

The Politics of Food

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 building)

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 some of the many different arenas and institutions that shape the politics of food: kitchens, farms, factories, corporations, advertising strategies, cities, schools, churches, research institutions, social movements, legislatures, government programs. 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.

Students in this course may choose to participate in one of two established community service projects. One is a social studies course for juniors on “the Politics of Food” taught by Mr. Bruce Poulson in the Eco-Tech Division at University City High School. You will work with the students in this class to develop a community service project on issues related to food and nutrition at the school: the food served in the cafeteria; the food advertised and sold in vending machines; and the issues being debated in the Congressional reauthorization of the child nutrition and school lunch programs. The other project 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 fully utilized, it would bring millions more dollars in federal funds and opportunities for healthier food choices to low-income households throughout the city. Students working with this campaign will be trained to do screening for food stamp eligibility and assist with the food stamp application process at sites in low-income neighborhoods. They will also participate in a broader campaign

and organizing efforts directed towards overcoming the barriers to participation in the food stamp program. There will be some work-study jobs associated with both these projects. If you are a work-study student and would like to apply for such a position, please let me know as soon as possible.

For those of you who wish to pursue other options for your community service project, there are many possibilities including anti-hunger groups and burgeoning efforts to address the obesity epidemic. The Food Trust and the Urban Nutrition Initiative work on such issues as access to healthy food and nutrition related health problems in low-income communities (including Philadelphia schools). The Union of Food and Commercial Workers is engaged in organizing efforts among low wage food workers. The Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture together with local leaders is sponsoring a “buy fresh, buy local” campaign. Greensgrow is an urban farm, farmers’ market, and community supported agriculture project in Kensington. You can structure 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, with whom you will work, and what you hope to accomplish by September 19th and make an appointment to discuss your project with me. (Efforts to lay the ground work for future “politics of food” community service projects will be especially welcome.)

Requirements for the course include: 50-100 pages of weekly readings and at least five brief responses (1-3 pages), submitted by email by Wednesday at noon, on the day before the relevant class. Preferably with a partner or two, you will also choose one session from the syllabus that you will help to present. Each of you will also adopt a food related web site and give a brief report on the issues raised by your website in the course of the semester. (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, 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 your web site by Sept. 19th; you can change websites in the course of the semester, if you so choose.

There will be one short 5 page double space discussion paper due Sept 25 and 2-4 page analyses of your community service work due on Oct. 16th and Nov. 13th. You will also be expected to keep a journal on your community service work, and submit at least five entries in the course of the semester. Students will have a choice between a take home essay exam at the end of the semester and a 20-25 page research paper on any topic related to the politics of food. Those of you taking the research paper option, should bring ideas regarding the topics you would like to work on to class for discussion on Oct. 10^h. Draft of topic proposal including statement of problem to be analyzed, bibliography,

and strategy for research due Tuesday, Nov. 5th. A first draft is due Nov. 26^h. Take home final exams (or research papers) are due Dec. 11th.

Your research paper or final exam will count for 40% of your grade; your three discussion papers 10% each; your class participation (I'll count the quality of your responses for those of you who don't like to talk) 15%; and the quality of your participation in and analysis of the community service work (as judged by your journals, observations and reports on your work, and your participation in related discussions) 15%.

An additional PSCI 199 independent study course credit option will be available for those students who commit to at least six hours a week on their community service work and develop a related paper or multi-media project. Those students who wish to take this independent study course option must discuss it with the instructor before September 16th.

Required books: Upton Sinclair, The Jungle (1981 [1906]), bantam edition; Eric Schlosser, Fast Food Nation (2001); Janet Poppendieck, Emergency Food and the End of Entitlement (1998). These books are being placed on reserve at the library and have also 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

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

Week 2. Sept. 11 The Politics of Food at the turn of the 21st century:
REQUIRED: FAST FOOD NATION, 3-10, 133-190, 239-243, 260-288
Recommended:

Richard Lewontin, "Genes in the Food," New York Review of Books, June 21, 2001, 81-84 (packet); Wendell Barry, "The Prejudice Against Country People," The Progressive, April 2002, 21-24 (packet); Wendell Barry, "For Love of the Land," Sierra, May/June 2002, 50-55 (packet); Sidney Mintz, "Food and Eating: Some Persisting Questions," in Warren Belasco and Philip Scranton, eds., Food Nations (2002), 24-33 (packet); Eric Schlosser, Fast Food Nation, 1-10, 111-288; Harriet Friedman, "Remaking 'Traditions': How We Eat, What We Eat and the Changing Political Economy of Food," in Women Working the NAFTA Food Chain, 36-50.

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

Politics of Food case studies: Food security, poverty, hunger; grass-roots, faith-based and government programs.

REQUIRED: POPPENDIECK, 1-19, 36-106, 288-318.

Recommended:

Kenwyn Smith, Manna in the Wilderness of Aids: Ten Lessons in Abundance (2002), ix-48, 205-211. (packet); Janet Poppendieck, Sweet Charity?: Emergency Food and the End of Entitlement (1998), 1-48; 81-140, 201-255, 288-318 ; Norwood Allen Kerr, "Drafted into the War on Poverty: USDA Food and Nutrition Programs," Agricultural History, spring 1990, 154-166 (packet); Mary von Euler, "Food Stamps: The Remains of the Safety Net," pamphlet published by Americans for Democratic Action, 1998 (packet)

Week 4. Sept. 18 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; Gary Taubes, "What if It's All Been a Big Fat Lie?" New York Times Magazine, 7/7/02; Amanda Spake, "A Fat Nation," U.S. News and World Report,

RECOMMENDED: 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 5: Sept. 25. The Politics of Food at the turn of the 20th century: 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;

RECOMMENDED:

Clayton Coppin, "James Wilson and Harvey Wiley: The Dilemma of Bureaucratic Entrepreneurship," Agricultural History, spring 1990, 167-181; Clayton Coppin and Jack High, The Politics of Purity: Harvey Washington Wiley and the Origins of Federal Food Policy (1999), 1-6, 18-34, 165-171.

Week 6: Oct. 3. The Politics of Food and Low Wage Work at the turn of the 21st century
REQUIRED: Schlosser, Fast Food Nation, 59-88, 149-190

RECOMMENDED: Southern Exposure, "Ruling the Roost" (Summer, 1989), 1-33; Jim Lewis, "Grasshopper Power"; Jennifer Gordon, "Buying into the Future: Understanding Boycotts," Radcliffe Quarterly, Fall, 2001. Websites: <http://www.ciw-online.org>, <http://www.dpja.org>, <http://fairfoodamerica.org>; National Employment Law Project, www.nelp.org; Brandt,ed., Women Working the NAFTA Food Chain, 62-80, 114-126

Week 7: Oct. 10 The Politics of Agriculture.

Presentation of potential topics for those planning to take research paper option

REQUIRED: Mary Summers, "Putting Populism Back In: Rethinking Agricultural Politics and Policy," Agricultural History, Spring, 1996, 395-414; 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); Robert Paarlberg and Don Paarlberg, “Agricultural Policy in the Twentieth Century,” Agricultural History, Spring, 2000, 136-161

RECOMMENDED: Lawrence Goodwyn, The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America (1978), 20-93 (packet); Wendell Barry, “Six Agricultural Fallacies,” in Home Economics (1987), 123-131.

Week 8: Oct. 17 The Politics of Agricultural Research and Development:

2-4 page analysis of community service work due

REQUIRED: Jim Hightower, Hard Tomatoes, Hard Times (1973), vi-64; James Scott, Seeing Like a State, 262-306 (packet); Michael Pollan, “Power Steer,” New York Times, March 31, 2002; Michael Pollan, The Botany of Desire (2001), 185-248 (packet); RECOMMENDED: Kurt Eichenwald, “Redesigning Nature: Hard Lessons Learned; Biotechnology Food: From the Lab to a Debacle,” New York Times, Jan. 25, 2001; Jack Kloppenberg, First the Seed (1988) (packet), 1-18, 39-129, 278-290; Willard Cochrane, The Development of American Agriculture, 235-257 (packet); Harrison Welford, Sowing the Wind (1972) 264-285 (packet); Mary Summers, “History of Agricultural Institutions” for Organization for Competitive Markets position paper, A Food and Agricultural Policy for the 21st Century (2001)

Week 9: Oct. 24th The Politics of consumption, markets, and kitchens

REQUIRED: Marion Nestle, Food Politics (2002) (packet), vii-50, 93-174.

RECOMMENDED: Jeffrey Pilcher, “Industrial Tortillas and Folkloric Pepsi,” in Warren Belasco and Philip Scranton, Food Nations, 222-239; Arlene Avakian, ed., Through the Kitchen Window (1997), 1-9; Marge Piercy, “What’s that smell in the kitchen, 111 (packet)

Week 9: Oct. 31st

Discussion/presentation of food related web sites/issues

Week 10: Nov. 6th

Topic proposal and research strategy due for those writing research papers.

Discussion/presentation of work with Mr. Poulson’s class

Week 12: Nov. 13th

2-4 Page Analysis of Community Service work due

Discussion/presentation of work with Food Stamp Enrollment campaign

Week 13: Nov. 20

Discussion/presentation of other community service projects and research topics

FIRST DRAFT OF RESEARCH PAPERS DUE BEFORE BREAK

Week 14: Dec. 4 Last Class. 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