**POLI 138D: Special Topics in Comparative Politics**

**The Politics of Food**

**Course Overview:**

Everybody eats. But how do politics affect our food? This course examines close historical relationships between politics and food; the politics of conventional agriculture and food policy; and alternative agriculture movements and food systems. Through these topics, you will learn to identify and evaluate the political choices underlying our current food system and proposed alternatives to it; and you will learn to identify and evaluate the political choices and tools available for remaking and restructuring that food system according to your own values and preferences, whatever they may be.

**Student Responsibilities:**

In order to achieve the course goals, you will need to read, watch, and digest the course texts, think through and complete the assignments, and participate fully in course activities and discussions. These are all necessary for the completion of the various assignments (paper, exams) which will give you the opportunity to apply the knowledge, understanding, and skills you will gain in the course. Any changes to the syllabus (incl. exam/due dates or required readings) will be posted to the WebCT page for this course, which you should check regularly.

**Required Texts:**

Many of the course readings and films are available on e-reserves at Geisel Library. You can access these readings at [http://reserves.ucsd.edu](http://reserves.ucsd.edu); to access these items off-campus you will need to enable a web proxy or vpn on your computer (to learn how to set this up, go to: [http://libraries.ucsd.edu/services/computing/remote-access/index.html](http://libraries.ucsd.edu/services/computing/remote-access/index.html)). In addition, two of the course readings are available for purchase in the bookstore and for borrowing on reserve at Geisel Library. These are:


**Student Evaluation:**

To earn a grade in this course, you must complete: 1) an in-class midterm examination; 2) a paper; and 3) an in-class final examination. No student who fails to complete one or more required assignments will pass the course. These three items will be weighted as either 1) Midterm-25%, Paper-25%, and Final-50%; OR 2) Midterm-30%, Paper-35%, Final 35%; your final course grade will be based on the higher calculation of the two options. The in-class exams will consist of both short-answer and essay questions. Tests will be based on lectures, presentations, readings, and films. The paper can either be on a topic of your own choosing, with approval by the teaching staff, or on a topic assigned by the instructor. Late papers will be penalized. Incompletes or special exams will be given only in pressing and properly documented circumstances.
cases and in accordance with UCSD policy; petitions for these must be timely.

The midterm exam is tentatively scheduled for Monday, May 3rd, 2010. The due date for the paper is tentatively scheduled for Monday, May 24, 2010. The final exam is currently scheduled for Wednesday, June 9, 2010 at 3pm, location TBA; please double check the official university final exam schedule in case of changes.

**Students with Disabilities:**
Students with disabilities who may need accommodations are encouraged to notify, as soon as possible, both the instructor and the Office for Students with Disabilities {http://osd.ucsd.edu} in order to work out the particulars. Note: both the instructor and the Office for Students with Disabilities must be notified *well in advance* of any course deadlines or due dates.

**Academic Honesty:**
Your instructor takes academic dishonesty very seriously. Any student violating UCSD's Academic Dishonesty or UCSD's Student Conduct policies will earn an 'F' in the course and will be reported to their college Dean for investigation. Committing acts that violate Student Conduct policies, and which result in course disruptions, are cause for suspension from UCSD. See {http://www-senate.ucsd.edu/manual/appendices/app2.htm#AP14} for more information.

*Tentative* Course Calendar:

**I. Introduction:**

**Week 1:**
Politics. And Food.
Listen or Read: Joyce 2010. “Belief in Climate Change Hinges on Worldview.” [total 4min]
Film: *Food, Inc.* [total 91min]
Film: *The Botany of Desire*, “Potato/Control.” [in class]

**II. Food in Political History: Case Studies**

**Week 2:**
Manning 2004. “The Oil We Eat.” [total 9p]

Sugar
Mintz 1985. Selections from Ch 2 (pp 23-46; pp 52-57; pp 61-73); Selection from Ch. 4 (pp 151-171). [total 64p]
Beghin and Jensen 2008. “Farm policies and added sugars in US diets” (p 480, p 484, p 486). [total 3p]
Week 3:
Bananas
Koeppel 2008. Introduction, Chs 9-11, Chs 15-16, Ch 23, Ch 27, Selection from Ch 35 (pp. 221-223), Selection from “A Banana Timeline” (pp 247-260). [total 73 p]
Porter 2009. “Banana Wars.” [total 1p]

Week 4:
Famine and Hunger
Waldman 2002. “Poor in India Starve as Surplus Wheat Rotts.” [total 3p]
Riches 1999. “Advancing the Human Right to Food in Canada.” [total 9p]
Film: The Business of Hunger. [total 28min]

III. Conventional Agriculture and Food Policy

Week 5:
A Primer on Conventional Agriculture
Pollan 2006. Introduction, Chs 1-7. [total 116p]
Hurst 2009. “The Omnivore’s Delusion.” [total 7p]
Castle 2008b. “EU relents and lets a banana be a banana.” [total 2p]
Film: King Corn. [total 90min]

Week 6:
*Tentative* Midterm Date: Monday, May 3, 2010, in Class

The Politics of Food Safety

Week 7:
The Politics of Biotechnology and Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs)
Nestle 2003. Safe Food. Part Two “Intro” (pp 139-143), Chs 6-8, “Conclusion.” [total 114p]
Film: Deconstructing Supper. [total 48min]

IV. Alternative Agriculture, Food Policy, and Social Movements

Week 8:
A Primer on Alternative Agriculture
Pollan 2006. Chs 8-14. [total 151p]
Week 9:

*Tentative* Paper Due Date: Monday, May 24, 2010, in Class

Food Security and Alternative Food Policy: Cuba and Belo Horizonte, Brazil
Nieto and Delgado 2002. “Cuban Agriculture and Food Security.” [total 17p]
Film: The Power of Community: How Cuba Survived Peak Oil. [total 53min]

Farmers, Farm Labor, and Peasant Movements
Holt-Giménez 2010. Introduction to “Grassroots Voices.” [total 6p]

Week 10:

Consumer Movements (Fair Trade, Local Food, etc.) vs. Food-System Change
Wilkins 2005. “Eating Right Here: Moving from Consumer to Food Citizen.” [total 5p]
Film: Food, Inc. [total 91min]

*Tentative* Final Exam Date: Wednesday, June 9, 2010, 3-6pm, location TBA

List of Sources:


