**What Your Food Ate**

Summary of Themes in the Introduction

Many foods such as carrots and beef do not have the same level of nutrients that were in them back when your grandparents were kids. Such nutritional declines are reported in fruits, vegetables, grains, meats, and dairy.

Farming practices have changed dramatically in the past century and this has reduced levels of beneficial compounds in our diet, and some of these changes mean that our present diets can create more inflammation and give less protection against cancers.

While society argues about what we should eat more of and less of, we rarely talk about how foods are grown and how that affects our health. One reason is that we are only now learning about that – in particular, how diverse microbial life in soils benefits the healthiness of our diet.

Livestock health is shaped by the nutritional quality of the feeds eaten, which is shaped by soil health.

Routine plowing and liberal use of fertilizers have helped drive the problems of degraded soil health and declining nutrients in food. *Yes, it seems like a paradox*. Italicized words is instructor remark.

The more farmers have come to rely on synthetic inputs instead of beneficial soil life, the more farmers need the former and lose the latter.

The good news is that there are practical, cost-effective ways for farmers to promote soil life and harvest healthier food, known as regenerative farming practices. This is a story about the way health flows to us from the land.

Regenerative farming practices, once established, can actually lower farm expenses. By using them they can rely on biological practices building organic matter and support soil life and fertility.

This book addresses the question: How good are modern farming practices – which have degraded our soils - for our health? To answer that, we need to acknowledge and account for the other factors that affect our health too.

One reason that we tend not to be aware of nutritional declines in our food is that we have almost solved growing enough to feed us all, and *nutritional shortfalls are more of a distributional problem* (italicized remark from your instructor).

Relying on our own innate nutritional wisdom to help us what to buy in a supermarket is a fraught proposition, partly due to modern marketing and the ubiquity of highly processed foods.

Not even eating food produced organically is necessarily a sure way to get the best nutrition possible.

There are other problems, both environmental and social, which modern agriculture makes worse, such as climate change and downstream water pollution.

This book will explore soil science, microbiology, human biology and nutritional science to make the case that for plants, animals, and people alike, the roots of health grow from healthy soil.