

**PSCI 485: Senior Seminar in Food Politics**

Fall 2006

Humboldt State University

Monday 3:30-6:00pm, Siemens Hall 116

Prof. Noah Zerbe  
Office: FH 139  
Office Hours: M&F 10:00-11:30  
and by appointment

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***Course Description:***

We rarely pause to consider the food we eat, and when we do, our primary concern is more likely to be calorie content or nutritional value than anything else. Yet food is imbued with significant social and cultural meaning and evokes intense political and economic debate. In this seminar, we will explore major political and economic debates in the context of food; how people define their interests, ideas, goals and strategies in the kitchen, farm, factory, corporation, and government. In the most general terms, we will explore the politics of food from farm to fork.

This is the senior seminar for political science majors. Consequently, you will be expected to apply knowledge acquired from the other courses you have taken. An important part of your experience in this course will center on critically appraising and assessing the scientific and moral reasoning, often presented as factual or normative statements, regarding the issues raised in the materials. This will be done in both written work and seminar discussions.

***Required Book and Readings:***

The following books are required and are available at the HSU Bookstore:

- Brian Halweil. *Eat Here: Homegrown Pleasures in a Global Supermarket*. (WW Norton, 2004). (ISBN: 0-393-32664-0).
- Jack Kloppenburg. *First the Seed: The Political Economy of Plant Biotechnology*. (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 2005). (ISBN: 0-299-19244-X)

Additional readings will be available on electronic reserve through the course Moodle site.

***Course Requirements:***

**Critical Responses (30%):** Each week, you may submit a one page (2 paragraph) critical response to the readings for that week. Critical responses must be submitted via e-mail to me at noah.zerbe@humboldt.edu no later than 6:00am Monday morning. Late critical responses will not be accepted, and you must be present in class to discuss the review to receive credit for it. The response should be no more than two single-spaced paragraphs (one page). The first paragraph will briefly recount the main argument of the reading or readings for that week. The second paragraph will critically evaluate and assess the reading(s). They should conclude with at least two questions for class consideration. Critical responses will be graded on a  $\sqrt{0}$  (credit/no credit) scale, and critical responses that do not meet the basic expectations laid out here will not receive credit. There are a total of 10 weeks in which you may elect to submit a critical review (excluding weeks 1 and 9, and presentation weeks). Based on the following scale, the number of critical responses submitted for credit will determine your responses mark:

<u>Desired Mark</u>	<u># of CRs</u>
A (100%)	9
B (85%)	8

C (75%)	7
D (65%)	5-6
F (50%)	1-4
0 (0%)	0

**World Food Day Critical Response (10%):** The annual World Food Day is Monday, October 16. A teleconference featuring three key speakers is scheduled to take place from 9:00 am - 12:00 noon that day. You will be responsible for writing a 500 word (approx. 2 pages) response/analysis in which you critically engage with the issues and debates presented at the teleconference. The teleconference will be videotaped and available in the HSU Library incase you are unable to attend the teleconference live. Strong responses will be well-written, citing appropriate academic sources and presentations. Responses are due October 23.

**Essay (35%):** The bulk of your mark for this course will be based on an original research project. To that end, you will be responsible for writing an essay of 18-20 pages (typed, double-spaced) on a topic of your choice related to the ideas and concepts considered in class. An outline, thesis statement, and preliminary bibliography are due October 2. A draft of your essay is due for peer review no later than the beginning of class on November 6. Failure to submit an outline, preliminary bibliography, or paper draft will result in a per-item 10% penalty your final paper mark. The final draft of your essay is due in class on November 27. Late papers will be penalized at one-half letter grade per day. Please remember that this is an academic essay. I expect that the majority of citations be derived from academic sources (e.g., peer reviewed journals), and that it be generally free from grammatical and typographical errors. I also expect that the essays advance some kind of thesis or argument.

**Peer Essay Review.** You will be responsible for commenting on one of your colleague's papers through the peer review process. In order to facilitate the peer review process, you will need to divide into groups of 2-3 students and provide me with a list of the members of your group as soon as possible. Peer review comments must be returned to the author of the essay and to me on November 13. Failure to submit a paper for review, or failure to complete a meaningful review will result in a one-letter-grade penalty on your final paper mark.

**Paper Presentation (10%).** During the final two weeks of class, students will present their research paper to the class. Details on the presentation and discussion will be provided in class.

**Participation (15%):** This course is organized as a seminar. In order to be successful, you must come to class prepared to discuss the material. Regular attendance and participation in class is expected. I expect that you have completed the required readings and occasional outside assignments for a given week before class, that you attend regularly and that you contribute to seminar discussions. Attendance is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for doing well on your participation mark.

**Moodle Site:** Course information will regularly be posed to the course Moodle Site. Moodle is the freeware alternative to Blackboard. By using Moodle, the university saves considerable monies that can be used for other programs. I will provide a brief overview on accessing and using Moodle on the first day of the course. You can access the course site at:

**Moodle: <http://learn.humboldt.edu>.**  
 Your initial login will be your axe id for your username (e.g., nrz3)  
 Your initial password will be your student identification number

**Late Assignments** will be penalized at a rate of one-half letter grade (5%) per day. All assignments are due in class on the due date listed in the syllabus. Make up exams will not be scheduled without a valid medical excuse. If you have scheduling problems with any due dates, please contact me well before the assignment or exam is due.

**Appeals:** I am happy to speak with you about marks earned on a particular assignment. Before coming to discuss a grade, however, I request that you: (1) take 24 hours to read my comments before approaching me to discuss the mark; (2) write a detailed explanation of your question, including the specific reason(s) why you think your mark should be changed; and (3) submit your written response to me, and make an appointment with me (either during my office hours or at some other time) to discuss the grade. Under no circumstances will I discuss grades over e-mail or telephone.

**Academic Honesty & Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is the representation of someone else's work as your own, and includes but not limited to having someone else do your work or failing to properly attribute work to their sources. Plagiarism is a serious academic offense, and will result in an automatic zero for the assignment, failure of the course, and potentially more serious sanctions from the University according to the Academic Honesty policy. Please contact me *before turning in your assignment* if you are unsure of what constitutes plagiarism.

***In consideration of your fellow students, please turn off mobile phones before entering the classroom. If you absolutely must arrive late or leave early, please enter or leave quietly and sit near the door to minimize the disruption to your colleagues.***

**Support:** HSU offers excellent resources to help you succeed in your academic endeavors. These include the Library, Computer Labs, Computer Help Desk, Academic Support Center, Learning Center, and Writing Center. I strongly encourage you to take advantage of them!

**Disability Resources:** If you have a documented disability and would like to discuss academic accommodations, please contact me as soon as possible. Our campus Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC) can assist you with the accommodation process and can be reached at (707) 826-4678 or (707) 826-5392 (TTD). The SDRC is located in House 71 (Little Apartments) off Library Circle.

## Course Calendar

### Week 1 (August 21)

#### **Introduction: The Politics of Food at the Dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

No readings

### Week 2 (August 28)

#### **The Meaning of Food: Culture, Identity, and Eating**

Philip McMichael. "The Power of Food." *Agriculture and Human Values*. 17(2000): 21-33.

Sidney Mintz. "By Bread Alone: What Food Sharing Means Cross-Culturally." Unpublished paper presented at the Eating as a Moral Act: Ethics and Power from Agrarianism to Consumerism Saul O Sidore Memorial Lecture Series, April 27, 2004.

Sidney Mintz. "Introduction," Ch. 1 (pp. 1-16) in *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996).

Michael Pollan. "Introduction: Our National Eating Disorder," Ch. 1 (pp. 1-14) in *The Omnivore's Dilemma*. (New York: Penguin, 2006).

### Week 3 (September 4)

#### **No Class: Happy Labor Day!**

### Week 4 (September 11)

#### **Family Farms and Factory Farms: Food Production in the First World**

Jack Kloppenborg. *First the Seed: The Political Economy of Plant Biotechnology*. Pp. 1-151.

### Week 5 (September 18)

#### **First World Food: A Fastfood Nation?**

Eric Schlosser. "The True Cost of America's Diet." *Rolling Stone*. (794); Sep. 3 1998: 58-73.

Michael Pollan. "The Agri-Cultural Contradictions of Obesity." *New York Times Magazine*. (October 12, 2003): 41-44.

JoAnn Jaffe and Michael Gertler. "Victual Vicissitudes: Consumer Deskillling and the (Gendered) Transformation of Food Systems." *Agriculture and Human Values*. 23 (2006): 143-62.

Tom Standage. "Globalization in a Bottle," Ch. 12 (pp. 250-65) in *A History of the World in Six Glasses*. (New York: Walker, 2005).

### Week 6 (September 25)

#### **Consumer Movements, Organic Agriculture, Fair Trade and Resistance in the First World**

Ian Hudson and Mark Hudson. 2003. "Removing the Veil? Commodity Fetishism, Fair Trade and the Environment." *Organization and Environment*. 16(4): 413-430.

Aimee Shreck. "Resistance, Redistribution and Power in the Fair Trade Banana Initiative." *Agriculture and Human Values*. 22(2005): 17-29.

Laura Raunolds. "Re-Embedding Global Agriculture: The International Organic and Fair Trade Movements." *Agriculture and Human Values*. 17(3); 2000: 297-309.

Gavin Fridell. "The University and the Moral Imperative of Free Trade Coffee." *Journal of Academic Ethics*. 2(1); 2004: 141-59.

**Week 7 (October 2)**

**Landlords and Landless Peasants: Food Production in the Third World**

**NOTE: Thesis Statement, Outline and Preliminary Bibliography Due**

Jack Kloppenburg. *First the Seed: The Political Economy of Plant Biotechnology*. Pp. 152-355.

**Week 8 (October 9)**

**Food and Technology: The GMO Debate**

Andy Thorpe and Catherine Robinson. "When Goliaths Clash: US and EU Differences Over the Labeling of Foods Derived from Genetically Modified Organisms." *Agriculture and Human Values*. 21(2004): 287-98.

Jerry Cayford. "Breeding Sanity into the GM Food Debate." *Issues in Science and Technology*. 20(2); Winter, 2004: 49-56.

Jennifer Clapp. "WTO Agricultural Trade Battles and Food Aid." *Third World Quarterly*. 25(8); 2004: 1439-52.

Carl Eicher, et al. "Crop Biotechnology and the African Farmer." *Food Policy*. (forthcoming 2006).

**Week 9 (October 16): World Food Day**

**The Politics of Hunger: Food in the Third World**

World Food Day Teleconference Reading Package.

Food First. "Twelve Myths About Hunger." *Food First Background*. 5(3); 1998. Available online at <http://www.foodfirst.org/pubs/backgrdrs/1998/s98v5n3.html>

**Week 10 (October 23)**

**Food, Aid and Trade**

**NOTE: World Food Day Teleconference Reactions Due**

Maria O'Neill. "The Winds of Change Blow Again: The WTO's Impact on the European Community's Common Agricultural Policy." *Liverpool Law Review*. 24(2002): 181-208.

Antonio LaVina, et al. "Beyond the Doha Round and the Agricultural Subsidies Debate: Towards a Reform Agenda for Livelihoods and the Environment." *WRI Conference Paper*. December 2005.

Eliso Ponce and Ben Bradshaw. "The Impact of Farm Subsidies: Bringing Some Balance to the North-South Debate." *UN Chronicle*. November, 2003: np.

**Week 11 (October 30)**

**Food and Globalization 1**

Brian Halweil. *Eat Here: Homegrown Pleasures in a Global Supermarket*. All.

**Week 12 (November 6)**

**Food and Globalization 2**

**NOTE: Paper Drafts due for Peer Review**

James Heartfield. "The Politics of Food: Two Cheers for Agribusiness." *Review of Radical Political Economics*. 32(2); 2000: 317-26.

Michael Perelman. "The Costs of Capitalist Agriculture: A Challenge for Radical Political Economy." *Review of Radical Political Economics*. 32(2); 2000: 327-30.

Elizabeth Fitting. "Importing Corn, Exporting Labor: The Neoliberal Corn Regime, GMOs, and the Erosion of Mexican Biodiversity." *Agriculture and Human Values*. 23(2006): 15-26.

**Week 13 (November 13)**

**Alternatives**

**NOTE: Peer Reviews Due**

DCH Watts, B Ilbery and D Maye. "Making Reconnections in Agro-Food Geography: Alternative Systems of Food Provision." *Progress in Human Geography*. 29(1); 2005: 22-40

Charles Levkoe. "Learning Democracy Through Food Justice Movements." *Agriculture and Human Values*. 23(2005): 89-98.

Jennifer Wilkins. "Eating Right Here: Moving from Consumer to Food Citizen." *Agriculture and Human Values*. 22(2005): 269-73.

**Week 14 (November 20)**

**No Class: Happy Thanksgiving Break!**

**Week 15 (November 27)**

**Paper Presentations**

**NOTE: Final Papers Due**

**Week 16 (December 4)**

**Paper Presentations**