

# Political Science 198: The Politics of Food and Agriculture

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Subject/Discipline: [Political Science](#)

School: [University of Pennsylvania](#)

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

Fall 2003

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## The Politics of Food and Agriculture

PSCI/HSOC 135-401 ABCS and Fox Leadership Program Seminar

Thurs 2-5 Prof. Mary Summers

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office hours: Weds, 2-3:30 and by apptmt

Leadership Hall, rm 20

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

PLEASE NOTE: UNLESS OTHERWISE ANNOUNCED, STARTING SEPTEMBER 11TH, THIS CLASS WILL MEET IN THE 2ND FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM AT LEADERSHIP HALL, 3814 WALNUT

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: markets, kitchens, farms, factories, schools, churches, cities, research institutions, social movements, legislatures, bureaucracies, and trade. Case studies of leaders who have made a difference in the politics of food will include guest speakers who work on food related issues. 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.

## Community Service

Students in this course may participate in one of three established community service projects. The first is a food stamp enrollment campaign led by the Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger. More than 100,000 eligible people in Philadelphia are not participating in the food stamp program. If the program were more fully utilized, it would

bring millions more dollars in federal funds and opportunities for healthier food choices 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, grocery stores, soup kitchens and food cupboards). Interested students may participate in a pilot project in the West District County Assistance office, working with the staff there to improve the experience of applying for food stamps. There may also be opportunities to analyze the barriers to participation in the food stamp program, to develop strategies for publicizing the program in different neighborhoods, and to organize neighborhood festivals and events promoting food stamp screening and enrollment.

The second service project is with a social studies course on the “Politics of Food” taught by Mr. Bruce Poulson in the Eco-Tech Division at University City High School a few blocks from Penn. You will work with the students in this class to develop either a research or a community service project on an issue related to the politics of food.

The third community service opportunity involves working with the Food Trust on their Comprehensive School Nutrition Policy. This project seeks to address the incidence of childhood obesity by changing the food environment in city schools. Established as a pilot in 10 public schools, where all food served in the cafeteria and vending machines meets nutrition standards and is linked to classroom nutrition education, this program is now beginning to work with corner stores to promote healthier snacks for students on their way to and from school.

For those of you who wish to pursue other options for your course related community service project, there are many possibilities, including such anti-hunger groups as the Greater Philadelphia Food Bank and SHARE. The Urban Nutrition Initiative works on such issues as access to healthy food and the establishment of community gardens in schools in West Philadelphia. The Union of Food and Commercial Workers is engaged in organizing efforts among low wage food workers with a special focus on how expansion of Wal-Mart is leading to a “race to the bottom” in terms of wages and benefits in grocery and retail jobs. The Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture together with local leaders, including the Fair Food campaign out of the White Dog Café, is sponsoring a “buy fresh, buy local” campaign. Greensgrow is an urban farm, farmers’ market, and community supported agriculture project in Kensington. A project studying “the politics” of Penn’s food services (sources of food, labor practices, marketing, etc) and ways to impact them would be especially welcome. You may develop your own project, preferably working with at least one other student; but you must give me a brief written proposal describing the problem your project will address, and with whom you will work by September 18th.

## **Requirements**

Requirements include at least 100-200 pages of weekly readings, with at least 4 brief (1-3 pages) responses to the readings and 4 reflections on your community service project submitted by email by Wednesdays at noon. These responses will not be individually

graded but will count towards the class participation component of your grade. There will be one short discussion paper (3-5 pages) and a midterm take home exam (7-10 pages). With at least one partner, you will also be responsible for presenting a debate with regard to issues raised by the readings during one class in the course of the semester. Each of you will also adopt a food related web site relevant to that session and give a brief report on the issues raised by your website as part of your class presentation. (See for example, 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, <http://www.familyfarmer.org>; U. S Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, <http://www.ers.gov> --for food assistance and nutrition research, <http://www.ers.gov/briefing/foodnutritionassistance/>) You should let me know the class at which you will present and your web site by Sept. 18th.

At the end of the semester, students have an option for a 15-25 page paper/project or a take home exam. You may choose to work either individually or in groups on your research papers. A project that involves significant research and analysis may meet the requirements for both the course and the associated independent study (PSCI 199; see below). If you choose to take the exam option, you are encouraged to discuss the questions with your fellow students, but you must write your own exam.

Students will have the option of receiving an additional independent study credit (PSCI 199), if they commit to at least four hours a week on their community service work, produce a 5-7 page analysis of the goals and effectiveness of their project, a journal, 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 135-401 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% and your midterm 30%.

For PS/HSOC199, 40% of your grade will be based on your final project ; 30% on your reflections on your work and feedback from project supervisors; and 30% on your analysis of the community service project.

## **Readings**

Required books: Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (1981 [1906]), bantam edition; Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation* (2001); Janet Poppendieck, *Sweet Charity? Emergency Food and the End of Entitlement* (1998). 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 Ruth Ozeki's novels, *My Year of Meats and All Over Creation* (2003), Walter Willett, *Eat, Drink, and Be Healthy* (2001), and Marion Nestle, *Food Politics* (2002),

### **Class Calendar**

Week 1 Sept 4 Introduction to course themes, requirements, and community service projects.

REQUIRED: David Akst, "Cheap Eats," and Lis Harris, "The Seductions of Food," in *The Wilson Quarterly*, Summer 2003, 29-41; 52-60 (packet); Sidney Mintz, "Food and Eating: Some Persisting Questions," in Warren Belasco and Philip Scranton, eds., *Food Nations* (2002), 24-33 (packet)

Week 2. Sept. 11 Presentation of Community Service Sites

Trudy Lieberman, "Hungry in America," *The Nation*, Aug. 18/25, 2003, 17-22; Sydelle Zove, "Food Stamps have proven worth," and Robert Rector, "Food Stamp program is outdated," in *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Aug. 29, 2003, A23; "Paradox of Hunger and Obesity in America," position paper developed by Center on Hunger and Poverty and Rood Research and Action Center (<http://www.frac.org/pdf/hungerandobesity.pdf>); Barry Yeoman, "Unhappy Meals," *Mother Jones* (January/February, 2003, 41-45, 81.); Community Food Security Coalition: "Fact Sheet Child Nutrition Reauthorization"; David Beckmann, Bread for the World, Testimony to the United States Senate Agriculture Committee, April 3, 2003; Eric M. Bost, Under Secretary, Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services, USDA, Testimony before the Subcommittee on Education Reform, House Committee on Education and the Workforce, July 16, 2003

Week 3 Sept. 18 The Politics of Food: Hunger and Food Insecurity

Food security, poverty, hunger; grass-roots, faith-based and government programs.

REQUIRED: POPPENDIECK, *Sweet Charity?*, 1-19, 36-106, 288-318; Jim Wallis, *Faith Works* (2000), 76-118, 286-332; see readings on hunger in Week 1.  
Recommended: Norwood Allen Kerr, "Drafted into the War on Poverty: USDA Food and Nutrition Programs," *Agricultural History*, Spring, 1990 (154-166); Mary Von Euler, "Food Stamps: The Remains of the Safety Net," Americans for Democratic Action, 1998.

Week 4. Sept. 25 The Politics of Food at the Turn of the 21st century:

REQUIRED: *FAST FOOD NATION*, 3-10, 133-190, 239-243, 260-288

Week 5: Oct. 2 The Politics of Food at the turn of the 20th century: *THE JUNGLE*: industrialization; low wage work; food purity: labor organizing, political crusades and government programs.

\*\*\*\*First discussion papers due.

REQUIRED:

Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle*, (1906, 1981) bantam edition w. intro by Morris Dickstein, v-xvii, 1-29, 72-118, 133-161, 257-280, 330-346

Week 6: Oct. 9. The Politics of Food and Low Wage Work at the turn of the 21st century  
GUEST SPEAKER FROM THE UNITED FOOD AND COMMERCIAL WORKERS UNION

REQUIRED: Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation*, 59-88, 149-190; Jennifer Gordon, "Buying into the Future: Understanding Boycotts," *Radcliffe Quarterly*, fall, 2001.

RECOMMENDED: Websites: <http://www.ciw-online.org>, <http://www.dpja.org>, <http://fairfoodamerica.org>; National Employment Law Project, <http://www.nelp.org>;

Week 7: Oct. 16 The Politics of Agriculture and Trade

\*\*\*Presentation of potential topics for research papers

REQUIRED: Robert Paarlberg and Don Paarlberg, "Agricultural Policy in the Twentieth Century," *Agricultural History*, Spring, 2000, 136-161 (packet); "The Rigged Trade Game," *New York Times*, July 20, 2003; "A French Roadblock to Free Trade," NYT, Aug. 31, 2003; Wendell Barry, "Six Agricultural Fallacies," in *Home Economics* (1987), 123-131; 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 (packet); Global Exchange: "Food Security, Farming and the WTO/FTAA (<http://www.globalexchange.org>);

Week 8: Oct. 23 JIM WALLIS?

Follow-up trade, agriculture, world hunger....

\*\*\*Take Home Mid-term Due

Week 9. Oct. 30 The Politics of consumption, industry, markets, and kitchens

\*\*\*Topic proposal and research strategy due for those writing research papers

REQUIRED: Harriet Friedman, "Remaking 'Traditions': How We Eat, What We Eat and the Changing Political Economy of Food," in *Women Working the NAFTA Food Chain* (1999), 36-50 (packet); Arlene Avakian, ed., *Through the Kitchen Window* (1997), 1-9; Marge Piercy, "What's that smell in the kitchen, 111 (packet); Marion Nestle, *Food Politics* (2002) (packet), vii-28, 93-174;

Week 10: Nov. 6th The politics of obesity

REQUIRED: Marion Nestle, *FOOD POLITICS*, 175-218, 358-374; Kelly Brownell, "The Environment and Obesity," and "Public Policy and the Prevention of Obesity," in Fairburn and Brownell, eds., *Eating Disorders and Obesity: A Comprehensive Handbook* (2002), 433-438, 619-623; Amanda Spake, "A Fat Nation," *U.S. News and World Report*; Kelly Brownell and David Ludwig, "Fighting Obesity and the Food Lobby," *Washington Post*, 6/9/02, B07; (Packet); "Fatty Foods and Law Suits," exchange, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 8/8/02-8/15/02; "Twinkie Tax," articles

Aug. 19, 2002; S. Kumanyika, et al, "Obesity Prevention: the Case for Action," *International Journal of Obesity* (2002), 425-436.

Week 11: November 13: The Politics of monocropping, diversification, industrialized agriculture and the environment

2-4 Page Analysis of Community Service work due

REQUIRED: Blake Hurst, "Up on the Farm," *The Wilson Quarterly*, Summer, 2003, 42-51; Wendell Berry, "For Love of the Land," *Sierra*, May/June 2002, 21-24; Harrison Wellford, *Sowing the Wind* (1972), 264-285; Michael Pollan, "Power Steer," *New York Times*, March 31, 2002; James Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 262-306 (packet)

Week 12: November 20: The Politics of Research and Development in Food and Agriculture: case study –GMO's

FIRST DRAFT OF RESEARCH PAPERS DUE BEFORE BREAK

REQUIRED: Michael Pollan, *The Botany of Desire* (2001), 185-248 (packet); Kurt Eichenwald, "Redesigning Nature: Hard Lessons Learned; Biotechnology Food: From the Lab to a Debacle," *New York Times*, Jan. 25, 2001; David Appell "Future Food," *Wilson Quarterly*, Summer, 2003.

Richard Lewontin, "Genes in the Food!" *New York Review of Books*, June 21, 2001, 81-84; Wendell Barry, "The Prejudice Against Country People," *The Progressive*, April 21-24; RECOMMENDED: Jim Hightower, *Hard Tomatoes, Hard Times* (1973), vi-64;

Week 13: Dec. 4 Last Class.

Discussion/presentation of community service projects and research papers

Take home FINAL EXAM QUESTIONS handed out for those not doing research papers.

Dec. 11th: Community Service journals, take home finals and research papers due