

Food policy and politics

Winter 2020

School of Public Policy and Dept. of Environmental Sciences and Policy
Central European University

No. of credits: 2

Course e-learning site: [CEU Moodle](#)

Schedule: Thursday 13.30 - 15.10

Instructor: Tiziana Centofanti

Contact: centofantit@spp.ceu.edu

Office hours: Thursday 11.30 - 13.00 (or by appointment)

Course description

The purpose of this course is to familiarize and engage the student in the steps and dynamics of policy-making processes that address food and farming, nutrition problems, and global food security. This course examines the highly contested political space of food and farming in both developed and developing economies. The food system contains a complex mix of relationships, stakeholders, and feedbacks that operate across a diversity of goals. Scientists, economists, farmers, agribusiness, and social justice advocates hold very different views on food policies. Understanding the foundation of these conflicts is key to effective public health policy. The main objective of this course is to understand the policy interventions governments might take in response to issues related to environmental sustainability of food and farming systems, the link between agricultural subsidies (or lack thereof) and food production systems, and food industry interests and nutrition-related problems, e.g., hunger and obesity. In this course, we will also tackle the question: Who makes our food choices?

Learning outcomes

In this course, students will learn about and reflect upon:

1. Identifying multiple food system stakeholders and how they interact in policy systems to affect the food system

2. Describing the issues facing the food system and their potential policy interventions
3. Developing an in-depth understanding of how social trends and governance approaches have both contributed to the current state of food systems, and shaped alternative food movements aimed at changing these systems
4. Understanding the issues related to environmental sustainability of farming systems
5. Identifying, evaluating, and effectively communicating personal thinking regarding policies and plans that seek to make contemporary food systems more sustainable

Evaluation

- In-class participation to discussion, one minute paper(s), commentary (850 words) 10%
- Assignments (one minute paper(s), commentary (850 words)) 30%
- Final Exam 50%

Brief Summary of graded course requirements

One minute paper: it is a very short, in-class writing activity in response to an instructor-posed question, which prompts students to reflect on the day's lesson and provides the instructor with useful feedback.

Commentary: A commentary is a set of critical notes on a text. You are requested to read the following paper [Tim Folger, 2013. The Next Green Revolution. National Geographic Magazine](#), and write a commentary about it. For further instructions on how to write a commentary see [this](#). The commentary should be max 850 words.

Presentation: Students will present to the class the results of literature review about a topic of their choice relevant to the course.

Final Exam: The final exam is in the form of a Decision memo. Each student will research a defined food or agricultural policy problem and compose a 3 page single-spaced memo (12 pt) (addressed to an actual decision-maker) recommending the actions that individual should take in response. The completed memo will consist of a 1-page segment framing the problem for the decision-maker, a 1-page segment reviewing policy options, a final 1-page segment recommending the best policy choice. Max. 2000 words. For suggestions on how to write a decision memo see [here](#).

Suggested Text Books

- Paarlberg, R. and Paarlberg, R.L. 2013. Food politics: What everyone needs to know. Oxford Univ. Press.

- Nestle, M. 2013. Food politics: How the food industry influences nutrition and health. Univ. of California Press.
- Pinstруп-Andersen, P. and Watson II, D.D., 2011. Food policy for developing countries: The role of government in global, national, and local food systems. Cornell University Press.
- Lang, T. and Heasman, M., 2015. Food wars: the global battle for mouths, minds and markets. Routledge.

Course structure

Week 1. The Role of Governments in Food and Agriculture

(Governments, versus Multinational Corporations, versus NGOs; The dietary transition; Links between agriculture and nutrition)

Required reading:

- Mozaffarian, D., Angell, S.Y., Lang, T. and Rivera, J.A., 2018. Role of government policy in nutrition - barriers to and opportunities for healthier eating. *Bmj*, 361, p.k2426.

Additional reading:

- Baker, P., Hawkes, C., Wingrove, K., Demaio, A.R., Parkhurst, J., Thow, A.M. and Walls, H., 2018. What drives political commitment for nutrition? A review and framework synthesis to inform the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition. *BMJ global health*, 3(1), p.e000485.

Week 2. Food and Population

(Demographic projections and realities; Numbers of people versus the diets of people; The role of innovation and technology change)

Required reading:

- [A green evolution. 2016. The Economist.](#)
- Ausubel, J.H. 2015. The return of nature: how technology liberates the environment. *Breakthr. J.* 5.

Additional reading:

- Paarlberg, R. and Paarlberg, R.L. 2013. Food politics. Chapter 2, pp. 9-17.
- [Bremner, J. 2012. Population and food security: Africa's challenge. Population Reference Bureau Policy Brief.](#)
- [Ranganathan, J. et al. 2016. Shifting diets for a sustainable food future. World Resources Institute: Washington, DC. pp. 1-13.](#)

Week 3. The 2008 World Food Crisis

(Politics of food prices; Famine and world food prices)

Required reading:

- Sen, A. 1987. Poverty and Entitlements. *In*: Gittinger, J.P., Leslie, J. and Hoisington, C., 1987. Food policy: integrating supply, distribution, and consumption. Published for the World Bank [by] Johns Hopkins University Press. pp. 198-204.
- Xu, Z., 2019. Food Dependency and Global Food Crisis. *International Critical Thought*, pp.1-13.

Additional reading:

- Paarlberg, R. and Paarlberg, R.L. 2013. Food politics. Chapter 3, pp.18-30.
- Bush, R. and Giuliano, M. 2017. Food riots and protest: agrarian modernizations and structural Crises. *World Development*. 9:193-207.
- [Hendrix, C.S. 2016. When Hunger Strikes. The Chicago Council on Global Affairs.](#)
- Demarest, L. 2015. Food price rises and political instability: Problematizing a complex relationship. *The European Journal of Development Research*. 27: 650-671.
- [Global Report on World food Crisis 2017. World Food Programme.](#)

Week 4. International Policy Responses to Hunger

(Modern famine prevention; Famine and world food prices; Philanthropy, PPPs, advocacy NGOs, and social entrepreneurs)

Required reading:

- Lentz, E.C., Barrett, C.B., Gmez, M.I. and Maxwell, D.G., 2013. On the choice and impacts of innovative international food assistance instruments. *World Development*, 49, pp.1-8.
- Mary, S., 2019. Hungry for free trade? Food trade and extreme hunger in developing countries. *Food Security*, 11(2), pp.461-477.
- [Fat Help. 2016. The Economist.](#)

Additional reading:

- Paarlberg, R. and Paarlberg, R.L. 2013. Food politics. Chapters 4-5, pp.31-63.
- [Swartz, H. 2017. Food Aid vs. Food assistance in conflict areas: The case of the 2017 famine in South Sudan.](#)
- [Famine Early Warning System. December 2011. Below-average 2011 crop performance and insecurity will affect food security. FEWS.net Food Security Outlook Update.](#)
- [Videos on World Food Programme. Empowering smallholder farmers to reduce post-harvest loss.](#)

Week 5. The Green Revolution

(Implications for food production, poverty, hunger, and the environment; Impacts in Asia versus Latin America, prospects for Africa)

Required reading:

- Huang, J., Pray, C. and Rozelle, S., 2002. Enhancing the crops to feed the poor. *Nature*, 418(6898), p.678.
- Harwood, J., 2019. Could the adverse consequences of the green revolution have been foreseen? How experts responded to unwelcome evidence. *Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems*, pp.1-27.

Additional reading:

- Paarlberg, R. and Paarlberg, R.L., 2013. Food politics. Chapter 6, pp.64-80.
- Evenson, R.E., and Gollin., D. 2003. Assessing the Impact of the Green Revolution, 1960 to 2000. *Science* (330)5620:758-762.

Week 6. Environmental Damage from Farming

(Environmental damage from low input farming; Environmental damage from high input farming; Precision farming?)

Required reading:

- Foley, J.A. 2011. Can we feed the world and sustain the planet. *Sci. Am.* 305:60-65.
- Tanentzap, A.J., Lamb, A., Walker, S. and Farmer, A. 2015. Resolving conflicts between agriculture and the natural environment. *PLoS biology* 13(9), e1002242.

Additional reading:

- [Williams, S.D. and Fritschel, H. 2012. Farming Smarter. *Insights* 2:18-23.](#)
- Foley, J.A., Ramankutty, N., Brauman, K.A., Cassidy, E.S., Gerber, J.S., Johnston, M., Mueller, N.D., O'Connell, C., Ray, D.K., West, P.C. and Balzer, C. 2011. Solutions for a cultivated planet. *Nature* 478(7369):337-342.
- Biggs, E.M., Bruce, E., Boruff, B., Duncan, J.M., Horsley, J., Pauli, N., McNeill, K., Neef, A., Van Ogtrop, F., Curnow, J. and Haworth, B. 2015. Sustainable development and the water-energy-food nexus: A perspective on livelihoods. *Environmental Science & Policy* 54:389-397.
- Schieffer, J., and C. Dillon. 2015. The economic and environmental impacts of precision agriculture and interactions with agro-environmental policy. *Precision agriculture* 16: 46-61.

Week 7. The Politics of Farm Subsidies

(Why do farm subsidies persist?; How have farm subsidy policies changed?; Who is helped by farm subsidies?, and who is hurt?)

Required reading:

- Milhorance, C., Bursztyn, M. and Sabourin, E., 2019. The politics of the internationalisation of Brazil's Zero Hunger instruments. *Food Security*, 11(2), pp.447-460.
- Ricciardi, V., Ramankutty, N., Mehrabi, Z., Jarvis, L. and Chookolingo, B., 2018. How much of the world's food do smallholders produce?. *Global food security*, 17, pp.64-72.

Case study

- Woodward, 2007. The Impact of U.S. Subsidies on West African Cotton Production. Case Study 10-5 of the program: Food policy for developing countries: the role of government in the global food system. Cornell University.

Additional reading:

- Paarlberg, R. and Paarlberg, R.L., 2013. Food politics. Chapter 8, pp.100-115.
- Nestle, M., 2013. Food politics. Chapters 6-7, pp.137-172.
- Bellemare, M. 2013. [In an Industrialized America, Why Do Members of Congress Support Farm Subsidies? Scholars Strategy Networks.](#)

Week 8. Government Policy and Obesity

(What has created the modern obesity crisis?; Is this an issue of public health or personal responsibility?; What have governments done to address the crisis?)

Required reading:

The students will form groups and each group will read one paper (listed below). Each group will then discuss the paper in class.

Group 1 reading:

- Wright, J.D., Donley, A.M., Gualtieri, M.C. and Strickhouser, S.M. 2016. Food Deserts: What is the Problem? What is the Solution?. Society 53:171-181.

Group 2 reading:

- Marron, D., Gearing, M. and Iselin, J. 2015. Should We Tax Unhealthy Foods and Drinks. Urban Institute and Brookings Institution.

Group 3 reading:

- Biro, A., 2015. Did the junk food tax make the Hungarians eat healthier?. Food Policy, 54, pp.107-115.

Additional reading:

- Paarlberg, R. and Paarlberg, R.L., 2013. Food politics. Chapter 7, pp.81-99.

- Stuckler, D. and Nestle, M., 2012. Big food, food systems, and global health. PLoS medicine, 9(6), p.e1001242.
- Monteiro, C.A. and Cannon, G., 2012. The impact of transnational big food companies on the South: a view from Brazil. PLoS medicine, 9(7), p.e1001252.

Week 9. Food safety

Required reading:

Case study

- Le Ha Thanh, Pham Hong Chuong (2010). Case Study 10-12, "Vietnam's Aquaculture Trade: Food Safety and Sanitation Issues". In: Per Pinstrup-Andersen and Fuzhi Cheng (editors), "Food Policy for Developing Countries: Case Studies." 13 pp.
- <http://www.fao.org/fao-who-codexalimentarius/en/>

Week 10. Agribusiness, Food Companies, and Supermarkets

(Do agribusiness companies control seed supplies, and farmers?; Do food companies control food policy?; Why are supermarkets spreading in developing countries?)

Required reading:

- Reardon, T., Timmer, C. P., Barrett, C. B., and Berdegue, J. 2003. The rise of supermarkets in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. American Journal of Agricultural Economics, 85(5):1140-1146.

Case study

- Derek Baker, Kimmie Graber-Ltzhft (2007). Case Study 6-1, "Concentration in Agribusiness and Marketing: A Case Study of Arla Foods". In: Per Pinstrup-Andersen and Fuzhi Cheng (editors), "Food Policy for Developing Countries: Case Studies." 15 pp.

Additional reading:

- Paarlberg, R. and Paarlberg, R.L., 2013. Food politics. Chapter 11, pp.153-165.
- [Pollan, M. 2016. The Big Food Strikes Back. The New York Times.](#)

- Nesheim, M. C. and Nestle, M. 2015. The Internationalization of the Obesity Epidemic. In *The fight against hunger and malnutrition: The role of food, agriculture, and targeted policies*. Oxford University Press New York.
- Stuckler, D., McKee, M., Ebrahim, S., and Basu, S. (2012). Manufacturing epidemics: the role of global producers in increased consumption of unhealthy commodities including processed foods, alcohol, and tobacco. *PLoS medicine*, 9(6):e1001235.
- Bittman M., Pollan M., Salvador R., and De Schutter O. 2014. How a national food policy could save millions of American lives. *The Washington Post*.

Session 11. Macronutrient deficiencies and nutrition transition

In this class, we will review - through the analysis of two papers - concepts on malnutrition and obesity analyzed in previous classes.

Required reading:

Group 1

- Hawkes, C., 2006. Uneven dietary development: linking the policies and processes of globalization with the nutrition transition, obesity and diet-related chronic diseases. *Globalization and health*, 2(1), p.4.

Group 2

- Pingali, P., Mittra, B. and Rahman, A., 2017. The bumpy road from food to nutrition security - Slow evolution of India's food policy. *Global Food Security*.

Additional reading:

- Paarlberg, R. and Paarlberg, R.L., 2013. Food politics. Chapter 12, pp.166-183.
- Watson, J. L. 2000. China's big mac attack. *Foreign Affairs*, 120-134.

Session 12. Review class

In this class we will review concepts discussed in the previous classes.