

Political Science 135: The Politics of Food and Agriculture

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Subject/Discipline: [Political Science](#)

School: [University of Pennsylvania](#)

Project Area: [Hunger & Homelessness](#); [Health](#)

Spring 2006

The Politics of Food and Agriculture

PSCI/HSOC 135-301 ABCS and Fox Leadership Program Seminar

Monday 3-6

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Leadership Hall, rm 20

3814 Walnut St (entrance is on side of left side of building)

From THE JUNGLE to FAST FOOD NATION, this academically based community service seminar will explore the politics that have shaped food production, consumption and problems like food insecurity and obesity here in West Philadelphia and around the world. Students will be encouraged to think broadly about how people define their interests, ideas, goals and strategies in the many different arenas and institutions that shape the politics of food: farms, factories, families, markets, marketing, migration, legislatures, bureaucracies, research and health care institutions, and social movements. The primary focus will be on the American politics and institutions that have shaped –and resisted-- the industrialization of food and agriculture; but there will also be opportunities for students to develop international and comparative perspectives on these issues. In the course of the semester students will develop their own research and writing projects related to some aspect of the politics of food and agriculture.

Community Service

Students in this course may participate in one of four established community service projects. The first is a food stamp enrollment campaign led by the Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger. If the food stamp program were more fully utilized, it would bring millions more dollars in federal funds to low-income households and neighborhoods. Students working with this campaign will be trained to screen clients for

food stamp eligibility and assist with the food stamp application process at sites in low-income neighborhoods (health centers, Career Links). You will generally be expected to work at your site at a time that fits your schedule 2 hours a week. The Campaign will also be sponsoring “food stamp fairs” at grocery stores fairs in low-income neighborhoods and developing some materials about food stamps for immigrant communities. Excellent project for students interested in issues related to poverty, food insecurity, immigration, low wage work, and government support programs. The instructor and Campaign staff will work with students interested in using the significant Campaign Data base to look at obstacles to food stamp enrollment. For more information and to get enrolled in the trainings, contact Cindy Eisenberg, the volunteer coordinator, at ceisenberg@hungercoalition.org (215-430-0555). For more information about the Coalition and the Campaign, check their web site at <http://www.hungercoalition.org>.

The second service project is with an American history social studies class of tenth graders, taught by Mr. Bruce Poulson in the Eco-Tech Division at University City High School a few blocks from Penn on Tuesdays from 11:30 to 12:30. You should also be available for occasional meetings with Mr. Poulson on Tuesdays at 10:30. You will work with small groups of students in this class for an hour one day a week on projects that use historical documents to relate “the politics of food” to the Progressive and New Deal eras. You will also attend weekly planning sessions with Ashley Johnson (ashleyj@sas.upenn.edu), who will be coordinating this project and attend some additional meetings with Mr. Poulson to discuss how to work most effectively with his students. This and the following community service project are excellent opportunities for students interested in developing relationships with inner-city high school students that would allow them greater insight on a variety of research projects: for example, the “school food environment”; the impact of media and marketing and/or food availability (fast food outlets vs. grocery stores) on food choices and habits; the history of the school lunch program and opportunities for better nutrition and constraints that impact school lunch programs; the teenage experience of low wage work in fast food and other food related industries.

The third community service opportunity involves working on Tuesdays and/or Thursdays from 1-2 with an English class of ninth graders taught by Ms. Lynn Johnson at Sayre High School in an Urban Nutrition Initiative project that seeks to promote health awareness with a special focus on the media and the impact of commercials on nutritional health. You will be working with the students to analyze food and beverage commercials as well as on developing their own story-board “commercials” for healthy food. You will also attend weekly planning sessions with Kaveri Arora (kaveria@sas.upenn.edu), who will be coordinating this project. Ms. Johnson will also be available for consultations about how to work most effectively with her students. This community service project will be especially useful for students interested in analyzing the impact of media and marketing on food choice, nutrition, and the obesity epidemic. For more information about the Urban Nutrition Initiative, consult their web site at <http://urbannutrition.org>.

FarmEcology is an effort initiated by students who took this course last year to work with Penn Dining Services and Aramark to introduce more locally grown food on campus.

You will be working with them on a campus-wide education campaign to increase student interest in the nutritional and environmental benefits of local food. These efforts will include sponsoring a Local Foods Spring Dinner at one of the dining halls and the development of a fundraising calendar that highlights local foods and recipes, as well as maintaining and expanding the local food “farm stand” in Houston Market and the appearance of local foods in the Penn dining halls on a regular basis. For more information, contact Emma Kirwan (evkirwan@sas.upenn.edu) or see the FarmEcology web site: <http://snacks.dining.upenn.edu/farmecology/links.htm>. Participation in this community service project will represent an important opportunity to analyze the environmental and social values associated with “local” and “organic” food, the potential for “marketing” these values to your peers, and the institutional opportunities and constraints for impacting “food politics” represented by the purchasing and marketing power of a large institution like Penn.

For those of you who are already engaged in community service, it is often quite possible to relate this activity to “the politics of food”; and you are welcome to discuss this option with the instructor. You may also wish to pursue other options for community service; and again, you are welcome to do so in consultation with the instructor. For example, local soup kitchens and food cupboards will give you a chance to work with the people and needs currently served by emergency food institutions. (For information and schedule for University City Hospitality Coalition serving meals on/near Penn campus see <http://dolphin.upenn.edu/~soupkit/>.) **Greensgrow** is an urban farm, farmers’ market, and community supported agriculture project in Kensington. **Jobs with Justice and the Union of Food and Commercial Workers** are engaged in national and local organizing efforts to focus attention on how Wal-Mart is leading to a “race to the bottom” in terms of wages and benefits that have a big impact on workers and farmers in food related industries. The **Student/Farmworker Alliance** is a national group, working with the **Coalition of Immokalee workers**, a grassroots organization of immigrant farmworkers, to extend the gains made in their Taco Bell boycott victory to McDonalds, Burger King and Subway in an effort to use the enormous purchasing power of fast food industries to improve wages and working conditions for farmworkers. (www.sfalliance.org or www.ciw-online.org) Many volunteer activities with children

Requirements

- Participation in a community service project
- At least 50-100 pages of weekly reading
- One 3-5 page discussion paper on your family or campus “food ways”
- One 5-7 page midterm paper that states the argument/question to be explored in your final paper and evidence you will look at
- Final paper, 15-20 pages. Can be either a research paper on a topic of your choosing in consultation with the instructor, or a “discussion paper,” using course readings to make a significant argument with regard to the politics of food.
- 3-5 page analysis of community service
- Presentation (with a partner) of issues raised by readings for one class in the semester with emphasis on underlying debates

- 2 short reflections on class readings to be posted on class blackboard or emailed to instructor
- 2 short reflections on community service or food related events and experiences to be posted on class blackboard or emailed to instructor. (These reflections will not be individually graded but will count towards the class participation component of your grade.)

Students will have the option of receiving an additional independent study credit (PSCI or HSOC 199), if they commit to at least four hours a week on their community service work, a journal to be submitted weekly on black board or by email, and a relevant research paper or multi-media project. Examples of possible final projects include, but not limited to: an evaluation of the project; research on an issue important to the community organization you are working with; research on “best practices” in other states and cities with regard to a related issue; a proposal for a campaign or public policy initiative that might better address this issue; other options, as discussed with the instructor.

Grading: For PS/HSOC 135-301 your research paper or final exam will count for 40% of your grade; your class participation (including the overall quality of your reflection responses on reading and community service work) for 20%; your first discussion paper 10%, your community service analysis 10%, your midterm 20%.
Extra credit for students who post articles, links or summaries of food politics related issues from newspapers/web sites on Class Blackboard.

For PS/HSOC199, 40% of your grade will be based on your final project; 40% on your journal and reflections on your work and 20% on reports from project supervisors.

Readings

Required books:

Hassia R. Diner, Hungering for America: Italian, Irish, & Jewish Foodways in the Age of Migration (2001);

Upton Sinclair, The Jungle (1981 [1906]), bantam edition;

Eric Schlosser, Fast Food Nation (2001);

James L. Watson, ed. Golden Arches East;

Janet Poppendieck, Sweet Charity? Emergency Food and the End of Entitlement (1998);

Kelly Brownell, Food Fight, 2004

Susan Linn, Consuming Kids: Protecting our Children from the Onslaught of Marketing and Advertising

Steve Striffler, Chicken: the Dangerous Transformation of America’s Favorite Food, 2005.

These books have been ordered at House of Our Own bookstore, 3920 Spruce St., 215-222-1576.

All other readings will be included in a course packet which can be obtained at

Campus Copy Center, 3907 Walnut St., 215-386-6410.

Recommended books include Holly Hughes, Best Food Writing, 2005; Ruth Reichl, Tender at the Bone (1998); Ruth Ozeki, My Year of Meats and All Over Creation (2003); Walter Willett, Eat, Drink, and Be Healthy (2001); Marion Nestle, Food Politics, 2002; Kenwyn K. Smith, Manna in the Wilderness of Aids: Ten Lessons in Abundance (2002), Bill Lambrecht, Dinner at the New Gene Café (2001); Andrew Kimbrel, The Fatal Harvest Reader (2002); Tim Lang and Michael Heasman: Food Wars: The Global Battle for Mouths, Minds and Markets (2004)

Examples of Relevant Web Sites

Food First, <http://www.foodfirst.org>; Bread for the World, <http://www.bread.org>; Food Research Action Center, <http://www.frac.org>; Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, <http://iatp.org>; Rural Defenders and Family Farm Coalition, www.familyfarmer.org; U. S Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, <http://www.ers.gov>; <http://www.ers.gov/briefing/foodnutritionassistance/>, Slow Food Movement, www.slowfood.com; marketing to children, www.consumingkids.com; Center for Science in the Public Interest, www.cspinet.org; Center for Informed Eating has newsletter with much up-to-date information on conferences/research, etc. on Big Food, <http://www.informedeating.org>

COURSE CALENDAR

Week 1 Jan 9 PRESENTATION OF COMMUNITY SERVICE SITES;
INTRODUCTION TO COURSE THEMES AND REQUIREMENTS

Make sure to notify instructor, if taking independent study option by 1/13/06

Jan 16 MARTIN LUTHER KING HOLIDAY

Week 2 Jan 23 THE POLITICS OF FOOD AND THE IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE,
1900 I: *Class, gender, ethnicity and food consumption, 1820-1920*
Reading: Hasia Diner, *Hungering for America: Italian, Irish, & Jewish Foodways in the Age of Migration* (intro, conclusion, and chapters of your choice);

Week 3 Jan 30 THE POLITICS OF FOOD AND THE IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE,
1900 II: *Labor, industry and food safety*
Readings: Upton Sinclair, The Jungle (1906), Chapters 3, 5, 8, 9, 12-15, 29, 31

Week 4, Feb. 6 THE POLITICS OF FAST FOOD/GLOBAL FOOD, 2000: *Production, marketing and consumption of fast food in the U.S. and East Asia*
Readings: Eric Schlosser, FAST FOOD NATION, Introduction and chapters 1-2, Steve Striffler, CHICKEN, Introduction and chapters 1-2
James L. Watson, ed., GOLDEN ARCHES EAST (intro, afterword and chapters of your choice)

**** FIRST DISCUSSION PAPER DUE** (3-5 page analysis of some aspect of the "foodways" of your family or your meals while at college. Explore one or more of the factors that have shaped or changed what, where, and how you eat: ethnicity; religion/philosophical commitments; gender/family roles; nutrition/health concerns; money; taste; time and schedules; neighborhood and geography; family/community values and traditions; media influences; technology; etc)

Week 5, Feb. 13 FAST FOOD/GLOBAL FOOD, 2000: *Labor, industry, and food safety*
Readings: Eric Schlosser, Fast Food Nation (2002), Chapters, 3,7,8,9, Afterword
Steve Striffler, Chicken: The Dangerous Transformation of America's Favorite Food (2005), chapters 5, 6, 7

Week 6, Feb. 20 FAST FOOD/GLOBAL FOOD, 2000I: *Farms and farmers, crops and animals*
Readings: Wendell Berry, "Six Agricultural Fallacies," from Home Economics (1985) (bulk pack); Blake Hurst, "Up on the Farm," The Wilson Quarterly, Summer, 2003 (bulk pack); Michael Pollan, The Botany of Desire (2001), 185-248 (bulk pack); Michael Pollen, "Power Steer," NYT, March 31, 2002 (bulk pack)
Schlosser, Fast Food Nation, chapters 5-6
Striffler, Chicken, chapters 3-4

MIDTERM DUE (Argument/question you will explore in final paper; evidence you will examine)

Week 7, Feb. 27 THE POLITICS OF HUNGER IN THE U.S: *Government and grass roots policies and programs*
Readings: Janet Poppendieck, SWEET CHARITY? EMERGENCY FOOD AND THE END OF ENTITLEMENT, Introduction, chapters 1-3 7, and conclusion; George McGovern, The Third Freedom: Ending Hunger in Our Time (2001), 11-45; 69-82 (bulk pack)

March 6 SPRING BREAK

Week 8, March 13 THE POLITICS OF AGRICULTURE IN THE US: *Government policies and programs, research, interest groups, and social movements.*
Readings: Robert Paarlberg and Don Paarlberg, "Agricultural Policy in the Twentieth Century," Agricultural History, Spring, 2000, 136-161 (packet); Mary Summers, "From the Heartland to Seattle: The Family Farm Movement of the 1980's and the Legacy of Agrarian State Building," in Countryside in the Age of the Modern State, Stock and Johnston, eds., 2001, 304-326 (bulk pack); Michael Pollan, "The (Agri)Cultural Contradictions of Obesity, NYT, Oct. 12, 2003 (bulk pack); Kurt Eichenwald, "Redesigning Nature: Hard Lessons Learned; Biotechnology Food: From the Lab to a Debacle," New York Times, Jan. 25, 2001 (packet)

Week 9, March 20 THE OBESITY EPIDEMIC: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

Readings: Kelley Brownell and Katherine Battle Horgen, Food Fight: The Inside Story of the Food Industry, Americans' Obesity Crisis, and What We Can Do About It, Chapters 1-9.

Week 10, March 27 FOOD INDUSTRIES, MARKETING, REGULATION, CONSUMER ACTION AND REACTIONS

Readings: Susan Linn, Consuming Kids: Protecting Our Children from the Onslaught of Marketing and Advertising (2005), Introduction and chapters 1-3, 5-6, 9-12; Schlosser, Fast Food Nation, chapter 10; Striffler, Chicken, chapter 8; Brownell and Horgen, Food Fight, chapters 10-11

****COMMUNITY SERVICE ANALYSIS DUE (3-5 pages)**

Week 11, April 3 GLOBAL AND LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS

Readings: Harriett Friedmann, "Remaking 'Traditions': How We Eat, What We Eat and the Changing Political Economy of Food," in Deborah Barndt, ed., Women Working the NAFTA Food Chain (1999), 36-60 (bulk pack); Jeffrey Pilcher, "Industrial Tortillas and Folkloric Pepsi," in Warren Belasco and Philip Scranton, Food Nations, 222-239 (bulk pack)

****FIRST DRAFT OF FINAL PAPERS DUE**

Week 12, April 10 FOOD WARS: *Conflicting paradigms for our food future*

Readings: Tim Lang and Michael Heasman: The Global Battle for Mouths, Minds and Markets (2004), 1-46 (bulk pack) PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH PROJECTS

Week 13, April 17 LAST CLASS/DISCUSSION OF COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS

MAY 1: ALL FINAL PAPERS AND PROJECTS DUE