

WOODROW WILSON DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS
PLAP 3160: THE POLITICS OF FOOD

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January 2017
M-F 10:00-3:30
211 Gibson Hall

How and what we eat is basic to who we are as individuals, as a culture, and as a polity. This course looks at the production and consumption of food in a political context. Food politics and policies have critical implications for the environment, for public health, for political equality, and for budget priorities. This course looks at food politics through a series of “food fights.” We will examine controversies over agricultural subsidies, labeling requirements, taxation, farming practices, food safety, advertising and education. In doing so, we will explore some of the most important features of American democracy, including legislative politics, regulation, interest group activity, federalism, public opinion, political communication, and representation. Ultimately we will examine the ways in which the politics of food represents both a reflection and a distortion of fundamental democratic principles.

Requirements

This course will be run as a seminar, so participation is critical. It is essential that you come to class having done the readings, having *thought* about them, and having answered questions posed in class the day before.

A final paper (approximately 10 pages) will be due no later than 12:00 PM Monday, January 16. Collaborative project presentations will take place during our last class meeting. More information about the paper and the presentations will be provided in class. There will be an on-line quiz on the afternoon of January 6, and a second on-line quiz available starting on the afternoon of January 13.

More detailed information about these requirements will, of course, be provided in class. A class web page appears at the [Collab site](#).

Grading

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| Attendance, Participation, Short Assignments | 15% |
| Quiz 1 | 15% |
| Quiz 2 | 25% |
| Symposium Presentation | 10% |
| Final Project | 35% |

A word about academic integrity: Plagiarism is the act of using someone else’s words or ideas as your own without giving proper credit to the source. It is assumed that all students in this class will abide by the University of Virginia Honor System. For more information see: <http://www.virginia.edu/honor/what-is-academic-fraud-2> along with <http://usingsources.fas.harvard.edu/what-constitutes-plagiarism>

Required Texts (available at the Bookstore and on reserve at Clemons; all other assigned readings will be available in electronic form in the “resources” section of the class Collab site.)

- Pollan, Michael.** 2007. *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. New York: Penguin Press.
- Paarlberg, Robert.** 2013. *Food Politics: What Everyone Needs to Know*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Outline and Readings

January 3: **Introductions and Democratic Ideals**

Pollan: introduction, ch. 1-3.

Bittman, Mark, Michael Pollan, Ricardo Salvador, and Olivier De Schutter. 2014. "How a National Food Policy Could Save Millions of American Lives." *Washington Post*, November 7.

Schmitter, Philippe C. and Terry Lynn Karl. 1991. "What Democracy Is...and Is Not." *Journal of Democracy* 2(3):75-88.

American Planning Association 2010. "Principles of a Healthy, Sustainable, Food System."

January 4: **Eating, Wasting, and Producing: Environmental Impacts**

Eating

Pollan: ch. 16-17.

Foer, Jonathan Safran. 2009. *Eating Animals*. New York: Little Brown, ch.1-2.

Nestle, Marion. 2006. "What to Eat." [chapter 1, excerpted in *The New York Times*.]

Berry, Wendell. 1990. "The Pleasures of Eating." From, *What Are People For?* New York: North Point Press.

Wasting

Gunders, Dana. 2012. "Wasted: How America is Losing Up to 40 Percent of its Food from Farm to Fork to Landfill." National Resources Defense Council Issue Paper.

Producing

Paarlberg: ch. 1, 6, 9, 10, 11.

January 5: **Legislative Politics: The Farm Bill, SNAP and Government Subsidies**

Pollan: ch. 4-7.

Hurst, Blake. 2009. "The Omnivore's Delusion: Against the Agri-intellectuals." *The American: The Journal of the American Enterprise Institute*. July 30.

National Corn Growers Association. 2011. "World of Corn."

Pew Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production. 2009. "Executive Summary."

Smithfield Foods. 2013. "Integrated Report."

United States Department of Agriculture. 2012. "Building a Healthy America: A Profile of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program," pp. 1-6.

Center for Responsive Politics, Agribusiness Lobbying:
<https://www.opensecrets.org/lobby/indus.php?id=A>

January 6: **Regulatory Politics 1: Food Safety and Public Health, Quiz 1**

Guest Speaker: Stuart Pape; Polsinelli, Washington, D.C.

Paarlberg: ch. 13.

Nestle, Marion. 2010. *Safe Food: The Politics of Food Safety*. Berkeley: University of California Press, ch. 1.

Berfield, Susan. 2015. "Inside Chipotle's Contamination Crisis." *Bloomberg Businessweek*. December 22.

Schlosser, Eric. 2016. "A Safer Food Future, Now." *Consumer Reports*, May, pp.50-51.

GMOs

Pollack, Andrew. 2015. "Genetically Engineered Salmon Approved for Consumption." *The New York Times*, November 19.

Genetic Literacy Project. 2015. "AquaBounty Salmon Backgrounder." November 19.
Bisson, Robin. 2015. "Label the Salmon. For Everyone's Sake." *The Guardian*, December 21.
Haspel, Tamar. 2016. "Scientists Say GMO Foods are Safe, Public Skepticism Remains."
<http://theplate.nationalgeographic.com/2016/05/17/scientists-say-gmo-foods-are-safe-public-skepticism-remains>

Food Safety Modernization Act

Snapshot of [Food Safety Milestones in the History of the FDA](#)

<http://www.fda.gov/food/guidanceregulation/fsma/ucm238505.htm>

Background on the [Food Safety Modernization Act \(FSMA\)](#)

<http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/FSMA/ucm239907.htm>

Harris, Gardiner and William Neuman. 2010. "Senate Passes Sweeping Law on Food Safety."
The New York Times, December 10.

Strom, Stephanie. 2013. "F.D.A. Offers Sweeping Rules to Stop Food Contamination." *The New York Times*, January 4.

United States Government Accountability Office. 2014. "Federal Food Safety Oversight: Additional Actions Needed to Improve Planning and Collaboration," pp. 1-7.

January 7: **Field Trip to Polyface Farm**

Pollan: ch. 8-11.

Salatin, Joel. 2011. *Folks, This Ain't Normal: A Farmer's Advice for Happier Hens, Healthier People, and a Better World*. New York: Hachette Book Group, pp. 292-327.

January 9: **Regulatory Politics 2: Obesity and Public Health, Proposed Paper Topics due**

Pollan: ch. 12-14.

Paarlberg: ch. 7.

Pew Research Center. 2013. "Public Agrees on Obesity's Impact, Not Government's Role."

Nestle, Marion. 2015. *Soda Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press, ch. 5, 25

O'Connor, Anahad. 2016. "How the Sugar Industry Shifted Blame to Fat." *The New York Times*, September 12. <http://nyti.ms/2c5GXmW>

January 10: **Regulatory Politics 3: Policy Responses**

Sodas, Taxes, and SNAP

Bittman, Mark. 2014. "Introducing the National Soda Tax." *The New York Times*, July 29.

Francis, Norton, Donald Marron, and Kim Rueben. 2016. *The Pros and Cons of Taxing Sweetened Beverages Based on Sugar Content*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, pp.1-14.

Kent, Muhtar. 2009. "Coke Didn't Make America Fat: Americans Need More Exercise, Not Another Tax." Opinion. *The Wall Street Journal*. October 7.

Cary, Mary Kate. 2009. "No Soda Tax: Government Can't End Obesity in America." Commentary, *U.S. News and World Report*, October 28.

Rudd Report. 2009. "Soft Drink Taxes: A Policy Brief."

Farley, Thomas and Richard F. Daines. 2010. "No Food Stamps for Sodas." *The New York Times*, October 7.

Carroll, Aaron E. 2016. "How Restricting Food Stamp Choices Can Fight Obesity." *The New York Times*, September 22. <http://nyti.ms/2cFDSGr>

Menu Labeling

FDA menu labeling regulations:

<http://www.fda.gov/Food/IngredientsPackagingLabeling/LabelingNutrition/ucm248732.htm>

- Roberto, Christina A., Henry Agnew, and Kelly D. Brownell. 2009. “An Observational Study of Consumers’ Accessing of Nutrition Information in Chain Restaurants.” *American Journal of Public Health*. 99(5):820-21.
- Bassett, Mary T., et. al. 2008. “Purchasing Behavior and Calorie Information at Fast-Food Chains in New York City, 2007.” *American Journal of Public Health*. 98(8):1457-59.
- Elbel, B., Gyamfi, J., and R. Kersh. 2011. “Child and Adolescent Fast-Food Choice and the Influence of Calorie Labeling: A Natural Experiment.” *International Journal of Obesity*. 35:493–500.

January 11: **The Politics of Dietary Guidelines**

Guest Speaker: Anna Maria Siega-Riz, Ph.D., Member 2015 DGAC

Guidelines and Labels

- Nestle, Marion. 2013. *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health*. Berkeley: University of California Press, ch.2-3.
- Scientific Report of the 2015 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee. February 2015. Letter to the Secretaries and Executive Summary.
- Abrams, Steven. 2015. “[Why We Must Protect Healthy Dietary Guidelines from Political Interference.](#)” *Huffington Post Health News*, August 24.
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/steven-abrams/why-we-must-protect-health_b_8034430.html
- Philpott, Tom. 2014. “[Brazil's Dietary Guidelines Are So Much Better Than the USDA's.](#)” *Mother Jones*, November 22.
<http://www.motherjones.com/tom-philpott/2014/11/brazil-schools-usda-dietary-guidelines>
- Vilsack, Tom and Sylvia Burwell. 2015. “[2015 Dietary Guidelines: Giving You the Tools You Need to Make Healthy Choices.](#)” USDA, October 6.
<http://blogs.usda.gov/2015/10/06/2015-dietary-guidelines-giving-you-the-tools-you-need-to-make-healthy-choices>
- 2015 Dietary Guidelines:** <http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines/executive-summary/>
- FDA Nutrition Facts Labeling:**
<http://www.fda.gov/food/guidanceregulation/guidancedocumentsregulatoryinformation/labelingnutrition/ucm385663.htm>

January 12: **Think Globally, Eat Locally?**

**Guest Speakers: Matt Smythe, Samantha Jameson, U.Va. Dining
Kristen Suokko, Laura Brown, Local Food Hub**

- Paarlberg: ch. 3, 4, 5, 8, 12, 14.
- Brown, Lester. 2011. “The New Geopolitics of Food.” *Foreign Policy*, May/June.
- Russell, Natalie. 2011. “Seven Problems Solved by the Local Food Hub.” *Edible Blue Ridge*.
- Sexton, Steve. 2011. “The Inefficiency of Local Food.” *Freakonomics Blog*, Nov. 14.
- Philpott, Tom. 2011. “Freakonomics Blog: Still Wrong on Local Food.” *Mother Jones*. Nov. 18.
- U.Va. Dining: <https://virginia.campusdish.com/Sustainability/WhatWeAreDoing.aspx>

January 13: **Symposium, Quiz 2**

- Pollan: ch. 20.
- Paarlberg: ch. 15.
- Lappé, Frances Moore, Raj Patel, Vandana Shiva, Eric Schlosser, and Michael Pollan. 2011. “The Food Movement: Its Power and Possibilities.” *The Nation*. October 3, pp. 11-19.