

Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology

SPEAKER SERIES

PhD Proposal Presentation

Exploring Female Farmer Identity formation in post-pandemic Canadian Agriculture

Alexa Avelar

Over the past 30 years, the total number of farm operators in Canada has decreased substantially, yet the number of female farm operators has increased, operating around one third of all farms across Canada. As farm operators and as part of farm households, women play essential roles in agricultural production but continue to face gender discrimination and other gendered barriers to success within the industry. Farming is historically patriarchal and is still male-dominated; more importantly for my thesis, farming identities – what it means to be a “farmer” – tend to be masculine-coded. That is, the stereotypical or imagined farmer is a man. This matters because the formulation of a farming identity is central to the work and lifestyle of farming and might be what helps farmers persist through challenging times like the post-pandemic state of agriculture today. In my doctoral thesis, I will examine how women farmers approach and handle gendered barriers within agriculture, exploring what kinds of farms they operate, *how* they operate them, and ultimately, how these experiences inform the development of women’s farming identity in comparison to men. Thus, I pose two questions: 1) how do women develop a farming identity within a male-dominated and historically patriarchal field? 2) Are women’s approaches to farming different than men’s? If so, how and why? To address these questions, I will interview women and men, focusing on their experiences and motivations in farming, using a thorough, multi-layered methodological approach in order to produce an analysis of identity formation, paying careful attention to my own interpretation, their own narratives, their relationships with others, and the overarching relations of structural and social forces that create and frame their stories.

Friday, October 10th, 2025

2:30 p.m., McCain #1116

All Welcome!