Description
What is the proper place of nature and agriculture in cities? How do cities shape nature, and vice versa? Where do—and where should—city-dwellers get their food? “Concrete jungles” (as opposed to “real” ones) often seem to be purely human-built, unnatural places where things are made and consumed, not grown. But the place of nature in cities, and our relationship to it, has long been contested. When we look at food in relationship to urban centers, we end up seeing far beyond the questions of what we eat and where we get it. The proper place of nature in cities is at the heart of many contemporary debates over urban policy, including food and agriculture, land use, disaster policy, and immunization. In this class, we will think historically and critically about these debates both in the past and in contemporary cities, focusing, though not exclusively, on North America, especially New York. Readings will include William Cronon, Ted Steinberg, Catherine McNeur, Katherine Leonard Turner, and others.

Learning goals
• Students will be introduced to, consider, and learn major themes in urban environmental and food history.
• Students will learn the historical background of and develop a critical analysis of questions of urban land use, urban agriculture, and other questions of urban policy.
• Students will practice their research, analytical, and academic writing skills.

Required texts
In general, we’ll be reading about large chunks of books each week—about 150 pages per week. Those books in which we will be reading at least 100 pages—which is to say, most of them—are listed below, are available for purchase at the NYU Bookstore, and are on reserve at Bobst. Selections of less than 100 pages will be scanned and available on NYU Classes. If you are concerned about spending too much on books, I encourage you to shop around online for used books (use the ISBN listed below). You can also come talk to me and I’ll help you figure out some strategies.

Assignments and grading

Class participation and discussion – 20% of your final grade
The purpose of class participation is not only to show that you have done the reading assigned, but also to help yourself and your classmates better understand the readings and the issues discussed in them. In addition, class participation provides practice for the skill of engaging in honest, respectful, and thoughtful intellectual discussion. The point of discussion is quality, not quantity; you don’t get points each time you open your mouth, and the person who talks once but says something brilliant that moves the discussion forward is more appreciated than the person who talks every five minutes but never says anything useful. That said, you can’t participate well if you never participate, so you can’t be silent; if I don’t know the sound of your voice by the end of the term, you’re unlikely to get a good class participation grade. Likewise, you can’t participate if you’re not in class, so please prioritize attendance.

Reading responses – 10% of your final grade
Each Tuesday, you will also bring to class a short (approximately 250 words, or one page) reading response. This isn’t a paper, and it won’t be graded as a paper. It’s a way to make you think about the reading before you come to class, to get your intellectual juices flowing, and to practice writing. In each reading response, you should think about the argument of what you have just read and assess its success. These papers will be graded check-plus (10/10), check (9/10), or check-minus (8/10). This means that the only way you can get less than an 8 out of the 10 possible points in this section is by failing to turn in your reading responses. Note that because the point of the reading response is to think about the readings before class, late reading responses will not be accepted; if for whatever reason you can’t turn in your reading response on paper (you aren’t in class, you have a printer emergency) please email it to me by the time class starts.

Presentation – 15% of your final grade
Each week, you (or in some cases, you and a colleague) will be in charge of presenting the reading to your classmates. For that week (we’ll pick the first session of class) you will be responsible for presenting the reading and its key issues to the class. Don’t just summarize the reading; put it into the context of the course. Prepare some discussion questions that you think will spark a good conversation. Bring a handout for your classmates; the handout
should serve as a reference and help spark conversation among your classmates, but it can otherwise have whatever you want on it. The best judge of your success as a presenter will be the quality of the discussion that follows.

**Final paper – 30% of your final grade**
The primary project will be a research paper on a relevant topic of your choice. Your paper can be on any relevant topic in urban history and studies, environmental history and studies, food history and studies, or (hopefully) the intersection of these three/six things, but it must require primary source research, advance an argument, and contain your original analysis. It should be roughly 20 pages long (plus a bibliography), include Chicago/Turabian style footnotes, and have a title. In keeping with the Gallatin ethos you may propose a different sort of final project as long as it has a major research and analysis component; if you are interested in doing this come and talk to me in office hours.

To help you prepare for your final paper, you will do three preliminary assignments:

- **Proposal – 10%** Write about two pages proposing your topic. Explain what you want to write about (what questions you will ask), how you plan to research it, and why it is a good topic.

- **Annotated bibliography – 10%** Prepare a bibliography of at least seven scholarly secondary sources. Cite them in proper Chicago/Turabian bibliography format and then write four or five sentences about their argument, their evidence, and their relevance to your topic.

- **Draft introduction – 5%** Write a draft of your paper’s introduction. Be sure to (a) include a clear thesis, (b) start with an engaging “hook,” and (c) lay out a signpost of what you intend to do in the paper and how.

**Recommended texts**
These are books that, because we have a limited number of weeks, I cut out of the syllabus. Depending on your research topic and interests, you might find them helpful or interesting.

- Andrea Gaynor, *Harvest of the Suburbs: An Environmental History of Growing Food in Australian Cities* (Crawley: University of Western Australia Press, 2006).

**Course schedule**

*January 25 – Introduction*
no reading

February 1 – Thinking about nature in New York

February 8 – Nature into commodities

February 15 – Animals and space in New York

February 22 – Cities, nature, and state simplification

Part 2: Eating in cities

March 1 – Milk
  - Paper proposal due

March 8 – Working-class food I
  - We will meet at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum for a class on the food of the Lower East Side. Meet at 103 Orchard Street.

March 15 – No Class (Spring Break)

March 22 – Working-class food II
  - Annotated bibliography due.

Part 3: Taming Urban Nature

March 29 – Disease and public health

April 5 – Climate and disaster

**Part 4: Contemporary ideas about urban food and environment**

April 12 – Urban farming

April 19 – Wildness

- Draft introduction due

April 26 – Fish

- We will start the class with a guest presentation by Mr. Greenberg. Please be sure to come prepared with questions for him about the book and his argument.

May 3 – Detroit
The five readings below are all linked to on NYU Classes.

- David Whitford, "Can Farming Save Detroit?" *Fortune* (December 29, 2009)

May 9 (Tuesday) – Final papers due by 1:45. Please both email me your final paper and deliver a hard copy to my mailbox on the 5th floor by 1:45.

**Course policies**

**Attendance.** As described elsewhere in this syllabus, participation in class discussion is a key thing we do in this class. You can’t participate if you’re not in class. Therefore, attendance is required. Absences will be factored into your participation grade. It is always
better to come than not to come, if you can. If an absence is unavoidable, please email me ahead of time; depending on the circumstances, I will excuse your absence.

Electronic devices. Electronic devices can sometimes help and sometimes hinder active participation. They can be resources for looking things up; they might have your text on them; and they can be essential to students with disabilities. But they can also be distracting to you and to your classmates (and your professor!). Texting, IMing, or otherwise playing on your devices shows a lack of respect for the others in the room. (So too, for that matter, do things that do not require electronics, like reading the newspaper or sitting at the table reading a novel.) While you are welcome to have your computer or other device for class related work while in class, please refrain from checking your email, IMing, texting, playing games, tweeting, or otherwise using your screens for non-class purposes. The general rule is, Don’t be rude.

Academic integrity. As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the university. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website (http://gallatin.nyu.edu/about/bulletin/undergrad/policies/integrity.html).

Beyond the above boilerplate warning, the best rule is: When in doubt, cite. This admonition isn’t just about following the rules. To be convincing, arguments must be based in fact, and in order to assess facts the reader must know from whence they came. Academic dishonesty also robs you of the education you’re here for; if you don’t do the work you’re supposed to do, you don’t get the educational experiences you’re supposed to get. If you have questions about what constitutes academic dishonesty or plagiarism, ask.

Deadlines and extensions. Written work must be turned in on time. Reading responses will not be accepted late under any circumstances; all other work that is turned in late will be marked down a third of a grade per day; that is, a paper turned in a day late that would otherwise have gotten an A- will get a B+. If a legitimate delay is unavoidable, you can ask for an extension, but you must ask for one no less than 24 hours before the deadline.

Office hours and help. I encourage you to come to my office and chat about history, the class, or about anything else. No appointment is necessary during office hours. If you want to meet outside my office hours, feel free to email me for an appointment and we’ll make something work. You’re also welcome to email me about anything else at jacob.remes@nyu.edu (but please don’t expect a fast response on weekends). Always, the rule is, if you don’t understand something, or if you’re having trouble, ask for help, whether in class, by email, or in office hours.

Academic assistance. What we’re trying to do here is think about hard things in a supportive environment. This course is supposed to be difficult (if it’s not, complain to me
and we'll fix it!) but I also want to be supportive. Giving you help is my job. But I'm not the only one you can turn to for help. I strongly encourage you to make use of the Gallatin Writing Center at every stage of your writing, from conceiving of your paper to your final revisions. See http://gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/undergraduate/writing/writingcenterappointments.html for more details, or email Sam Patwell at smp725@nyu.edu. The general rule, whether for reading or writing or researching, is, **If you're having trouble, ask for help.** That's what I'm here for. If for whatever reason you don’t want to talk to me, reach out to your academic advisor or to your first-year class advisor. The most important thing is not to suffer in silence and to make use of the many NYU and Gallatin resources that exist to help you.

**Disabilities.** New York University is committed to providing equal educational opportunity and participation for students with disabilities. It is the University's policy that no qualified student with a disability be excluded from participating in any University program or activity, denied the benefits of any University program or activity, or otherwise subjected to discrimination with regard to any University program or activity. If you have a disability and need accommodation, the first step is to talk to the Moses Center for Students for Disabilities. You can contact them at 212-998-4980 or email mosescsd@nyu.edu; see http://www.nyu.edu/life/safety-health-wellness/students-with-disabilities.html for more information. Before or after you speak with the Moses Center, I am happy to talk to you about accommodating you.