Feast or Famine? The Global Business of Food
AEDECON 2580 | INTSTDS 2580

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Spring 2018
Baker Systems 188
Office Hours: Weds 10-11am or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

There is a loud debate taking place about the condition of the modern global food system. Its champions praise the billions of people that have been fed with fixed resources thanks to modern technologies like nitrogen fertilizer or genetically modified organisms. Its critics lament the industrial nature of the system that has emerged, decrying its loss of quality as well as its ethical and environmental consequences.

This course will thrust you into the debate, equipping you with the facts and arguments of both sides and asking you to choose among them. Our principle text, Paarlberg’s Food Politics, will provide us with a through line that helps us understand the contours of the debate in a comparably academic fashion. Other texts, including Omnivore’s Dilemma and Stuffed and Starved will take a more explicitly biased perspective against the modern global food system. Still others, Food Police and Unnaturally Delicious will take a similarly biased position in defense of the global food system.

Besides the readings, I will use lectures and films to fill in the gaps in our historical and global understanding of the global business of food. You will be evaluated on the lectures and readings through participation in class discussion, weekly blog posts on Carmen, as well as mid-term and final exams. For the final exam, the class will be divided into debate teams focusing on specific critical questions regarding the implications of the global food business for the state of Ohio. Here, individuals and teams will be judged based on the quality of the evidence for or against a specific legislative proposal, as well as their overall argumentation.

REQUIRED BOOKS

Food Politics by Robert Paarlberg (2nd edition)

The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals by Michael Pollan

Stuffed and Starved: The Hidden Battle for the World Food System by Raj Patel

The Food Police by Jayson Lusk

Unnaturally Delicious: How Science and Technology are Serving Up Super Foods to Save the World by Jayson Lusk
COURSE OBJECTIVES, GOALS & OUTCOMES

By the end of this course, you should be able to:
• Synthesize and critically engage with a variety of scholarly works related to the global food business through in-class discussion and written work;
• Evaluate scholarship based on the merit of the argument as well as the quality of the evidence;
• Identify, develop, and conduct research on a specific topic related to the food business;
• Think critically about the historical and global forces shaping the food business today;
• Effectively communicate via written and oral presentations.

COURSE FORMAT AND EVALUATION

Tuesdays will generally focus on lecture and background material. Thursdays will generally focus on class discussion and reactions to the reading. Please note that anything contained in the lecture may appear in the mid-term or final exam. For this reason, your punctual attendance will be central to your ability to pass this class.

To facilitate active and engaged reading, you will be asked to make weekly blog posts through the discussion board on Carmen. These posts must be made by Wednesday evening so that I may evaluate them before discussion on Thursdays. Note that you may miss two blog posts without adversely affecting your grade.

The mid-term and final exams will consist of in-class, closed book essays in response to short and long-answer questions. For the final project, the class will form into debate teams to consider specific legislative and regulatory questions related to managing the market for food here in Ohio. Should GMO research be expanded or curtailed? Should high-calorie foods and beverages associated with diabetes and heart disease be taxed more heavily? What should the future of food look like for Ohio? You will debate these questions in-class during our final exam period as well as provide a written summary of your argument.

Evaluation and Grades

Class Participation......................................................................................................................10%

10 Reading Blog Posts (1% each)..........................................................................................10%

2 Graded Exams (30% each)..................................................................................................60%

Final Debate (individual written paper and group presentation, 10% each).........................20%

NOTE: This course moves very fast. Accordingly, there will be no late assignments accepted except under the most extraordinary of circumstances.

A note about cheating and plagiarism

The rules and standards set by Ohio State University in the Code of Student Conduct will be strictly enforced in this course. Please refer to the Code of Student Conduct for a full description of academic misconduct (p. 3, 33352304 [A]) and the potential sanctions (p. 6, 33352317) the university may take in response to academic misconduct up to and including dismissal from the university.
**Student Accommodation and Disability Services**
I respect and uphold University policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance available to the physically handicapped, visually and/or hearing impaired student; plagiarism; sexual harassment; and racial or ethnic discrimination. All students are advised to become familiar with the respective University regulations and are encouraged to bring any questions or concerns to the attention of the instructor.

In compliance with Ohio State University policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that you may require. Requests for academic accommodations need to be made during the first two weeks of the semester, except for unusual circumstances, so arrangements can be made. Students with a disability must register with the Student Disability Services for disability verification and for determination of reasonable academic accommodations.

**COURSE CALENDAR**

**Week 1 (Jan 9, 11): Welcome to your Global Food System**
Read: Paarlberg, Preface and Chapter 1  
*Omnivore’s Dilemma, Introduction and Part I: Industrial*

**Week 2 (Jan 16, 18): Food and Population**
Read: Paarlberg, Chapter 2  
*Omnivore’s Dilemma, Part II: Pastoral*

**Week 3 (Jan 23, 25): Politics of High Food Prices**
Read: Paarlberg, Chapter 3  
*Omnivore’s Dilemma, Part III: Personal*

**Week 4 (Jan 30, Feb 1): Hunger**
Read: Paarlberg, Chapter 4  
*Food Police, Chapters 1-3*

**Week 5 (Feb 6, 8): Food Aid**
Read: Paarlberg, Chapter 5  
*Food Police, Chapters 4-7*

**Week 6 (Feb 13, 15): The Green Revolution**
Read: Paarlberg, Chapter 6  
*Food Police, Chapters 8-10*

**Week 7 (Feb 20, 22): Obesity**
Read: Paarlberg, Chapter 7  
*Mid-Term Exam Feb 22*
Week 8 (Feb 27, March 1): Farm Subsidies and Trade
Read: Paarlberg, Chapter 8
       Stuffed and Starved, Chapters 1-3

Week 9 (March 6, 8): Food and the Environment
Read: Paarlberg, Chapter 9
       Stuffed and Starved, Chapters 4-6

Spring Break

Week 10 (March 20, 22): About Meat
Read: Paarlberg, Chapter 10
       Stuffed and Starved, Chapters 7-10

Week 11 (March 27, 29): Agribusiness
Read: Paarlberg, Chapter 11
       Unnaturally Delicious, Chapters 1-3

Week 12 (April 3, 5): Organics and the Local Food Movement
Read: Paarlberg, Chapter 12
       Unnaturally Delicious, Chapters 4-7

Week 13 (April 10, 12): Food Safety and the Rise of Genetically Engineered Food
Read: Paarlberg, Chapter 13
       Unnaturally Delicious, Chapters 8-11

Week 14 (April 17, 19): Governing the World Food System
Read: Paarlberg, Chapters 14 & 15
       Final Exam April 19

Final Debates: April 30th 6-8pm