The concept of the food desert describes areas of low-income, limited access to grocery stores and barriers to retail food outlets that stock nutritious affordable, adequate and culturally appropriate foods. In recent years critical geographers have sought to deepen our understanding of the food desert problem by drawing attending to particular historical and spatial dynamics associated with food distribution, the rise of private retail concentration, and changes in nutritional entitlements that shape access to food in the United States and abroad. In this presentation Dr. Bradley Wilson, Associate Professor of Geography at West Virginia University presents his geographic research on the food desert problem in Appalachia and how theorizing the relationship between food access, justice, and rights can enable us to rethink the contours of this pernicious problem in rural America. Drawing on his experience in agro-food studies, geographic information science and action research, Wilson introduces the concept of “spatialized food justice” to advance both an understanding of nutritional disparities as well as the importance of greater democratic control over place-based foodways, the retail landscape and our freedom to use nutritional entitlements.

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