

# The Politics of Food and Hunger

POLS 421 — Spring 2008

Dr. Linda M. Young

Tuesday & Thursday 2:10-3:25

JOHN 346

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*The Politics of Food and Hunger* will examine a diverse set of issues concerning food and hunger through a political economy perspective. We will examine the evolution of government policies in providing safe, affordable and secure food supplies in both the developed and developing world. We will also scrutinize the motivations for support of the agricultural sector, and how the rationale and political economy of agricultural policy evolve through the process of development. The role of the individual, civil society, government and multilateral institutions in addressing the issues below will be critiqued.

## Major topics

1. *Who Is Hungry and Why*: The status and distribution of global hunger and progress in achieving the Millennium Goals for the alleviation of hunger. What level of food insecurity is acceptable, at home and abroad?
2. *The Political Economy of Famine*: Discussion of the international occurrence of famine, its relationship to the form of government, and Nobel Lauriat Amartya Sen's concept of the entitlement to food.
3. *Agricultural Policy in Developing Countries*: An examination of agricultural price policy in developing countries and its consequences. How has agricultural policy affected the level of food security in developing and transition countries?
4. *Domestic and International Food Aid*: Debates in U.S. domestic food assistance programs including an evaluation of the roles of the government and civil society. US international food aid programs will be critiqued.
5. *Food Safety and Scares*: What are the strengths and weaknesses of our regulatory system for food safety? Is the US public given adequate information to assess food safety issues? How and to what extent has increased trade and bioterrorism increased the risk of unsafe food?
6. *Agriculture*: Polluter or environmentally friendly?
7. *Biotechnology and Food*: Why has the public of the United States widely accepted genetically modified organisms (GMOs) while other publics have rejected them? What are the consequences for trade and for the alleviation of hunger in developing countries of the lack of global acceptance of GMOs? What are the consequences of market power in the research, development and patent rights of GMOs?
8. *Obesity*: What factors have contributed to the increase in obesity in the United States and though out the world? To what extent are powerful MNCs to blame? What

policies can the United States adopt to discourage obesity and what is the political economy of adopting these policies?

9. *Local Food Systems*: What economic, health and political goals can be achieved through the promotion of local food production?

10. *Biotethics*: How do our food choices matter?

### **Course Goals**

- To address the questions outlined above analyzing the political and economic factors and the relationship between the two;
- Understand the causes and consequences of hunger, both within the United States and globally;
- To evaluate how rent-seeking, the development of international norms, and other political theories explain the evolution of the government's role in food and hunger.

### **Requirements**

Students are expected to attend class regularly; read assignments before class and be prepared discuss them during class. Lectures are designed to supplement and clarify material presented in the readings. To participate in this seminar you must commit to doing the reading and participating in class discussions and group assignments.

### **Office Hours**

Dr. Linda Young

2-134 Wilson Hall

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994-5604

Monday 9-11 and Wednesday 9-11 and by appointment

### **Grading**

*Papers –13 %*

One short paper will be required accounting for 15% of your grade. **THIS PAPER WILL REQUIRE AN INTERVIEW OF A RESOURCE PERSON RELATED TO YOUR QUESTION**

*Class Debate-15%*

Details to come!

*Reading Quizzes– 12%*

Four quizzes will be given with no notice to test students on their comprehension of the assigned readings. **NO MAKESUPS WILL BE GIVEN.**

*Midterm – 20%*

The mid-term will consist of in-class essays synthesizing and evaluating the course material to date. The questions will be given out one week ahead of the midterm.

*Group Work – 20%*

On several occasions work will be done in groups during class time, evaluating and critiquing the readings. Peer evaluation will be used in this component of the grade, and details will be explained in the first class.

*Final – 20%*

The final will be a take home essay due on the day of the class final as scheduled.

**Unexpected Emergencies**

Students who have an unexpected emergency and have to miss an exam or turn in an assignment late are encouraged to contact me as soon as possible. Written verification of the emergency is expected.

**Plagiarism**

Paraphrasing or quoting another's work without citing the source is a form of academic misconduct. Even inadvertent or unintentional misuse or appropriation of another's work (such as relying heavily on source material that is not expressly acknowledged) is considered plagiarism. If you have any questions about using and citing sources, you are expected to ask for clarification. Plagiarism will be dealt with according to departmental and university policies. Papers will be submitted on line and subject to scrutiny using state of the art software to detect plagiarism.

**All readings on webct except for two textbooks by Marion Nestle**

| Date        | Topic  | Reading  |
|-------------|--|--|
| Jan 17      | Introduction and expectations  |  |
| Jan 22      | Hunger in the United States  | Nord, Andrews and Carlson  |
| Jan 24      | Hunger in Gallatin County and the Food Bank<br>Presentation by Heather Grenier                                   | Andrews and Clancy   |
| Jan 29      | Global Food Security   | Runge et al, Ch 1 & 2  |
| Jan 31      | Global Food Security con't   | FAO Food Insecurity in the World 2006  |
| Feb 5       | Famine   | Sen , Chapter 7  |
| Feb 7       | <i>Group Project No. 1</i>   | <i>Who is Hungry and Why?</i>  |
| Feb 12      | History and Issues in Food Aid   | Barrett and Maxwell, Chs 1,2 3   |
| Feb 14      | History and Issues in Food Aid (con't)<br>Case Study: Ethiopia   | Barrett and Maxwell, Chs 5,6   |
| Feb 19      | Agricultural policy in developing countries  | World Bank Development Report 2008, Ch 1   |
| Feb 21      | Case study on China and transition countries   | Swinnen and Rozelle Chapter 4  |
| Feb 26      | Food Scares  | Nestle, <i>Safe Food</i> , Chs. 1,2,3,4  |
| Feb 28      | No class due to midterm<br>Midterm will be posted Feb. 22<br>Essay questions due Feb 29, 5 pm                    |  |
| March 4     | Biotechnology and Consumer Acceptance  | Nestle, <i>Safe Food</i> , Chs. 5,6  |
| March 6     | View dvd "The Future of Food"  | Nestle, <i>Safe Food</i> , Chs. 7,8  |
| March 10-14 | Spring Break   |  |
| March 18    | Food Politics  |  |
| March 20    | Nutrition and Food Marketing<br>Group Project #2: Jigsaw reading   | Nestle, <i>Food Politics</i> , Jigsaw reading: Chs. 1-10   |
| March 25    | Obesity: Guest lecture by Prof. Alison Harmon, Health and Human Development                                      | Young & Nestle: Expanding portion sizes ...<br>Nestle: Childhood Obesity<br>Mancino: Insidious Eating  |
| March 27    | Agriculture and Pollution  | FAO: Livestock's Long Shadow, Summary & Ch. 3  |
| April 1     | Agriculture and Pollution  | Shortle and Abler, Ch2   |
| April 3     | Guest speaker: Gallatin Valley Land Trust  | TBA  |
| April 8     | Local Food Systems<br>Guest speaker Travis Byerly, Montana Fish Company  | Singer and Mason, Ch 10  |
| April 10    | Field trip: 2:30 13000Springhill Road. Becky Weed and Dave Tyler, Belgrade's Thirteen Mile Lamb and Wool Company | <a href="http://www.lambandwool.com/">http://www.lambandwool.com/</a><br><a href="http://www.outsidebozeman.com/magazine.php?action=fullArticle&amp;articleID=433">http://www.outsidebozeman.com/magazine.php?action=fullArticle&amp;articleID=433</a> |
| April 11    | Paper due 5 pm   |  |
| April 15    | Local Food Systems   |  |
| April 17    | Food as a Weapon   |  |
| April 22    | Food as a Weapon con't   |  |
| April 24    | Class debate   |  |
| April 29    | Class debate   |  |
| May 1       | Group Project #3 Bioethics   | Singer and Mason, Ch 7 and 18  |

