125B: The Politics of Food in a Global Economy

Spring 2015, Room HSS 1330, Tuesday & Thursday, 11:00 am -12:20 pm

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Course Website: https://ted.ucsd.edu/ (Search for Instructor “Naoi”). All the readings and lecture slides will be uploaded on TED.

Important Due Dates:

April 16 (Thursday): Assignment I due in class (30% of your grade): Your own research memo on the politics of agricultural protectionism in two countries of your choice from the dataset below (5-page, single-spaced text with figures you made from World Bank’s Estimates of Distortions to Agricultural Incentives, 1955-2011). See the Template for this assignment at the end of this syllabus. Open-book and open sources. You can also discuss your research with anyone. When you incorporate their insights and suggestions, make sure to acknowledge them in the memo as scholarly etiquette.

May 12 (Tuesday): Sign-up due date for voluntary presentations between May 26-June 4 (see below).

May 19 (Tuesday): In-class quiz on readings and lecture through TOPIC 6 (20% of your grade): This will be multiple choice questions on the required readings and lectures. Closed book.

May 26 – June 4: In addition to my lecture about ethical consumption, there will be a several students’ presentations of their research on the politics of food that the lecture did not cover, or, food-related activities and NGOs that they are involved in. Please sign up for it by May 12 and send me the power-point slides before the class.

June 9 (Tuesday): Assignment II due between 1:30-2:30 pm in the class (50% of your grade). Your own research memo on the politics of consumption (single-spaced, 5-page with figures and tables). Details to be announced after the Assignment I. Open-book & open sources. Early submission is allowed as long as you can submit hardcopies.
About this Course:

This course will examine the politics of food in a global economy. The first five weeks will examine the politics of food producers (farmers and food industries), and the last five weeks will examine the politics of food consumers. In addition to learning important issues in the politics of food, we will also learn the following:

**Political Economy Theories and Concepts**: learn key theories in political economy such as the logic of collective action, how political institutions affect public policy outcomes, tragedy of commons and various solutions to the common-pool resource problem, and how special interest groups influence policy-making process.

**Scientific Literacy**: develop skills to read and understand peer-reviewed articles in science and social sciences and to make evidence-based decisions in your life.

**Research Skills**: learn how to conduct original research and communicate the findings accurately and visually using figures and tables.

Course Outline

Part I: The Politics of Food Producers

- TOPIC 1: The Politics of Agricultural Protection Around the World
- TOPIC 2: Political Institutions and Agricultural Protection
- TOPIC 3: Environmental Challenges to Farming and Fisheries
- TOPIC 4: Politics of Famine and Hunger
- TOPIC 5: Processed Food Industries

Part II: The Politics of Food Consumers

- TOPIC 6: Public Health Consequences of Food Policies (1): Obesity
- TOPIC 7: Public Health Consequences of Food Policies (2): GMOs
- TOPIC 8: Ethical Consumption –Fair Trade, Sustainability, Animal Rights and Locally-grown Produce

Workshop I (April 14): Q and As Sessions on the Assignment I (Bring your questions & laptops)
Workshop II (May 14): Causal Inference and the Importance of Experiments

Guest Lectures

April 21: Peter Halmay on co-managed sea urchin fishery in San Diego.
April 30 or May 5: Jason Kuo (Ph.D. Candidate, Political Science Department, UCSD) on Food and Drug Administration and Free Trade.
May : Ike Sharpless (Ph.D. student, Political Science Department, UCSD) on animal rights.
March 30: Overview of the Class and Explanations for Assignment I

Check out the dataset and related materials for the Assignment I:

Scroll down the above website and click: “Core database (updated to 2011)”. You will be using this data for the Assignment I.

This link will take you to regional and country-specific reports on agricultural protectionism using the above data:

Part I: The Politics of Food Producers

TOPIC 1: The Politics of Agricultural Protection Around the World

April 2, 7: The Patterns of Agricultural Protection and Various Approaches to Explaining Them


Discussion Questions: Why some governments protect farmers more than others? Who shoulder the costs of agricultural protection? What are incentives of politicians in protecting farmers vs. providing cheaper food to consumers?

We will learn:
How do we measure agricultural protection across countries and across commodities?
What are governments’ objectives and the trade-offs that they face?
What are the non-institutional factors that shape the levels of protection?

Key Concepts: the logic of collective action, various measures of agricultural protectionism (tariffs, NRA, PSE, CSE etc), different government’s instruments of protection, economic vs. political efficiency
TOPIC 2: Political Institutions and Agricultural Protection

April 9: Regime Types, Electoral Systems and Agricultural Protection


We will learn: What are the institutional factors that affect the levels of protection? Do democracies differ from autocracies in responding to farmers’ vs. consumers’ demands? Which electoral systems empower producers (farmers) over consumers?

Key Concepts: politicians’ incentives in authoritarian vs. democratic systems, different types of electoral systems (majoritarian vs. proportional, single-member district vs. multi-member district systems),

April 14: Workshop on the Assignment I (Q and As Sessions)

Bring your questions and laptops!

TOPIC 3: Environmental Challenges to Farming and Fisheries

April 16: Governing the Commons *(Assignment I Due in Class)*


April 21: Guest Lecture, Peter Halmay, the Sea Urchin King & the President of San Diego Fisherman’s Working Group. Plus viewing of a documentary about urchin fishing in San Diego, *Sweet, Sexy Ocean*.

Read following background articles before his guest lecture.

• About Pacific to Plate Legislation (Pete will be testifying on this in Sacramento):
  http://asmdc.org/speaker/about/speaker-atkins-announces-pacific-to-plate-legislation-to-
  boost-coastal-fish-markets

Discussion Questions: What are the common-pool resource problems and what are various
solutions to the problems?

Key Concepts: tragedy of commons, common-pool resource problem, various solutions to CPR
problems.

TOPIC 4: Politics of Famine and Hunger
April 23, 28

• Haggard, Stephan, and Marcus Noland. *Famine in North Korea: Markets, aid, and
• Nunn, Nathan, and Nancy Qian. 2014. “US Food Aid and Civil Conflict.” *American

Discussion Questions: Amartya Sen famously said: “No famine has ever taken a place in
democracy”. Is this true? Why do famines occur more often under autocratic rules? What are
tehe

Key Concepts: tragedy of commons, common-pool resource problem, various solutions to CPR
problems.

TOPIC 5: Processed Food Industries
April 30, May 5

• Nestle, Marion. 2013. *Food politics: How the food industry influences nutrition and

Discussion Questions: How do food industries influence nutrition and health of the public?
What role do regulatory agencies such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the
U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) play?

Key Concepts: regulatory capture, delegation from Congress to bureaucratic agencies, politics
behind the scientific knowledge

Guest Lecture by Jason Kuo (Our TA!): TBA.
TOPIC 6: Public Health Consequences of Food Policies (1): Obesity

May 7, 12
• Kaufman, Leslie, and Adam Karpati. 2007. “Understanding the sociocultural roots of childhood obesity: food practices among Latino families of Bushwick, Brooklyn.” Social Science & Medicine 64.11: 2177-2188.

Discussion Questions: What accounts for the rise of obesity around the world? What can governments do to address obesity problems?

Key Concepts: nutrition transition, energy gap model, supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP), variety of medical and welfare systems

May 14 Workshop II: Causal Inference and the Importance of Experiments

• Oster, Emily. 2013. Expecting better: why the conventional pregnancy wisdom is wrong and what you really need to know. Hachette UK, Chapter 4.

May 19: In-class, closed-book quiz on readings & lecture (through Topic 6). Multiple choices.

TOPIC 7: Public Health Consequences of Food Policies (1): GMOs


Discussion Questions: Who are the winners and losers of biotechnological innovation such as GMOs and how do they influence regulatory decisions by governments? What are known and unknown health risks? Why some governments regulate them heavily while others do not?

Key Concepts: genetically modified organism, regulator testing, revolving door, labeling
TOPIC 8: Ethical Consumption –Fair Trade, Sustainability and Locally-grown Produce
May 26, June 2 & June 4


Guest Lecture by Ike Sharpless (our TA!): Animal rights

Some Students’ Presentations (Sign-up by May 12)

Discussion Questions: What is ethical consumption? Who are more likely to pay premium for being ethical than others?

Key Concepts: “Willingness to pay” research, behavior vs. preference (attitudes), price premium for ethical consumption, labeling and traceability regulation

**Final research memo submission deadline:** June 9 (Tuesday) between 1:30 pm – 2:30 pm in the class.