

Food Policy and Politics

University of Vermont

Monday and Wednesdays
3:30pm- 4:45pm
3 credits
Location: 115 Harris Hall

Instructor

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Course Overview:

The food system contains a complex mix of relationships, stakeholders, and feedbacks that operate across a diversity of goals. For example, farmers and agricultural systems may aim to maximize productivity and minimize costs while consumers seek to purchase food with minimal environmental impacts and maximum health benefits. Vice versa, many consumers lack the capacity to purchase or access food, which may be at odds with farmer goals of accessing high-end, niche markets with specialty products. These complexities are intertwined with sweeping sets of policies that influence the food system across many attributes from food safety to environmental conservation to nutrition. These policies affect the food system across many different scales of government from local to federal to global. To have a clear understanding of the global food system across many sectors it is crucial to also connect these sectors and actors to the policies that influence their decision-making and behaviors. This enables us to analyze how food system stakeholders influence and drive the policy process.

This is a systems course that will focus on understanding the food policy process, the policymakers, stakeholders, issues, goals and feedbacks at the interface of food policy and politics. Students will learn through a variety of experiential and hands-on methods and approaches including course games and exercises, policy analysis, direct policy engagement, and case studies. The course is designed so that students will have a clear understanding of the policy and regulatory process in the United States and across other policy systems globally and for students to critically assess the relationships between policymakers, policies and food system stakeholders.

Course Goals and Objectives:

This course will provide students with a systems perspective on food policies and politics across the entire food system. Often food policy courses focus on one particular aspect- either nutrition or agricultural policy- this course will provide overview of all aspects of food policy.

Students will achieve the following learning objectives:

1. Define the policy process and policymakers for creating, implementing and enforcing state, federal and international laws, regulations and policies **(The Food Policy Process)**
2. Identify multiple food system stakeholders and how they interact in policy systems to affect the food system **(The People in the Food Policy Process)**
3. Describe the issues facing the food system and their potential policy interventions **(The Problems the Food Policy Process Attempts to Change)**
4. Demonstrate through critical policy analysis how policy interventions may affect multiple components of the food system **(The Feedbacks in the Food Policy Process)**
5. Participate in the policy process through public comment, regulatory or legislative avenues **(The Politics of the Food Policy Process)**

Course Reading and Materials:

1. Food Policy in the United States: An Introduction. 2018. Park Wilde. (Required reading; on reserve at the library)
2. Food Politics. (2013 edition). Marion Nestle. (readings will be posted online)
3. Food Politics. 2010. Robert Paarlberg. (readings will be posted online)

The course readings will be made available on the blackboard site, with the exception of the Food Policy in the United States book, which is the required textbook. It is on reserve at the library and can be purchased online including at the following:

Amazon: https://www.amazon.com/Food-Policy-United-States-Introduction/dp/1138204005/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1535403945&sr=8-2&keywords=food+policy+in+the+united+states

Half.com: <https://www.ebay.com/itm/FOOD-POLICY-IN-THE-UNITED-STATES/332674898337?epid=242728227&hash=item4d74f819a1:g:60wAAOSwru9bFV82>

News and Blogs:

Food policy is happening all the time. For this reason we will start every class with an open discussion of current news in food policy. These discussions are part of your expected participation. To stay up to date you may want to browse some blogs on current agriculture and food policy topics. These include:

1. Politico [Morning Agriculture](http://www.politico.com/tipsheets/morning-agriculture) (blog of Politico, one of the leading newspapers on Capitol Hill) (<http://www.politico.com/tipsheets/morning-agriculture>)
2. Marion Nestle's blog [Food Politics](http://www.foodpolitics.com/) (she's a nutrition professor) (<http://www.foodpolitics.com/>)
3. Jason Lusk's [blog](http://jaysonlusk.com/) (he's a food and agriculture economics professor) (<http://jaysonlusk.com/>)

4. Park Wilde's [US Food Policy blog](http://usfoodpolicy.blogspot.com/) (he's an economist/food policy professor) (<http://usfoodpolicy.blogspot.com/>)
5. Marc Bellemare's [blog](http://marcfbellemare.com/wordpress/) (he's an agricultural economics professor) (<http://marcfbellemare.com/wordpress/>)

Course Expectations and Evaluation

In Class Expectations

This is an interactive, hands-on and engaged course. Students are expected to be active learners and will participate in many activities both within and out of class that give you an understanding of our policy systems and politics in action. As a result, active engagement in class is required to be a successful learner. **Laptop computers are permitted for note taking only. Cell phone use of any kind is not permitted in class, except during specific class activities in which Dr. Niles will tell you they are appropriate.** You may wish to download certain apps for course activities. Cell phone use outside of this context is not allowed. You will be working in groups frequently and are expected to contribute to your group and in class-discussions.

This is a political course, which means that people will be expressing their political opinions through debate, class discussions, i-clickers, and in other ways. To facilitate a learning experience, which includes understanding diverse perspectives, it is crucial that we first and foremost respect a difference of opinion. **I am deeply committed to creating a learning environment in which a diversity of political opinions is welcome and accepted as part of a learning experience.** To achieve that, all students are expected to respect their peers, Dr. Niles and their TA by listening to different perspectives even if they do not hold the same opinion or belief. Debate is a natural part of politics, but debate will always be conducted with respect in this class.

Out of Class Expectations

Politics and policy can be a very formal process with a high degree of professionalism. In this class it is highly likely that you will be engaging with policymakers and other professionals working within the policy system or working to influence the policy system. It is expected that you represent yourself, our course and UVM with the highest level of professionalism in these instances. Furthermore, please consider these aspects when interacting with Dr. Niles, TAs and others in email exchanges.

Citing Appropriate Sources

For your assignments you will be expected to use proper citations and scientific and research sources appropriate to the policy topic that you choose. While some aspects of the assignment may provide an opportunity for you to give your opinion on a topic, much of the assignment requires research and sources that should be properly cited. **Please use the APA citation style for all assignments** (see: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>)

Special Needs or Accommodations

It is my job to make your learning experience as productive as possible, if there is anything I can do to help facilitate this, please let me know. If you have specific requirements that require ongoing accommodations, please contact **Student Accessibility Services (SAS)** and ensure that they send me the appropriate documentation.

If you anticipate or are experiencing a serious situation that may affect your academic success (such as a health issue), please, contact [CALS Student Services](#) (802) 656-2980 as soon as possible, so they can formally alert professors to your academic needs. Also, please also feel free to talk to me or the TA as soon as possible.

Paid Note-taking

Students: There are third-party websites that offer class notes for payment. You have the right to buy these notes. However, please know that these third-party websites are not affiliated with UVM, this course, or Dr. Niles. As such, Dr. Niles cannot attest to their quality or accuracy. Further, Dr. Niles knows that many students have limited resources and some students have extremely limited resources, which is why you do not have to pay any additional money to take my class and be successful. I offer FREE textbooks at the library, suggest discount options for buying textbooks, and post FREE study guides, worksheets, and every power point slideshow on Black Board. Dr. Niles and your TA offer office hours every single week. If you come to class regularly, take your own notes, and utilize the free/cheap resources, you shouldn't need to pay for anything in the course beyond UVM tuition.

Paid-Note Takers: As a paid note taker for a third-party site, you are within your rights to do this. However, you should know that there are limits of your enterprise at UVM. Please read the linked policies to learn more about what this means and the potential consequences. It is against [UVM's technology policy](#) for you to market your services to other students using any UVM network (email, Black Board, etc). In addition, [UVM's Intellectual Property policy](#) states that you are not permitted to share materials that are considered the professor's intellectual property. These kinds of actions could result in potential for judicial action at UVM. *Dr. Niles DOES NOT give you permission to share her intellectual property, including, but not limited to power point shows, syllabi, professor written notes, worksheets, quizzes, exams, assignments, or study guides. You MAY share your personal handwritten or typed notes based on her lecture or your reading.*

Course Evaluation

Component	Percent of Grade	Total Points	Due Date
In-Class Participation (including activities, i-clicker, and unannounced quizzes)	15%	150	
In-Class Policy Debate	15%	150	(See additional information)
Policy Memo	10%	100	Due September 24th
Midterm	20%	200	Wednesday October 10
Direct Policy Participation Assignment	3% (Prospectus) 12% (Full assignment)	150	Prospectus Due October 3. Full assignment due November 28
Final Exam	25%	250	Monday December 10 4:30pm- 7:15pm In Harris 115.

Specific rubrics will be given out prior to the Policy Memo, debates, and the direct policy participation assignment so that you are aware of the grading process.

Note that final exam dates are NOT flexible. These dates are set by the Office of the Registrar and cannot be changed.

In Class Participation

You are expected to attend class; however, I do not formally take attendance. Instead, your participation will be determined by your participation in class in the following ways: 1) your presence and participation if you are called on directly in class; 2) i-clicker questions; 3) your participation in discussion during class of current news events related to politics and 4) your participation in class activities and quizzes, which will be mostly unannounced. **Other activities in class may be announced or unannounced ahead of time. If you are not in class and have not previously alerted me to your absence you will not be given credit for these assignments.** In some instances it may be necessary to miss class including for student athletes, religious holidays or because you are sick. These instances require either medical documentation (in the case of your illness) or prior discussion with the instructor. **If you know you will miss class for religious holidays or athletic travel you must notify Dr. Niles by the end of second week of class.**

In Class Policy Debate and Activities

We will frequently have in class activities and all of you will be participating in an in-class debate on a specific food policy issue once in the semester. Your debate position will be assigned to you and you will be required to argue points from that perspective, regardless of whether it is your own opinion. You will be given a number of articles or other sources to consider in writing your perspective. A written overview of the position will be turned in prior to class and you along with others who have the same position to argue will debate against those with an alternative perspective in class and help facilitate a class discussion. There will be five total debates, and students will be assigned to their respective debates during the second week of class.

Policy Memo

Understanding the policy process of how a bill becomes a law, and the many steps in between, is critical for success in this class. To facilitate that, your first assignment will be to choose a current U.S.

Congressional bill, research the bill and its intentions, and to develop a policy memo on the bill and its potential path to becoming a law. Additional details will be given out prior to the due date.

Direct Policy Participation Assignment

It's hard to understand the policy process or politics without experiencing it. You will be required to participate in the policy process in some way during this course and to document your experience from the beginning to the end. The options for policy participation are varied- they could involve writing a public comment, attending a hearing and testifying, meeting with a legislator or regulator or their staff to discuss your concerns on a food policy issue or others as we can determine together. Through this assignment you will actually experience what it is like to be involved in the process itself, rather than a bystander. It is important to know that you will not be graded on your perspective that you wish to express in this process, but rather, your engagement in doing so. **In other words- your politics are your own and you can express what you want that reflects your own political views.** You will be graded on your participation, documentation and reflection on the process- not your politics. Late assignments will not be accepted without prior arrangement with the Instructor. You will turn in a one page prospectus at the end of September for approval. This is to help you plan your activity for participation early on in the semester; many of these potential options require significant planning and coordination.

Submitting Assignments and Late Assignments

All assignments are due by 10pm on the day of their due date. Late assignments will receive the following penalties:

- Less than 24 hours late: -10%
- 1-3 days late: -20%
- 4-6 days late: -40%
- More than 7 days late: not accepted, unless there are specific excusable absences or reasons as discussed with Dr. Niles

Exams

A mid-term exam will be given halfway through the course and a comprehensive final exam will be given in the course that will assess your understanding of the course objectives and assignments and the materials we learned and discussed in class. **The final exam date for this course is Monday December 10th from 4:30pm until 7:15pm in Harris 115.**

Proposed Course Topics, Materials and Assignments

Class/ Date	Class Topic	Assigned Readings (these readings should be done PRIOR to class)	Assignments/ Other Information
Class 1 Monday August 27th	Introduction to the course and food policy	Introducing ourselves. Overview of the course and materials. Discussion on what is food policy and why do we study it?	
Class 2 Wednesday August 29	Discussion of political values. Introduction to the US Food Policy Process (Legislative)	1) Listen to the podcast Hidden Brain; 2) Food Policy in the US Chapter 1 (Wilde); 3) Food Politics Overview (Paarlberg)	
NO CLASS MONDAY SEPTEMBER 3- LABOR DAY			
Class 3 Wednesday September 5	Introduction to the US Food Policy Process (Federal Agencies and Rulemaking)	1) Federal Register: Guide to the rulemaking process	Review legislative process
Class 4 Monday September 10	The U.S. in the Global Food Policy Process- Sustainable Development & Aid	1) NPR article: " U.S. To Ship Peanuts To Feed Haitian Kids; Aid Groups Say 'This Is Wrong' "; 2) Keep the Food in Food Aid : American Farm Bureau; 3) Heritage Foundation Brief- Food Aid focus on malnutrition	

Class 5 Wednesday September 12	NO CLASS		
Class 6 Monday September 17	The U.S. in the Global Food Policy Process – Global Food and Agricultural Trade	1) Food Policy in the US Chapter 4 (Food and agricultural trade) 2) Five-Thirty-Eight: Tariffs can work ; 3) The Hill Op-Ed: Farmers and Trump's Tariffs	Debate 1: Should the U.S. impose tariffs that will affect food and agricultural products?
Class 7 Wednesday September 19	People and Policymakers in Food Policy: Who Influences Food Politics and how? Effective policy writing	1) Politico Report 2) Open Secrets (browse major food companies) 3) Review Food Policy in the US Chapter 1, Section 1.6 & 1.7 (Wilde)	
Class 8 Monday September 24	Our Biggest Food Policy: The Farm Bill Overview	1) Congressional Research Service: What Is the Farm Bill?	Assignment 1: Policy Memo Due
Class 9 Wednesday September 26	Our Biggest Food Policy: The Farm Bill (Agriculture Programs and Conservation)	1) McGranahan, D.A. et al. 2013. A historical primer on the US farm bill: Supply management and conservation policy. Journal of Soil and Water Conservation	
Class 10 Monday October 1	Challenges and Issues in Food Policy: Agriculture Policies & Subsidies	1) Food Policy in the US Chapter 2 (Agriculture) (Wilde); 2) Wall Street Journal: Should Washington end agriculture subsidies? ; 3) Heritage Foundation Commentary- "Congress Gives Massive Subsidies to Farmers- It Shouldn't"	Debate 2: Should we subsidize agricultural production and, if so, what should we subsidize?
Class 11 Wednesday October 3	Challenges and Issues in Food Policy: Agriculture and Environmental Policies	1) Food Politics Chapter 9, (Paarlberg); 2) Food Policy in the US Chapter 3 (Food production and the environment)	Direct Policy Engagement Assignment Prospectus Due
NO CLASS Monday October 8- FALL RECESS			
Class 12- Wednesday October 10- Midterm- Policy process (US and global), Farm Bill, Agriculture policies			

Class 13 Monday October 15	Challenges and Issues in Food Policy: Animal Agriculture and Policies	Readings TBD	
Class 14 Wednesday October 17	Challenges and Issues in Food Policy: Nutrition, Diet and Health (Global & U.S. Food Insecurity and Malnutrition Policies)	Global: 1) State of Food Insecurity in the World (2017) U.S.: 1) Watch the following 3 videos with different perspectives on US food insecurity: 1) MSNBC Video - NYC; 2) Take Part Video 3) National Geographic - Rural Food insecurity in Iowa	
Class 15 Monday October 22	Our Biggest Food Policy: The Farm Bill (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program)	1) Food Policy in the US Chapter 10 (hunger and food insecurity) (Wilde)	Debate 3: Food stamp debate Guest Speaker: Faye Conte, Advocacy Director, Hunger Free Vermont
Class 16 Wednesday October 24	Challenges and Issues in Food Policy: Nutrition, Diet and Health (Dietary Guidelines and Nutrition)	1) Food Policy in the US Chapter 8 (dietary guidance and health)(Wilde); 2) Deconstructing Dietary Guidelines (Nestle);	
Class 17 Monday October 29	Challenges and Issues in Food Policy: Nutrition, Diet and Health (Diet and Sustainability)	1) Merrigan et al. 2015. Designing a Sustainable Diet.; 2) 2015 Dietary Guidelines Committee Report Executive Summary	Debate 4: Should dietary guidelines include sustainability?
Class 18- Wednesday October 31	Challenges and Issues in Food Policy: Child Nutrition Policies	1) Nutrition Assistance Programs for Children (Wilde, Chapter 11)	
Class 19- Monday November 5	Actors and Feedbacks in Food Policy: Labor Policies in the Food System	TBD	Guest Speaker: Migrant Justice
Class 20- Wednesday November 7	Actors and Feedbacks in Environment and Food Policy: National and State Food Waste Policies	1) Harvard Food Policy Law Clinic, Opportunities to reduce food waste in 2018 Farm Bill Executive Summary ; 2) Pew Charitable Trusts-	

		Trying to Reverse America's Rotten Record on Food Waste	
Class 21- Monday November 12	Actors and Feedbacks in Environment and Food Policy: Vermont's Food Waste Policy	TBD	Guest Speaker: Kim Crosby, Government Affairs Director, Casella
Class 22 Wednesday November 14	TBD	TBD	
November 19-23 Thanksgiving Recess- NO CLASSES			
Class 23 Monday November 26	Actors and Feedbacks in Nutrition and Food Policy: Booze Politics	1) Center for Public Integrity Report: Drunk on Power ; 2) CNN: Most US Beers to get calorie and ingredient labels	Debate 5: Should all alcoholic beverages have nutrition labels?
Class 24 Wednesday November 28	Actors and Feedbacks in Nutrition and Food Policy: Soda Politics	Soda Politics Chapters 1; 25-28 (Nestle)	Direct Policy assignment due.
Class 25 Monday December 3	Actors and Feedbacks in Food Policy: Food Safety	1) Politico Investigation: Why President Obama and Congress turned their backs on food safety ; 2) FSMA Overview and Background - National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition	Guest Speaker: Rachel Schattman, University of Vermont Cooperative Extension
Class 26 Wednesday December 5	Final Exam Review and Course Wrap-up/Evaluations		

Additional UVM Policies and Resources

Academic Integrity

The policy addresses plagiarism, fabrication, collusion, and cheating.

www.uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/acadintegrity.pdf

Grade Appeals

If you would like to contest a grade, please follow the procedures outlined in this policy:

www.uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/gradeappeals.pdf

University Grading Policy

For information on grading and GPA calculation, go to www.uvm.edu/academics/catalogue and click on Policies for an A-Z listing.

UVM Writing Center

The University provides a Writing Center in 105 Bailey/Howe Library. The center can help make writing less stressful by providing students with a tutor and writing resources.

Make an appointment:

<http://www.uvm.edu/wid/writingcenter/?Page=tutorsandschedule.html&SM=submenu5.html> Resources for writing: <http://www.uvm.edu/wid/writingcenter/tutortips/scienceproftips.html>

Final exam policy

The University final exam policy outlines expectations during final exams and explains timing and process of examination period. <http://catalogue.uvm.edu/undergraduate/academicinfo/examsandgrading/>