

Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Social Science and Policy Studies Department
GOV 231X – The Politics of Food
Sample Syllabus

Course Information

Professor Patricia Stapleton
#GOV231X #PoliticsOfFood

Course Description

Food is more than just what is on your plate at meal time. It can be framed in many ways, including as a cultural, ethical, or political issue. In this class, we explore the regulatory systems for food, with a particular focus on the United States and the European Union and their role in the international arena. The course will be split into five sections for advanced analysis: understanding food as a policy issue; technology in food production; food safety regulation; agriculture and sustainability; and food and foreign policy. Through readings, lectures, class activities, and research, students will learn the historical basis for current food issues, apply comparative theories and concepts to the American and European case studies, and develop analytic and research skills to engage effectively with the debates in contemporary scholarship on food production, regulation, and security issues. Recommended background: GOV1303 or GOV1320.

Assessment Statement & Learning Objectives

Your understanding of the course material will be evaluated through your completed reading responses, exams, and research assignments. At the end of the term you will be able to: hold an informed discussion on current issues in food politics, research these topics, and write field reports and essays that meet a high academic standard.

Required Texts - ALWAYS bring textbook, readings, and assignments to class.

There is **one required book** for this course.

Marianne Elisabeth Lien & Brigitte Nerlich (eds). *The Politics of Food*. Berg: 2006.

The Politics of Food is available for purchase at the campus bookstore.

Many of your required readings will be electronically available through the Gordon Library. Additional materials are also posted to [myWPI](#).

Students should regularly access a news source (print, online, or television) to keep up-to-date with current affairs related to food issues. Suggested sources: [The New York Times](#), [The International Herald Tribune](#), [The Washington Post](#), or the [BBC](#). Students who have subscriptions to any news source are encouraged to set up email notifications when food-related key words appear in-text.

Course Requirements

Plagiarism Tutorial	5% of Class Grade
Reader Responses (7/8)	15% of Class Grade
Field Assignments (4)	40% of Class Grade
Final Exam	25% of Class Grade
Attendance/Participation	15% of Class Grade

Calendar	
	The reading assignment listed under a given day is <u>due on that day</u> , i.e. the work listed for Class 2 should be finished before class that day.
Class 1	1 st day of class – Introduction to the course
Class 2 Comparative Policy	<i>Basic concepts of public policy, regulation, and risk assessment.</i> Assignments: Plagiarism tutorial; Reader Response #1. Reading: Intro chapter on Public Policy (myWPI); Reading on risk assessment (myWPI).
Class 3 Food as a Policy Issue	<i>Understanding how food can be a policy issue.</i> Assignments: Reader Response #2. Reading: Lien & Nerlich: Chp. 1-2.
Class 4	Assignments: Field Assignment #1. <u>Must be uploaded to myWPI by 12pm.</u> Reading: None
Class 5	Assignments: Reader Response #3. Reading: Lien & Nerlich: Chp. 3-4
Class 6	<i>EU & US specific cases of food as a policy issue.</i> Assignments: Reader Response #4. Reading: Lien & Nerlich: Chp. 6; Vogel, “The Tortoise and the Hare Revisited” (eGordon).
Class 7 Technology in Food Production	<i>Industrialized Farming and Genetically modified organisms (GMOs).</i> Assignments: Field Assignment #2. Reading: Michael Pollan, <i>The Omnivore’s Dilemma</i> : Chp. 1 (myWPI); Pollan: Chps. 4 & 6 (myWPI). Lien & Nerlich: Chp. 5
Class 8 Food Safety Regulation	<i>General issues in food safety regulation.</i> Assignments: Reader Response #5. Reading: -Lodge, “Risk, Regulation and Crisis: Comparing National Responses in Food Safety Regulation,” <i>Journal of Public Policy</i> , (2011) 31, pp 25-50 (eGordon);

	<p>-Raustiala, Drezner, Scott, and Echols, “The New Politics of Regulatory Cooperation: The Case of Food Safety,” <i>Proceedings of the Annual Meeting</i> (American Society of International Law), Vol. 102, (April 9-12, 2008), pp. 259-268 (eGordon).</p>
Class 9	<p><i>The US regulatory framework.</i></p> <p>Assignments: Field Assignment # 3.</p> <p>Reading: -Stewart & Gostin, “Food and Drug Administration Regulation of Food Safety,” <i>JAMA</i>, 2011; 306(1):88-89 (eGordon); -FDA-related materials: Basics about the FDA; FDA Food Basics; Who makes sure the food I buy at the grocery store is safe to eat?; How often does FDA inspect food manufacturing facilities?; Does FDA inspect grocery stores, restaurants, or dollar stores?; and read through information on The New FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA); How do the activities of USDA’s Food Safety Inspection Service differ from the activities of FDA’s Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition?</p>
Class 10	<p><i>The EU regulatory framework.</i></p> <p>Assignments: Reader Response # 6.</p> <p>Reading: Ansell & Vogel. “Chapter 1: The Contested Governance of European Food Safety Regulation,” <i>What's the beef? The contested governance of European food safety</i>. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2006, pp. 3-32 (eGordon); Young & Holmes, “Protection or Protectionism? EU Food Safety and the WTO,” <i>What’s the beef?</i> pp. 281-305 (eGordon).</p>
Class 11 Agricultural & Sustainability	<p><i>EU & US issues.</i></p> <p>Assignments: Reader Response #7.</p> <p>Reading: -Humphrey, “Convergence of US and EU Production Practices Under the New FDA Food Safety Modernization Act,” <i>The World Economy</i>. Special Issue: NTMs, Agricultural and Food Trade, and Competitiveness, Vol. 35.8, pp. 994–1005, August 2012 (eGordon); -Prakesh & Kollman. “Biopolitics in the EU and the US: A Race to the Bottom or Convergence to the Top?” <i>International Studies Quarterly</i> 47, no. 4 (December 2003): 617-41 (eGordon); -Wiener & Rogers, “Comparing precaution in the United States and Europe,” <i>Journal of Risk Research</i> 5.4 2002: 318 (eGordon).</p>
Class 12 Food & Foreign Policy	<p>Assignments: Field Assignment # 4.</p> <p>Reading: Lien & Nerlich: Chp. 9; McDonald: Introduction (myWPI)</p>

Class 13	Assignments: Reader Response #8. Reading: Lien & Nerlich: Chp. 11; Selected news articles on current global food trade & safety issues (myWPI).
Class 14	<i>Course debrief; course evaluations.</i> Assignments: Final exam due. Reading: None.