POLS 377 Topics in Law and Politics: Food Law and Policy Fall 2020

Andrea Freeman afree@hawaii.edu

3 credits, 37.5 contact hours, no prerequisites

Course description: This course introduces students to essential topics in food law and policy that cover all aspects of the food chain, from production to consumption. Students will practice advocacy through the writing of opinion pieces and gain exposure to food activism. Students will meet local food experts as guest lecturers, participate in field trips to local food organizations, and conduct interviews with local members of the food law and policy, food activism, or food growing community. Students will develop oral communication skills by participating in class debates on cutting edge issues in food law and policy, leading class discussions, and making oral presentations of their final papers or projects. Students will develop writing skills by writing a persuasive piece and a final paper or service project report. Reading materials will be posted on the course website.

This course provides a unique opportunity to learn in one of the world’s most vibrant centers of food law and policy. London is home to many of the UK’s most important food organizations and agencies, including the Food Ethics Council, The Food Foundation, Sustain Alliance for Better Food and Farming, the Centre for Food Policy, the British Nutrition Foundation, and community-based groups such as the Community Food Growers Network, City Harvest, Community Food Enterprise, and Global Justice Now. Additionally, the British Library is home to the Food Commission archives.

This course is designed to allow students not only to learn but to contribute to the London food law and policy community through their policy advocacy and interactions with individuals and organizations actively engaged in food law and policy. Students will actively engage in the London food scene. This course fulfills the following student learning objectives:

1. Communicate effectively, both orally and in writing.
2. Demonstrate increased proficiency of cultural competence.
3. Demonstrate awareness of students’ cultural values and biases and how these impact their ability to work with others.
4. Communicate appropriately and effectively with diverse individuals and groups.
5. Demonstrate knowledge of diversity with a focus on your chosen topic.
6. Demonstrate an increased capacity to analyze issues with appreciation for disparate viewpoints.
7. Increase awareness of global perspectives
8. Foster appreciation for different cultures
9. Sharpen skills of critical thinking, problem solving, communication, collaboration and global competence in a global setting
Grading

Student Papers/Service Project Reports  50%
Paper Presentations  10%
Op Ed  10%
Interview with Food Expert  10%
Class Debates/Participation  20%

Student Papers/Policy Briefs/Service Project Reports

Papers may take the form of a traditional essay, a policy brief, or a report on a completed service project. Students should come prepared to submit their proposed topic on the second week of class. During this class, I will approve topics. Students should email me their approved topic by 8pm that evening unless I have granted an extension. By discussing their topics in class, students will be able to share resources throughout the course when they come across information related to other students’ topics. By the beginning of our fourth class meeting, students should submit an outline of their paper. The outline should consist of a statement of the paper’s argument/thesis, headings indicating which topics will be covered, and a list of sources discovered so far. If the student is conducting a service project and report, the outline should describe the project goals, methods, and desired outcomes. Some examples of potential service projects are: setting up a food bank for university students; helping to install an irrigation system for a community garden; participating in a local farmers’ market. I will give feedback on the outlines before the next class meeting. A completed rough draft of the paper or report is due by the beginning of the eighth class meeting. I will provide feedback on these drafts before the ninth class meeting. The final draft of the paper or report is due one week after the last class meeting.

Papers or reports should be approximately 15 pages in length, double spaced, with one inch margins. Traditional papers should include footnotes. Students writing reports on service projects should include what they learned from the experience. 10 of the 50 points will be awarded for handing in the paper topic, outline, and complete first draft on time. Students will earn full points on their papers by making an original contribution to their topic of choice, making a logical argument, and supporting the argument with sources. Students will earn full points on their reports by engaging in the project over several weeks, describing the objectives and whether or not and how they were achieved, and reflecting on how the experience might affect food policy.

Paper Presentations

Students will have 20 minutes (including a question and answer period) to present their paper or report to the class and receive feedback. This presentation offers an opportunity for the presenter to learn from their peers, to incorporate their feedback, and to improve their papers or reports. Presentations can include images, videos, and other multi-media. Students will earn full points by making a clear presentation of their topic.
Op Ed

Students will write an op ed of approximately 800 words, double spaced with one-inch margins, on a food law or policy topic of their choice. They will research their topic and write persuasively to propose a solution to a pressing food law or policy issue in the UK. The topic should be different from their paper topic but can be related.

Food Expert Interview

Students will submit a report on an interview with an individual active in the food law and policy or food justice community. Identify the individual you would like to interview, make contact with them, and set up an in-person interview. Write a report of the interview that outlines what you learned from speaking with this person and how it affected your perspective on a food law or policy issue. 800-1200 words double spaced with one-inch margins.

Participation

Class participation includes regular attendance and thoughtful contributions to class discussions. It also includes presenting well-researched and thoughtful arguments during class debates and student-led discussions.

The following representative assignments will be adjusted to reflect the availability of local opportunities and guests in addition to newsworthy food-related topics.

Class 1: Food Waste

In the first class, students will explore the problem of food waste. They will consider the volume of food waste and potential solutions to reduce waste, including food sharing apps, standardizing food expiration dates, making food donation easier, and relaxing rules on restaurants and grocery stores on food disposal. They will discuss the conflict between nutritional science and fear of litigation that leads to food waste and how to change consumer behavior. After learning of the food waste project begun by Harvard students, they will brainstorm ways that students can contribute to solving this problem.

Assignment:


Video: John Oliver, Food Waste, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i8xWb0iLY (watch in class)
Class 2: Sustainable Urban Agriculture

Field Trip, GrowUp Urban Farms, London

Students will take a field trip to GrowUp Urban Farms where they will participate in the tour Discover Urban Aquaponics. Students will learn how group uses controlled environment production and vertical growing technologies to harvest sustainable salads and herbs year-round. In preparation for the trip, students will read Tara Garnett’s article describing London as an unsustainable city and consider innovative methods to reduce the city’s ecological footprint.

Assignment:


Class 3: Farm Pollution

Students will consider the problem of pollution from industrial animal farming. Looking at a case study from North Carolina where students and activists have joined forces to reduce the impact of industrial animal farming on rural residents of color, students will look at similar problems in the UK. They will explore the idea of environmental justice and brainstorm solutions to the health hazards and unequal distribution of the harms of industrial animal farming.

Assignment:


Video: On the Road in Duplin County, https://www.heraldsun.com/latest-news/article216104270.html (watch in class)

Class 4: Cultural Appropriation in the Restaurant World

Students will explore the complicated issue of accusations of cultural appropriation against chefs and restauranteurs. They will discuss the meaning of ‘ethnic food’, whether food is the reserve of chefs or entrepreneurs from certain cultures, and where to draw the line between cultural appreciation and cultural appropriation. Each student will come to class with an example of a food business that has or could come under fire for cultural appropriation and discuss whether they think the allegations are or would be fair.

Assignment:

Andrea R. Chow & Suyin Haynes, Fights over authentic Chinese food have a long and complicated history. Now they’re tearing the culinary world apart, Time, https://time.com/5620471/chinese-food-cultural-appropriation/


Additional Suggested Reading:

Class 5: Food Trucks

Guest Speaker: Owner, Baba G’s Bhangra Burgers

Students will learn about the regulations that govern food trucks in London. By speaking with the owner of a successful food truck owner, students will learn about the challenges and advantages of running a food truck instead of a ‘brick and mortar’ restaurant. Students will discuss the politics of food trucks, including opposition from restaurants, uneven enforcement of laws and regulations governing food trucks, and racial and gender politics behind the food truck business.

Assignment:


Case Studies:
Basinski, Shapiro, and Morales, Stuck in Park: New York City’s War on Food Trucks

Ehrenfeucht and Croegaert, Learning from New Orleans: Will Revising or Relaxing Public Space Ordinances Create a Just Environment for Street Commerce?

Optional Supplemental Reading:
Ernesto Hernandez-Lopez, LA’s Taco Truck War: How Law Cooks Food Culture Contests

Kathleen Dunn, Decriminalize Street Vending, in Food Trucks, Cultural Identity, and Social Justice
Class 6: Food Politics Debates

Students will break into teams for this class to prepare arguments around three cutting edge topics in food law and policy: whether meat grown from cells in labs is the only ethical choice for carnivores; whether sugar is as dangerous as cigarettes and should be treated the same way by the government; whether there should be an absolute ban on all food marketing to children. Students may rely on the sources below and/or find their own.

BIRT: Lab Grown Meat is our Best Hope for the Future of Food

BIRT: Products Containing Sugar Should Come with a Warning Label Similar to those on Cigarettes

BIRT: All Food Marketing to Children Under the Age of 13 Should be Banned

Suggested Readings:


Angela Lee, Meat-ing Demand: Is In-vitro Meat a Pragmatic, Problematic, or Paradoxical Solution?, Canadian Journal of Women in the Law (2018)


Emma Boyland, This is how advertising has the power to make children fat, The Independent, May 11, 2018, https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/junk-food-advertising-child-obesity-london-ban-sadiq-khan-sugar-fat-a8346656.html


Class 7: Food Safety, Adulteration, and Fraud

Guest Speakers: Attorneys from Marler Clark: The Food Safety Law Firm

Students will hear from practicing attorneys about law suits over food safety (cases of food poisoning), food adulteration (contaminated foods), and food fraud (intentional mislabeling of
foods. To prepare for the class discussion students will read articles about the trade in adulterated olive oil. Fraudulent fish and seafood labeling, and a listeria outbreak in UK hospitals that killed six patients.


**Class 8: Food Documentaries**

Students will watch a documentary about food and report about it to the class. Reports should be 5-10 minutes and describe the argument of the film and any interesting aspects of it. We will use a sign-up sheet to ensure that everyone watches a different movie. Students may select a film below or one of their choice.

Film Suggestions: The Moo Man, Bugs, Cowspiracy, What the Health, King Corn, Fed Up, Food Inc., Forks Over Knives, Food Matters, Food Fight, Hungry for Change, Fat, Sick, and Nearly Dead, Supersize Me, Rotten, The Game Changers

**Class 9: The Meaning of Milk**

Students will explore different political meanings attached to milk. From “nature’s perfect food” to a symbol of white supremacy, milk has taken on great cultural significance. Students will read about milk and feminism and legal battles over the naming and branding of ‘alternative’ milks

Assignment:

Andrea Freeman, *The Unbearable Whiteness of Milk*


Jessica Eisen, *Milked*

Iselin Gambert and Tobias Linne, *Got Mylk?*

**Class 10: Restaurant Labor**

**Field Trip, The Clink Charity Brixton**

This class will be held over lunch at The Clink Brixton: “A prison restaurant that has bars on its windows and panic buttons embedded into the walls is beating eateries owned by the likes of Gordon Ramsay and Jamie Oliver to the number one spot on TripAdvisor. The Clink restaurant –
a charity that aims to rehabilitate prisoners by training them for the food industry – has locations in four secure prisons across the country, three of which are rated No.1 in the area on the travel and restaurant review website.” “The Clink Charity had had a “statistically significant” impact on reoffending rates among prisoners. The Clink scheme helps prisoners to run restaurants. They learn to be chefs, bartenders, waiters, porters and front of house. They get City and Guilds qualifications in food and beverage services, professional cookery and food hygiene. In the four prisons running restaurants there has been a significant reduction in recidivism, 7% overall (in Brixton, reoffending rates were 11% for men who had worked in the restaurant, compared to 32% overall).” During the meal, we will discuss the following topics related to food labor: tipping; sexual harassment; and how consumers can contribute to better working conditions for restaurant works.

Suggested Assignment:


**Class 11 & 12: Paper Presentations**

During the last two class meetings, students will present their papers to the class. Presentations may include powerpoint slides, video or any other kind of visual media. Students will have twenty minutes to present their work, answer questions, and receive feedback.