

The Global Politics of Food

Proposed Political Science Research Seminar Syllabus

Spring 2012

(Hypothetical) M/W
Office Hours: by appointment
Room # TBA

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Course Description: This course progresses along three parallel tracks. The first traces the contours of the global food system: the effects of economic globalization on the food supply chain, the global food crisis, the rise of confinement livestock agriculture, and the state of global fisheries and aquaculture. The second examines current debates in food politics, over: regulatory politics and the appropriate reach of the state in food labeling, safety, and oversight; GM food, organic and sustainable agriculture, and the future of the world food system. The third examines the impact food choices (from veganism to locavorism) and food narratives (small-scale organic 'versus' biotech) have on our debate about the future of food. Readings will be drawn from a wide range of sources and disciplines, spanning from food movement 'classics' (Pollan, Patel, Shiva) to agribusiness case studies to World Bank and NGO reports. The course will include a midterm, a short written food log and analysis assignment, regular wiki uploads, and a research paper.

Course Wiki: The website for the course is ikesharpless.pbworks.com

Required Texts: you must have the following texts in class as needed. I recommend that you buy these texts from a used online site like www.abebooks.com. If you do so, however, be sure to buy the books with enough advanced notice to have them when the course begins.

- Robert Paarlberg, *Food Politics: What Everyone Needs to Know*
- Raj Patel, *Stuffed and Starved: The Hidden Battle for the World Food System*
- Michael Pollan, *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto*

Grading [change]

- Short paper 1: stakeholder analysis (10%)
- Short Paper 2: food log writeup (10%)
- Midterm (20%)
- Research Paper (40%)
 - Outline (5%)
 - Rough Draft (5%)
 - Final Draft (30%)
- Participation (20%)
 - Although there is no specific grade % allotted for in-class participation, strong participation will tend to push up grades that are hovering between two marks, and weak participation will do the opposite.
 - 20% of this grade will be based on student uploads to the pbworks website (10 of 11 possible uploads required, 2% each. The uploads will be due every Monday except for

the first day of class and Apr 9, but you should make an effort to post a link by no later than Sunday evening)

- Attendance (variable, as much as -20%)
 - I will take attendance each class. Two unexcused absences throughout the course will be permitted, but each additional unexcused absence will lower your grade by a third of a letter.

Note on Late Papers: Be sure to carefully check your work for spelling errors and grammatical flow. You can rewrite your short paper if you are dissatisfied with your grade, and I will average the two grades. I will also dock your grade by a third of a letter grade for every unexcused calendar day (*not* class day) a paper is overdue.

Student Upload Guidelines: You are expected to upload a relevant link, video, or other media source with a comment relating the ideas of the thinkers we are discussing to a pertinent current issue. The mechanism for logging on to the pbworks site will be explained in class. If, however, you are ever unable to upload a link to the website, just send me your link and comment and I will upload them for you. Unless I specify otherwise, the links should be related to the ideas covered in any class since the previous upload (i.e., the most recent two or three class sessions). If possible, you should also try to leave a comment on at least a few other students' posts throughout the semester—while not officially graded, I will consider giving you extra credit if you post a lot of comments.

Stakeholder Analysis Guidelines: forthcoming (broadly: to acclimate students with the range of actors in the global food policy terrain, from IGOs to NGOs to MNCs to governments – the assignment will require students to pick one specific actor and one specific food policy domain and explain that actor's motives, incentives, and effects on the issue in question)

Food Log Writeup Guidelines: forthcoming (broadly: to connect students personal food choices/habits with the issues presented in class: global supply chain, food safety, food labeling, biotechnology, etc.)

Research Paper Guidelines: To be provided in class.

Academic Honesty: Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated. If you have any questions about what does and does not constitute plagiarism, refer first to the UMass Lowell Undergraduate Catalogue under 'Academic Integrity'. If you have further questions, please contact me by email, phone, or in person. I would much prefer to clarify a small confusion than be forced to give you a failing grade in the class.

Citation Policy: Use whichever standard citation format works for you (i.e., MLA, Chicago, etc.), but use the same throughout your work and be sure that all relevant information is included. Because this is a high-level research seminar, you will be expected to cite your sources properly. Note: while useful for reference, Wikipedia is not a valid citation source.

Course Outline

nota bene – reading assignments are subject to revision anytime up to the class prior to their assignment. If you miss a class, be sure to verify the next day's readings by checking the pbworks website. I may add or remove some readings on a day-to-day basis, so be sure to pay attention in class.

Mon Jan 23 – Introductions, Course Expectations, Pbworks and Food Log Tutorial

Wed Jan 25 – Setting the Stage, Nationally: Two Competing Frames

- Michael Pollan, "Farmer in Chief": http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/12/magazine/12policy-t.html?_r=1
- Blake Hurst, "The Omnivore's Delusion": <http://www.american.com/archive/2009/july/the-omnivore2019s-delusion-against-the-agri-intellectuals/>

Module I – Surveying the Global Food System

Mon Jan 30 – Introducing the Global Food Crisis: Primer on Trade and Political Economy

- Joachim von Braum, "The World Food Situation", IFPRI policy report, 2007 (available online and on pbworks)
- Lester R. Brown, "The New Geopolitics of Food", *Foreign Policy*, May/June 2011: http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/04/25/the_new_geopolitics_of_food
- First pbworks upload

Wed Feb 1 – The Global Food Supply Chain

- Alexei Barrionuevo, "China's Interest in Farmland Makes Brazil Uneasy", *New York Times*, May 26, 2011: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/27/world/americas/27brazil.html>
- Joshua Keating, "How Food Explains the World". *Foreign Policy*, May/June 2011: http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/04/25/how_food_explains_the_world

Mon Feb 6 – Setting the Stage, Globally: The Global North and the Global South

- Focus on readings and videos from Vandana Shiva
- Raj Patel, "Can the World Feed 10 Billion People?" *Foreign Policy*, May 4, 2011: http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/05/04/can_the_world_feed_10_billion_people
- Second pbworks upload

Wed Feb 8 – Intellectual Property and the case of GM Foods

- Readings tbd

Mon Feb 13 – Focus on Agribusiness: CSR, Ecolabels, and Regulatory Policy

- "Corporate Social Responsibility: Just good business", *The Economist*, January 17 2008. Available on the pbworks wiki
- Third pbworks upload

Wed Feb 15 – Actors in the Global Politics of Food

- First short paper due – class discussion to focus on student work

Wed Feb 22 – Reading Paarlberg and Patel, day 1

- Selected passages from *Food Politics* and *Stuffed and Starved*

Mon Feb 27 – Reading Paarlberg and Patel, day 2

- Selected passages from *Food Politics* and *Stuffed and Starved*
- Fourth pbworks upload

Wed Feb 29 – Reading Paarlberg and Patel, day 3

- Selected passages from *Food Politics* and *Stuffed and Starved*

Module II – Animal Agriculture

Mon Mar 5: Focus on Food and Environment

- *Livestock's Long Shadow* (influential FAO report): read at least the executive summary (pp. 22-26): <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/010/a0701e/A0701E00.pdf>
- “Sweden looks to diet to cut global warming” (*NYT*, Oct 23 2009): <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/23/world/europe/23degrees.html>
- Also peruse the "case for eating dogs" passage from this npr story on Jonathan Safran Foer's new book, *Eating Animals*: <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=114298495&ft=1&f=2>
- Fifth pbworks upload

Wed Mar 7 – Midterm

Mon Mar 19 – Animal Welfare, Economics, and Consumer Choice

- Jennifer Fearing and Gaverick Matheny, “The Role of Economics in Achieving Welfare Gains for Animals” From *The State of the Animals IV: 2007*, available on the pbworks site.
- Sixth pbworks upload

Wed Mar 21 – Focus on Fisheries and Aquaculture, Case Study: Bluefin Tuna

- Readings to be provided on pbworks site

Mon Mar 26 – Special Session on Animal Ethics

- Peter Singer, “Animal Liberation at 30”, *New York Review of Books*: <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2003/may/15/animal-liberation-at-30/>
- Supplemental readings tbd
- Seventh pbworks upload

Module III – Food and Food Choices

Wed Mar 28 – From Veganism to Locavorism and Beyond

- "Spoiled: Organic and Local is so 2008":
<http://www.motherjones.com/environment/2009/02/spoiled-organic-and-local-so-2008>
- Nicollete Hahn Niman, "The Carnivore's Dilemma":
<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/31/opinion>
- Supplemental readings tbd

Mon Apr 2 – Reading *In Defense of Food*, day 1

- Eighth pbworks upload

Wed Apr 4 – Reading *In Defense of Food*, day 2

Mon Apr 9 – Food Log

- Use the ninth pbworks upload to post some comments about your food log
- Second short paper due

Module IV – Case Studies, Specific Issues, Other Approaches

Wed Apr 11 – How to Feed 10 Billion

- Passages from The WorldWatch Institute's *State of the World 2011: Innovations that Nourish the Planet*. To be provided.
- Research paper outline due

Wed Apr 18 – Special Session: Writing Tips and Research Methods

Mon Apr 23 – In Vitro Meat

- Michael Specter, "Test-Tube Burgers", *The New Yorker*, May 23, 2011. Available on the pbworks site
- Tenth pbworks upload

Wed Apr 25 – Special Session on Food and Anthropology

- Assorted readings, tbd
- Research paper rough draft due

Mon Apr 30 – Guest Lecture from Dr. Brendan McMullen, New England Dairy Veterinarian

- Eleventh pbworks upload

Wed May 2 – Student Research Topics: Informal Presentations

Mon May 7 – Course Recapitulation & Focus on Uploads

- Twelfth and final pbworks upload: focus on food issues in the news, and anything you think we haven't covered in sufficient depth

(Fri May 11 – research papers due)