside Norway. Similarly, there is funding available for a limited number of travel scholarships for selected students. Please consult point 3 under 'Application procedures'.

Students who are members of the Norwegian School for Environmental Humanities (NoRS-EH) will have the costs of their travel and accommodation paid for by the school. Please indicate your status as a NoRS-EH member in your application cover letter (point 3 below). If you are not a member of NoRS-EH but are enrolled in a PhD program in Norway and doing an environmental humanities project, you are urged to apply for membership in NoRS-EH (see <https://www.uis.no/nb/NoRS-EH> for more details).

## Application procedures

Interested students should state their motivation and upload the following via the Application Form:

1. **A cover letter** signed by your Ph.D. supervisor or another person at your institution/workplace, stating your academic background and academic degree(s) held, your research interests and current research projects (if any), including estimated date of submission of doctoral thesis.
2. **CV**
3. Students from outside Norway may apply for a modest travel scholarship and/or accommodation support, by **uploading a separate document** along with their course application. If you wish to apply for a travel scholarship, please also attach a **budget** based on minimum cost travel.



Applications are invited from **January 11th 2021**.

The application deadline is **March 15th 2021**.

An early application is highly recommended due to space constraints. Successful applicants will be contacted by **April 10th 2021**.

## Preparations

A major purpose of the course is to provide participants with comments on their on-going work. It is therefore obligatory for all participants to submit a draft paper which will be discussed during the course.

The paper should be approximately 10 pages long (4000 - 5000 words, excluding the bibliography). You should submit a paragraph attached to the paper where you specify what you need feedback on, where you are in the process and what your ideas for publishing are.

Students who are admitted to the course should submit their draft paper electronically to the course secretariat by 4 June 2021.

This paper may be revised and resubmitted for evaluation and approval after the course (please consult the section on 'Credits' below).

All draft paper submissions will be posted on the course's password protected intranet site. All participants are required to read draft papers for their allocated working groups in advance and provide feedback during the course. (You may of course read others as you wish.)

## Syllabus and programme

A complete reading list (with links to online publications, when possible) of approximately 1000 pages will be available on the course's intranet site by April 19th 2021. Participants are expected to read the syllabus in advance of the course. Participants are expected to attend morning and afternoon sessions, and evening sessions when relevant, on all three days.





## Credits

Course participants will receive a Course Certificate, recommending either 10 or 3 ECTS credits, but your own institution must approve credits for the course. We therefore recommend that you contact your Ph.D. coordinator about the issue of credits prior to your participation.

For a Certificate recommending 10 credits, a revised paper of 15 – 20 pages (6000 – 8000 words) must be submitted to the course organisers no later than 8 weeks after completion of the course, and the paper must be graded with 'pass'. (The paper will be evaluated by a course lecturer and assessed within eight weeks after submission).

3 ECTS credits will be recommended for those who participate in full but choose not to submit a revised paper for evaluation (or for those whose revised paper does not pass).

## A note on Covid-19

We would like to give this PhD-course physically here in Oslo rather than online. Due to the unpredictable nature of Covid-19 and restrictions that differ geographically, we understand that this might be difficult to achieve both for us and for participants. Because of this, we are planning for both options, hoping to be able to welcome lecturers and PhD-students if and when this is possible, while planning for an online option if needs be.

## Contact information

Should you have any practical enquiries, please do not hesitate to email the course secretariat [pandefood2021@sum.uio.no](mailto:pandefood2021@sum.uio.no)

Please check for updated information at [the Ph.D. course's web pages](#) at the Centre for Development and the Environment (SUM).