

## **The Politics of Food in America**

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

GOVERNMENT 4903.01

FALL 2017

TUESDAY / THURSDAY 11:00 – 12:20PM

ASB 202

Dr. Clare Brock

cbrock1@twu.edu

940.898.2142

Office: CFO 612

Office Hours: Tuesday 1:30 – 3:30; Wednesday 1:30 – 2:30, and by appointment

### **I. COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course examines food policy in the United States. It addresses the fundamentally political nature of food production and consumption, focusing on the history, institutions, and economy of food in America. Food policy today involves a variety of political actors: lobbyists, trade-associations, commercial scientists, consumers, bureaucracies, and politicians. Further, the policy arena encompasses issues from trade, energy, bioterrorism, and climate change, to more local issues such as beer distribution and sale laws and the regulation of small-batch raw cheeses. The course also examines the ethical problems facing the modern food economy. We will frequently address the question, “what is political?” in respect to food and eating in America.

Lectures and in class discussions will be interspersed with guest lectures and film. News stories, relevant articles, and other course-materials will be posted on the course's Blackboard website.

### **II: MATERIALS**

Required texts:

- Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001.
- Readings Uploaded to Canvas

### **III: ASSIGNMENTS**

- 10% Food Log
- 5% Food Log Paper rough draft
- 20% Food Log Paper final draft
- 10% 5 Reading Quizzes (2% each)
- 10% 5 In class writing assignments (2% each)
- 10% Attendance and participation
- 5% Self-Graded Discussion and Response
- 15% Midterm Exam
- 15% Final Exam

Food Log: You must keep a food journal for a 48-hour period over two consecutive days between January 20 through January 25, (your choice of days), in which you keep track of what you ate and when (the volume of what you eat or the number of servings is of secondary importance). In the log write down the *time* and *content* of what you eat and drink. Also, for one day, at minimum ten different items, determine the *exact ingredients* of the food and beverage. What is the *content* of what you consume and *where* is each ingredient from.

Food Log Paper (Rough and Final): In approximately 5 pages do the following: (1) describe what patterns you found from your log entries with respect to your consumption pattern and from uncovering the ingredients and place of origin of what you consume. (2) Identify the laws, policies, or political processes that influenced the harvesting/ production/ transport/ import/ manufacture of food and beverages you consumed over the 48-hour period. (3) Think broadly about what you have learned and explain. Why did you consume what you did, for instance—for reason of convenience? Taste? Cost? Figure out what aspects of the food system influenced you to eat as you did, as best as you can. Be sure to relate how what you found out matches up with what you know about the politics and policies of food from your readings, lectures, and other sources. The rough draft will be a completion grade. Full credit will go to students who submit a full draft of their 5-page paper. Half credit will go to students who do not submit a full rough draft. And no credit will go to students who fail to submit a rough draft. The best analyses will have a clear thesis, focus on a few key points, and manage to link the findings together into a clear, overarching analysis

Reading Quizzes: Open Book /Notes quizzes posted on Canvas over reading assignments. Must be completed *the night before class*. Correct Answers will be shown the morning of class. I will post 6 reading quizzes, and drop the lowest grade. If you complete all 6 reading you may receive up to 1 point extra credit, applied to your final grade.

In Class Writing Assignments: Several times during the course I will pose a question to the class and ask you to get out a piece of paper and write a paragraph, question, or other short prompt (1/2 page or less). These are opportunities for you to express your opinion about a question relevant to our course and for me to learn more about your ideas. A thoughtful response will earn the writer full credit (2 points), a messy, incomplete response will earn half credit (1 points), and no response will earn no credit. Students will earn a maximum of 10 points this way, for 10% of their total grade. The dates for these writing exercises will not be announced in advance. I understand that your lives are busy and complicated. However, I cannot offer “make ups” for this portion of the course. Therefore, I will offer at least 7 opportunities to earn these 10 points.

Attendance: I will take attendance each day by passing around a sign-in sheet. You are required to attend, be on time, and remain in class throughout the duration of all class sessions. All absences will be considered unexcused, and students will be allowed 3

“free” absences, excepting extenuating emergency circumstances (which must be discussed with the professor, and will be considered on a case-by-case basis). Each following absence will be a deduction of one percentage point from the student’s attendance grade.

- A syllabus quiz, to be taken by the second day of classes, will be included as part of this grade. (Worth 2 points)

Self-Graded Discussion and Response: Students are required to participate in a self-graded discussion and writing exercise. I will split the class in to groups, and each group will be given a prompt to discuss. At the end of class, each group will write a brief response to their prompt using class sources, and based on the content of their discussion. Students will grade their own group participation based on the provided rubric.

Midterm and Final Exams: Students will take a midterm and a final exam. The midterm will cover the first half the course, while the final exam will cover the second half of the course. Exams will contain multiple choice and / or matching questions. The exams must be taken in class, on the day that they are administered (see make-up policy), failure to do so will result in a 0. Students should use readings, reading quizzes, notes, power points, lectures, and the provided review sheet to prepare.

- Curving: After the exam, I will additionally give the number of points required to bring the highest grade in the class up to a 100.

#### **IV. GRADES:**

Grades consist of the aggregate and weighted grades of tests and quizzes; class participation/attendance; and the food log, as specified above. TWU uses standard letter grades, and does not use the plusses and minuses system. When calculating final letter grades, the instructor will round according to standard mathematical guidelines when students are on the verge between letter grades (e.x. 89.5 will be rounded up to a 90, while an 89.25 will be rounded down to an 89).

#### **Class Policies:**

##### Etiquette:

A government class will necessarily touch on topics that are sensitive, controversial, and difficult. Accordingly, I ask that above all students remain *respectful of one another*. Personal attacks and comments that discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, age, sexual orientation, religion, political party affiliation or national background will not be permitted, inside or outside of the classroom. I cannot promise that you will never perceive my political beliefs and positions; but I do promise that I will not push or force them upon you, I ask that you behave similarly. Further, in the name of fostering a respectful classroom environment, please refrain from engaging in talking or texting during class. I encourage you to participate in class discussions, ask questions, and respond when I ask you questions. However, side discussions during lecture are distracting. Similarly, please do not play video games, Tweet, Instagram, Facebook, Snap, etc. etc. etc. during class. Laptops will be allowed, unless students report

distracting behavior. If you struggle to abide by these etiquette rules, you may be asked to leave.

#### Power Point Slides:

Power Point slides will be posted to Canvas

#### Readings:

You should perform the readings listed on the syllabus in preparation for the day on which they are listed. In other words, the reading assigned on September 6<sup>th</sup> should be completed before attending class on September 6<sup>th</sup>. Reading quizzes will be due the night before class, with the expectation that you should be reading in advance.

#### Exam Review:

I will provide a *very* general review sheet for students. I do not recommend that students rely on crowd-sourced reviews such as google-docs, I have seen these go very wrong. Remember that in a class this large, you have no way of knowing how attentive or honest your fellow students posting to the google doc are. I do recommend and have seen great success from small, in-person, study groups.

#### Communication:

Email correspondence is welcome. Please format your emails as business correspondence (with a greeting and signature), ***and please realize that I may not be able to get to them right away.*** I will try to get to your emails within 24 hours or, at the latest, during my next scheduled office hours, unless the answer to a question is in the syllabus or was discussed in class (in which case you should consult a classmate). If you email me with a question that is answered in the syllabus, I will simply refer you back to this document. I may also answer through Canvas or a general email to the class, rather than writing you back personally, if your question reflects a general concern. I am also available after class, during office hours, or by appointment if you cannot make my office hours.

#### Academic Accommodations:

If you anticipate the need for reasonable accommodations to meet the requirements of this course, you must register with the office of Disability Support Services (CFO 106, 940.898.3835, dss@twu.edu) in order to obtain the required official notification of your accommodation needs. Please plan to meet with me by appointment or during office hours to discuss approved accommodations and how my course requirements and activities may impact your ability to fully participate.

#### Academic Integrity:

Plagiarism, cheating, and other academic misconduct are serious violations of your contract as a student. Plagiarism is using someone else's language without quotations and attribution or using someone else's idea (even in different language) without attribution. Honesty in completing assignments is essential to the mission of TWU and to the development of the personal integrity of students. In submitting graded assignments, students affirm that they have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance, and

that they have abided by all other provisions of the Code of Conduct in the TWU Student Handbook. Cheating, plagiarism, fabrication or other kinds of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will result in appropriate sanctions that may include failing the assignment, failing the class, or being suspended or expelled. Suspected cases of dishonesty in this course may be reported to Student Life. The specific disciplinary process for academic dishonesty is found in the TWU Student Handbook. Tools to help you avoid plagiarism are available through the TWU Libraries at:

[http://www.twu.edu/library/res/res\\_plagiarism.htm](http://www.twu.edu/library/res/res_plagiarism.htm).

For more on academic integrity, see: <http://www.twu.edu/student-life-office/academic-integrity.asp>

#### Make-up Policy and Late Assignments:

Full credit make-up exams will only be allowed for (1) University sanctioned events (verification required), (2) exceptional circumstances (with verification such as a physicians note), or (3) religious observations. If you intend to miss class for a religious holiday, you must notify me of your pending absence at least 14 days in advance. Late assignments are not permitted.

#### VI: Course Schedule:

**Introduction and Theories:** This section of the course is intended to help bridge the gap between theories about politics and the complexities of food policy. The theories are intended to help structure the way we think about food politics throughout the course.

January 16: Course Overview: Food and Political Science

- See posted news articles on the class Canvas site

January 18: Collective Action

- Canvas: Rachel Carson, "A Fable for Tomorrow," *Silent Spring*
- Canvas: John Tierney (2009) "The Non-Tragedy of the Commons," *NY Times*
- Canvas: Garrett Hardin (1968), "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science*, 1-13

January 23: Interest Groups, Iron Triangles

- Canvas: John Mark Hansen, "A Theory of Access," *Gaining Access* (1991), pp. 11-25
- Canvas: Jeff Gillman and Eric Heberlig, "Introduction," and "Science, Political Science, and the Science of Politics," *How the Government Got in your Backyard*, pp. 11-33
- **Reading Quiz**

January 25: Interest Groups Continued, Lobbying

- Canvas: Robert Gottlieb and Anupama Joshi, "Food Politics," *Food Justice* (2010), pp. 75-97

January 30: Framing; Poverty and School Lunches

- Canvas: Daniel Kahneman, Chs. 1, 11 *Thinking Fast and Slow* (2011), pp. 19-30; 119-128
- Canvas: Janet Poppendieck, Chs. 2, 6, *Free For All: Fixing School Food in America*, pp. 46-64; 161-189

**History:** This section of the course provides a brief overview of some of the more interesting and important moments of food history in the United States. We will incorporate the above theories into our discussions, so please consider them as you read.

February 1: Alcohol and Prohibition

- Canvas: James McWilliams, “Intoxication,” *A Revolution in Eating* (2005), pp. 241-278
- **Food Log Due**

February 6: Food and the Cold War

- Canvas: Tom Standage, “Food Fight,” *An Edible History of Humanity* (2009), pp. 171-196
- **Reading Quiz**

February 8: Eating Today

- Movie: *Food, Inc.* Dir. Robert Kenner, 2009 (in class), 1st half
- Canvas: Michael Pollen, “The Meal,” *The Omnivore’s Dilemma* (2006), pp. 109-119

February 13: Eating Today

- Movie: *Food, Inc.* (in class), 2nd half
- Text: Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation*, Ch. 9, pp. 193-222; “Afterword,” 271-288

**Contemporary Policy Issues:** This section of the course considers a variety of contemporary policy issues. Again, think about the theories we have learned as you read.

February 15: Americans as Consumers: Guest Lecture, John Hoening

- Text: Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation*, pp. 1-10, Chs. 1-2, pp. 13-59
- Canvas: Erica Strauss, “The Terrible Tragedy of the Healthy Eater,” *Best Food Writing* p.36-40
- Canvas: John M. Hoening, Ch. 5 “A Poor Tomato is Better than No Tomato,” *Garden Variety*.
- **Reading Quiz**

February 20: The Fast Food Industry’s Business Model and Worker Safety

- Text: Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation*, Chs. 3-4, 7-8, pp. 59-107, 152-66

February 22: Genetically Modified (GM) Crops

- Canvas: James McWilliams, Ch. 3, *Just Food* (2009), pp. 81-116

- Canvas: Jeff Gillman and Eric Heberlig, “Genetic Engineering: A Time Bomb Waiting to Explode?,” *How the Government Got in your Backyard*, pp. 114-133

February 27: The Organic Food Movement

- Canvas: Michael Pollen, “Big Organic,” *The Omnivore’s Dilemma* (2006), pp. 134-184

March 1: **Midterm Exam**

March 6: Writing Center Presentation; Peer Review Exercise

- **Rough Draft Due online, before class**
- **Bring copy of Food Log Paper Rough Draft**

March 8: No Class: Food Log Paper Revision Work Day

March 12 – 16: Spring Break

March 20: International Trade

- Canvas: Robert Gottlieb and Anupama Joshi, “The Food System Goes Global,” *Food Justice* (2010), pp. 99-119
- Canvas: Pierre Desrochers and Hiroko Shimizu, “Introduction,” *The Locavore’s Dilemma* (2012), pp. 1-15

March 22: Local, Imported, and Fair Trade

- Canvas: Peter Singer and Jim Mason, Chs.10, 11, *The Ethics of What We Eat*, pp. 135-169
- Canvas: Michael E. Conroy, *Branded: How the ‘Certification Revolution’ Is Transforming Global Corporations*, Ch. 5, pp. 97-120

March 27: Environmental Politics

- Canvas: Jeff Gillman and Eric Heberlig, “Organic Food: Safer, Friendlier, Better?” *How the Government Got in your Backyard* (2011), pp. 34-55

March 29: Race and Food Policy

- Clare Brock and Bartholomew Sparrow “Race, Ethnicity, and the Politics of Food” *The Oxford Handbook of Racial and Ethnic Politics in the United States*
- **Reading Quiz**

**Ethics and the Future of Food:** This portion of the class asks questions about the ethics of our food choices, and questions just how involved government should (and can) be.

April 3: What’s at Stake? The Commerce and Ethics of Eating

- Canvas: Marion Nestle, “Introduction,” *Food Politics*, pp. 1-28
- Canvas: Peter Singer and Jim Mason, Ch. 1, *The Ethics of What We Eat*, Introduction and Ch. 1, pp. 3-20

April 5: Eating Meat

- Canvas: Michael Pollen, “The Ethics of Eating Animals,” *The Omnivore’s Dilemma* (2006), pp. 304-333
- Timothy Pachirat, “The Kill Floor” *Every 12 Seconds*, p38-84
- **Reading Quiz**

April 10: Eating Fish

- Canvas: Peter Singer and Jim Mason, Ch. 9, *The Ethics of What We Eat*, pp. 111-134

April 12: Food for All?

- Movie: A Place at the Table
- **Food Log Papers Final Draft Due**

April 17: Food Politics

- Finish Movie: A Place at the Table
- Canvas: Robert Gottlieb and Anupama Joshi, “A New Food Politics,” *Food Justice* (2010), pp. 197-220

April 19: Food Assistance: SNAP, WIC, School Lunches

- Susan Levine. *School Lunch Politics*, pp. 39-88
- **Reading Quiz**

April 24: What Kind of Food Future?

- Canvas: Peter Singer and Jim Mason, Ch.18, *The Ethics of What We Eat*, pp. 270-84
- Canvas: Paul Roberts, Ch. 10 and “Epilogue,” *The End of Food*, pp. 269-322

April 26: Class Discussion: Ethics and Government Involvement

- **Self-Graded Discussion and Response**

May 1: In class review

May 5: **Final Exam**