GCSC Seminar Series

October 18, 2016
4:00-5:00 PM

Julie Guthman
University of California Santa Cruz, Program in Community Studies, Division of Social Sciences

"Pathogens, Plant Breeding, Chemicals, Land, and Workers in the Making and Unmaking of California’s Strawberry Industry"
Abstract

The early twentieth century appearance of the soil pathogen, Verticillium dahliae, in California strawberry production brought an entire assemblage of institutions, innovations, and practices into being. Together, these made for a highly profitable strawberry industry and nearly year-round consumption of affordable berries. But several of the key ingredients of the industry’s success – plant breeding, soil fumigation, coastal land, and abundant, cheap labor have morphed into threats, particularly with tighter regulatory restrictions on soil fumigants and the appearance of more virulent pathogens. These threats portend major changes in strawberry production, precisely because they concatenate with each another. Professor Guthman’s talk will describe this co-evolution and then discuss potential ways forward.

Bio

Julie Guthman is a geographer and professor of social sciences at the University of California at Santa Cruz where she teaches courses primarily in global political economy and the politics of food and agriculture. She has published extensively on contemporary efforts to transform how food is produced, distributed, and consumed, with a particular focus on voluntary food labels, community food security, farm-to-school programs, and the race, class and body politics of “alternative food.” Her publications include two multi-award winning books: Agrarian Dreams: the Paradox of Organic Farming in California and Weighing In: Obesity, Food Justice, and the Limits of Capitalism, and she is the recipient of the 2015 Excellence in Research Award from the Agriculture, Food and Human Values Society. Her current research is examining how California’s strawberry industry is contending with tighter regulatory restrictions on soil fumigants.