

# The Natural Food Industry and the Cooperative Business Model

Portland State University Senior Capstone  
Community Partner: **People's Food Cooperative**

Summer 2012, 6 credits

## \* SYLLABUS \*

### Professor

Pedro Ferbel-Azcarate, Ph.D.  
PSU Black Studies Department  
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### Class Meeting Time & Place (See Calendar for details)

UNST 421-543 - CRN #81816: Mondays and Wednesdays: 11.45- 1.35 PM: NH 381

UNST 421-550 - CRN #82807: Mondays and Wednesdays: 2.00- 3.50 PM: NH 382

and on-site at People's Food Coop 3029 SE 21<sup>st</sup> Ave (503) 232 9051

- NOTE that this class meets in different places according to the class calendar—be sure to check the meeting places for each class! When we meet at other locations, you will have an additional 15 minutes to arrive and depart. Public transportation makes it easy! See <http://www.trimet.org/>

### Office Hours

By appointment. Contact instructor.

### Course Description

This Capstone will provide an orientation to the cooperative business model and the natural food industry. Students will gain hands on experience working with the community partner, People's Food Cooperative, on various food system and food industry related inquiries. We will address different business strategies in the natural food industry and for cooperative businesses, specifically, and make the connection to broader themes including health and nutrition, food security and food politics, environmental, social and economic sustainability, urban design, and community development.

### University Studies Learning Goals

The Senior Capstone focuses on the University Studies learning goals of **critical thinking, communication, ethics and the diversity of the human experience**. Students should read the Capstone guidebook and the UNST link at <http://pdx.edu/unst/capstone.html> and be familiar with these goals.

### Class Specific Learning Goals

- \* Introduce students to the complexities and challenges of healthy communities, related to urban design, society and food systems.
- \* Orient students to the particular history and culture of cooperative businesses and the natural food industry.
- \* Provide students with ethnographic tools to successfully interact with individuals, groups and cultural landscapes, and be able to document and analyze their observations and communicate them to others.
- \* Gain a cultural sensitivity to be able to work with and understand the experiences of a diverse community of people.
- \* Learn environmental and social ethics related to sustainable agriculture, land use, and food issues.
- \* Apply experiences into a final presentation which demonstrates strong communication skills, critical thinking and reflection.
- \* Learn skills working with others, especially related to taking initiative and communicating in a direct and timely manner.

### Overview of Coursework

Coursework for the capstone will be a combination of reading assignments, fieldwork, reflection assignments, and a final group project.

This is your 6 credit Capstone class, the culmination of your PSU career! Expect this class to demand a little more of your time and energy than any other class you have taken at PSU. Students are expected to be critically engaged in the class and in the field. Attendance and participation count! Please contact instructor if you know you will be missing a class so you do not fall behind and so your absence does not adversely affect your grade.

Students should expect to spend approximately 12 hours/week outside of class working on this Capstone, including time spent on homework, readings and project fieldwork. You will find the class is weighted heavier with readings, tours and presentations at the beginning of the term. This is so you will have a solid foundation in the topical inquiry. The last few weeks of class are very flexible to allow for independent and group research toward the final project.

**Note:** while this class is demanding of your time and energy, students often report that it is the most rewarding experience of their academic career!

### **Attendance Policy**

Students are expected to attend class regularly and are strongly advised that they bear the sole responsibility for keeping current on readings, lectures, and notes.

Attendance will be noted and students may get a lower grade with any more than two unexcused (2) absences.

Tardiness is defined as arriving to class after the scheduled start time. If students have a conflict, which prevents them from attending class or arriving on time, they are advised to speak directly with the instructor so they do not suffer grade reductions for tardiness.

Portland State University policy for religious holy days: "Any student who, because of religious beliefs, is unable to attend classes on a particular day shall be excused from attendance requirements and from any examination or other assignment on that day. The student shall make up the examination or other assignment missed because of the absence. Students should make arrangements with their instructors prior to the holy day."

### **Reading Assignments**

The required book will be available for purchase at the PSU bookstore; optional books at Powell's.

"Food Inc.: A Participant Guide" edited by Karl Weber (REQUIRED)

"Hungry Planet: What the World Eats" by Peter Menzel and Faith D'Aluisio (Optional)

"Omnivore's Dilemma" by Michael Pollan (optional)

"In Defense of Food" by Michael Pollan (optional)

A short course pack of required readings will also be available at Smart Copy on 6<sup>th</sup> Ave.

### **Written Reflection Assignments**

Students will complete five written assignments during the course. Assignments will be geared toward assisting students in background field work and in reflective analysis. They will be drawn on as the basis for group discussions in class. Students are expected to finish assignments at the time they are due in the class calendar. It is the student's responsibility to make sure professor has received your work.

### **Service Learning Capstone Projects**

We will be working with our community partner, People's Food Cooperative, on various business related inquiries including financial analyses, marketing studies, and plans for short and long term growth. Students will organize into small working groups of 3-4 members based on their interests and expertise, and work toward specific project goals. These teams will pursue work as a group during the term, and, together as a whole class, will produce a final group project at the end of the course. Each of the project teams will be using some communicative medium (video, power point, photos etc) toward the final project "product."

**Note:** These projects involve student-centered learning. The success or failure of projects is literally in your hands. Communication between students and groups will be essential and the professor will help facilitate student group success. Individuals and groups must be aware that their acceptance of job tasks means they are responsible for performing those tasks or communicating their inability to perform those tasks as soon as possible. Communicate early and often!

**Assignment of Grades**

Students will be graded on a combination of individual written work, group and class participation, and engagement with the community partner.

- 20%** assignments
- 25%** group / class participation, including attendance, tardiness, and engagement, and check in with professor
- 25%** engagement with the community and community partner organization
- 30%** final project and final group report with reflection
- 100%**

**Note** that the State Board of Higher Education and PSU prohibits all forms of academic cheating, fraud, and dishonesty, including but not limited to plagiarism, buying and stealing of course assignments and research papers, performing academic assignments by other person, unauthorized disclosure and receipt of academic information, and such other practices commonly understood to be academically dishonest. The instructor reserves the right to assign a grade of F to any student who is academically dishonest.

**Disclaimer / Proclaimer**

We will follow seminar guidelines to keep our classroom a safe place, including no interrupting when someone is talking, asking clarifying questions as opposed to arguing, etc. Students will be mindful of our different personal experiences, understandings, backgrounds and positions as individuals that make us different as human beings. In the interest of openness, and in accordance with the constitutional right to free speech, students are encouraged to write and speak freely. However, the value of judgments and analysis in this class is based on merit and not on any prejudicial practice. Ultimately, the safety of our learning environment is more important than any student’s perceived right to free speech—we will caution on the side of no student ever feeling insulted in their place of learning.

Students are expected to act professionally and cooperatively with their fellow students and with our community partner (see Capstone handbook). Students are expected to communicate any conflicts with other students or with community members to the instructor as soon as possible. All students are encouraged to speak with the instructor during office hours to ask questions, clarify or seek ways to more effectively communicate their point of view or understand others’.

**Accommodations**

If you are a student with a disability, please contact the course instructor immediately to facilitate arranging academic accommodations.

**People’s Capstone Summer Term 2012 Calendar**

<b>WHEN?</b>	<b>WHERE?</b>	<b>WHAT?</b>	<b>DUE TODAY?</b>
Mon, June 25	P.S.U.	1 <sup>st</sup> day of class! Introductions and orientation; food issues and coop businesses; letters from former Capstone students.	Initial impressions, expectations for grades

Wed, June 27	People's (exact location to be announced)  (People's Harvest Festival!!!)	People's welcome to coops and orient. to Capstone projects from Shawn Furst, Development Manager  Hand out Assignment 1	Read syllabus very carefully! Check out <a href="http://www.peoples.coop">www.peoples.coop</a> website.  Readings: "We own it" from course pack; Hungry Planet: through Mc. Slow page 95
Mon, July 2	P.S.U.	Discuss course expectations, food issues, final projects; consensus decision making; group guidelines.	Watch "Super Size Me" at <a href="http://www.freedocumentaries.org">www.freedocumentaries.org</a>  Readings: <u>Food Inc.</u> Chs 1 and 2
Wed, July 4  —— [Sat, July 7]	Holiday!  —— [People's]	P.S.U. closed  —— [People's Annual Meeting]	Declare your food independence!  —— [Extra Credit!]
Mon, July 9	P.S.U.	Discuss assignment 1; hand out Assignments 2 and 3; assemble preliminary groups!	Assignment 1 Due;  Readings: "Organicize Me!" on line; Hungry Planet: through Food with a Face, page 163
Wed, July 11	People's	Shawn Furst, People's Development Manager, Develop and submit project proposals; finalize groups.	Readings: <u>Food Inc.</u> Chs 3-5  Assignment 2 due
Mon, July 16	P.S.U.	Film: "King Corn"	Readings: <u>Food Inc.</u> Chs 6-8
Wed, July 18	P.S.U.	Student Projects; "King Corn" extra: Big River	Readings: "Checking out of Supermarkets" from coursepack
Mon, July 23	Food Front Food Coop— 2375 NW Thurman St,	Tour: Cassandra Black, Grocery Buyer	Assignment 3 due

Wed, July 25	People's	Labor, Coops and Fair trade Film: "Black Gold"	Readings: <u>Food Inc.</u> Chs 9-10
Mon, July 30	P.S.U.	Animals and Omnivores The Meatrix; Student Projects	Readings: finish Hungry Planet
Wed, Aug 1	People's	Project Progress Reports and Midterm Assessments	
Mon, Aug 6	P.S.U.	Film: "Food Inc."	Readings: <u>Food Inc</u> Chs. 11-13
Wed, Aug 8	t.b.a.		
Mon, Aug 13	P.S.U.	Powerpoint: the future of food	Assignment 4 Due
Wed, Aug 15	People's	Final rough draft! hand out Final Reflection Assignment	Project draft due
Mon, Aug 20	People's	Final Public Presentations	Last day of class; Final reflection Assignment due