

Politics of Food

Political Science 214 | Spring 2021 | 3 credits | **Quest III**
MWF, 12:40-1:40pm in Sage Hall 1214 | Modified Tutorial

BULLETIN COURSE DESCRIPTION

"In this course, we'll learn about how food policy is made at the national, state, and local levels. Then we'll examine how those policies impact the type and quantities of the food we eat, food distribution, food safety, and nutrition. Throughout, we'll have an eye to the future: is our current food system sustainable: That is, will it last beyond our lifetimes? Our class will encounter these issues not only in the classroom, but through our work with partners in the Oshkosh community."

SPRING 2021 COURSE DESCRIPTION

We all love to eat. Thanksgiving turkey, birthday cake, Christmas cookies, a quick trip through the lines at Blackhawk or Reeve, a midnight snack while studying for an exam... our lives find rhythm and comfort in food. But food is about so much more than just *eating*. As you'll learn in this course, food is one of the most intensely political topics around, and disentangling the many ways in which government ends up on your plate everyday takes some detective work and a lot of patience. After the semester is through, chances are that you'll never look at food the same way again (for better or for worse).

Our class will encounter these issues not only in the classroom, but also by working with the Oshkosh Area Community Pantry. Through our work with our community partner, we'll see how topics in our course play out in reality while helping our community partner fulfil its mission in the process.

NOTE: *There will be time required of you outside of our normal class time. There will be days where we will NOT meet so that you can be at the Community Partner sites. Also note that you cannot pass this class without completing the required hours for the community experience.*

PREREQUISITES

If you are taking this course, it means that you have completed Quest I and Quest II and are ready for the final course in your Quest sequence. There are no other prerequisites. *If you have already completed a Quest III course, you should enroll in another class or seek special approval from the instructor and/or USP to continue in this one.*

PROFESSOR TRACY H. SLAGTER

Ph.D., University of Iowa (2006)

Office Location: Sage Hall 4626

Open Hours: TTh, 11:00am-12:30pm in MS Teams

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DEPARTMENT MAIN OFFICE

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JOINING OPEN (OFFICE) HOURS

The Department of Political Science uses Microsoft Teams (MS Teams) for holding office hours. This system is available to all UW Oshkosh students. Faculty will be available during the hours noted on your syllabus. When logging into MS Teams, look closely at the status indicators for your instructor (green = available; red = with another student).

We hope that using MS Teams for office hours for all of our courses will help students become more accustomed to virtual office hours during the pandemic. The main point to remember is that we are available to you. Please use our office hours freely and often. We are here to help. We are also happy to set up meetings outside of my office hours if students have conflicts with the posted times.

For more information and a link to access open hours, see our course Canvas page.

COURSE MATERIALS

The following book is available at University Books & More and also from online retailers:

Pollan, Michael. 2006. *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. New York: Penguin Books.

Other readings will be available to you on Canvas.

SPECIAL SPRING 2021 NOTE

While some students have opted to access this course online, it was developed as an *in-person* course at the University's request and will be taught as such. In-person students are expected to physically attend each session. Online-only students are expected to attend each session virtually, but may have slightly different requirements than in-person students. Please read this syllabus carefully before the semester begins.

QUEST III & THE SIGNATURE QUESTION

This is a **Quest III** course in the University Studies Program (USP), which means that this is your chance to get out in the community and examine your final Signature Question: **How do people understand and create a more sustainable world?**

You might think sustainability is just about the environment, but it's really a very wide lens through which we can look at almost anything—it's been called "the ultimate liberal art (and science)" (Rhodes 2006). At the core, sustainability is about the interconnectedness of **ecological integrity, economic well-being, and social justice**. More than that, sustainability is about limits: how far can our current practices take us, and how are our current practices impacting our collective future? In this course, we'll examine our food system as a whole to gain insight into its ecological, economic, political, and social limits. Can the food system we have today serve our needs into the future?

WHY A "COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE?"

A lot of the courses you take in college will fill your head with knowledge, inspire you, and make you excited to keep learning. But Quest III courses do more than that: they allow you to put your knowledge and excitement to work *as part of your course*, preparing you in a unique way for your future after college. Think of this as practice for *real* life: putting knowledge into action to address *real* problems and help *real* people right in your own backyard. If you're uneasy about this at first, that's OK—it's uncomfortable to try new things, but real learning happens outside our comfort zones.

BUT WHAT ABOUT SAFETY?

You might be thinking, "She wants me to go somewhere and volunteer *during a pandemic?!?*" Yes, I do. Our Community Partner has devised safe ways for you to impact your community and not come into close contact with people. You will hear more about this in class. I always welcome your concerns, however!

OUR COMMUNITY PARTNER

The **Oshkosh Area Community Pantry's** (OACP) mission is "to establish a collaborative community food pantry that addresses the food and nutritional needs of our customers, identify and evaluate our customer's broader needs and provide access to other community resources that foster independence" (OACP website). In order to fulfill its mission, the OACP collects and distributes food to its customers through its store on Jackson Street, deliveries to those who are homebound, and its Food4Kidz Backpack program. It also offers cooking classes and nutrition information. Sustainability is at the heart of what the OACP

does: it recognizes the economic and social limits placed on those who rely on its services and at the same time attempts to ensure a healthy future for them.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

After successfully completing this course, students should be able to:

- *Describe* the way food policies are made in the United States;
- *Identify* the major actors in shaping food policy and associated programs;
- *Explain* the ways in which food policy impacts different constituencies;
- *Outline* the ways in which food policy touches all aspects of sustainability (social justice, ecological integrity, and economic well-being);
- *Assess* the effectiveness of local solutions to food insecurity in Oshkosh;
- *Impact* their community through experiences with our Community Partner.

Students working with the OACP will do some of the following:

- Assist with food delivery to populations in need who cannot reach the OACP themselves;
- Help with stocking, tidying, registration, and/or checkout;
- Assist in the staffing, maintenance and programming for the "Kids Corner" at the OACP;
- Help with various other tasks at the OACP as they arise.
- Online-only students will work closely with the OACP Board of Directors.

GETTING TO THE COMMUNITY PARTNER SITE

You are free to drive yourself to the OACP or other locations, and I encourage you to carpool safely when you can. GO Transit, our local bus service, also offers free bus rides to UW Oshkosh students when you present your campus ID.

REPRESENTING UW OSHKOSH

Students are expected to abide by the UW Oshkosh Student Academic and Non-Academic Disciplinary Procedures during their Quest III Community Experience.

COURSE FORMAT

This course requires us to get to know each other and work together. Meaningful student input is required for the course to be successful (and fun). As such, I expect that students will attend class each

week prepared to discuss the readings and work hard; completing the readings ahead of time is essential. *My ability to teach is severely limited if you do not read.*

GRADING

The following grading scale will apply to all assignments in this course:

A	94-100
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D+	67-69
D	65-66
F	0-64

Note that I do not typically grade on a curve. Also, it is important to remember that the Community Experience is *not graded but is required*. You cannot pass this course without completing it.

ASSIGNMENTS

Attendance & Participation (10%): You can earn a solid participation grade by coming to every class (in-person or online), responding to and asking questions in class, or visiting my office hours. If you show up to class every single session but never say a word, you can expect, at maximum, a C for this portion of your grade. You're free to ask me about this anytime. (**NOTE:** This may be different for those students joining online.)

Discussion Primers (20%): These quick responses, due in the moments before class, help me to gauge your understanding and help to prepare you for lecture and discussion. More details will follow in class.

Not-Quite-Midterm Examination (30%): There will be one exam in this class, much later than a typical midterm (see schedule). It will cover everything we've discussed and read to that point, and will be a combination of multiple choice and short answer questions. (**NOTE:** This may look different for students joining online.)

Track Your Snack Paper (40%): Who's funding your food? How is your favorite snack political? This paper, due in the last week of class, asks you to delve into a particular food you eat and investigate how it gets to your grocery store and, later, to you. More details will follow.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

A college education is intended to develop your skills, knowledge, and confidence. Graded assignments are

designed to work on these items. Thus, to gain the skills, knowledge, and confidence of a college-educated person all graded work is to be your own. When you are directed to work alone, an assignment or test must be done by you, its primary ideas are to be your own, and any outside materials should be dealt with properly (quoted when using someone's words, and cited when quoting or referencing them in any other way). When your instructor directs you to work in teams, the work is to be done by the team. More information can be found here:

<https://uwosh.edu/politicalscience/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2020/08/Academic-Honesty.pdf>

GRIEVANCES

The Department of Political Science is committed to offering you a high-quality classroom or online experience, and we take your feedback very seriously. If you have concerns about anything related to this course, assignments, or teaching method, you are encouraged to first speak with your instructor directly. If you are not comfortable speaking with the instructor, you are invited to speak with the Chair of the Department of Political Science, Dr. James Krueger. He can be reached at kruegerj@uwosh.edu. Should he be unable to resolve your concerns, he will guide you to appropriate resources within the College of Letters and Science.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you have or think you may have a learning difference or a disability—a mental health, medical, or physical impairment—that would limit your access to learning or demonstrating your knowledge in this course, please contact the Dean of Students Office. If you already have an accommodation, please let me know in the first week of class. Note that this class *may* be recorded for accommodation purposes.

NOTE TO POLITICAL SCIENCE MAJORS

If you are currently a Political Science major or if you think you will be one of our majors in the future, it is important that you save your graded coursework from this class, preferably in the One Drive associated with your University email account. Seniors in our department are required to take Political Science 401, a seminar in which students' progress through the major is surveyed

and a portfolio of their work is created. If you have questions, please see me after class.

STUDENT RIGHT TO KNOW ACT (1990)

Students are advised to see the following URL for disclosures about essential consumer protection items required by the Students Right to Know Act of 1990: <https://uwosh.edu/financialaid/consumer-information/>

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

After completing this course, you might want to know more—you'll see that politics impacts everything you do, no matter what your future career plans are. I encourage you to explore our department further, and am happy to answer any questions you might have or connect you with

my colleagues in the department. We also have a deep network of Political Science alumni who are eager to help you understand what a major or minor in Political Science has to offer. Take a look: <https://politicalscience.uwosh.edu/for-students/>

CHANGES

I reserve the right to change any portion of this syllabus at any time in the semester in order to accommodate the needs and pace of this particular group.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS, READINGS, AND ASSIGNMENTS

Note: readings should be completed by the date on which they appear on the syllabus. You'll see that the readings are front-loaded; the most difficult readings occur before Spring Break. This is by design.

WEEK ONE

- February 1 Introduction to the course, Quest III, and Sustainability
Community Partnerships and Assignments/Expectations
READ: this syllabus
- February 3 Major Actors in U.S. politics
READ: O'Neil, Fields, and Share. 2018. "United States." Excerpt from *Cases and Concepts in Comparative Politics*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- February 5 Political Ideology
READ: O'Neil, Fields, and Share. 2018. "Political Attitudes and Ideology." . Excerpt from *Cases and Concepts in Comparative Politics*. New York: W.W. Norton.

WEEK TWO

- February 8 How is Food Political?
READ: Nestle, Marion. "Influencing Government: Food Lobbies and Lobbyists." Chapter 4 in *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health* (10th ed), 2013. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- February 10 Interest Groups in American Politics
READ: Drutman, Lee and Stephen Teles. 2015. "Why Congress Relies on Lobbyists Instead of Thinking for Itself." <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/03/when-congress-cant-think-for-itself-it-turns-to-lobbyists/387295/>
- February 12 Visit from Community Partner and USP (*Jordan Wind*, Oshkosh Area Community Pantry and *Mike Lueder*, University Studies Program)

WEEK THREE

- February 15 Let's Talk About Corn
READ: Pollan, Chapters 1-3
- February 17 Let's Talk About Cows
READ: Pollan, Chapter 4-6
- February 19 Let's Talk About McDonald's
READ: Pollan, Chapter 7
READ: Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025. Read the "Executive Summary," found by scrolling down a little on the site: <https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/resources/2020-2025-dietary-guidelines-online-materials>

WEEK FOUR

- February 22 Government: It's What's For Dinner (and Lunch, and Breakfast...)
READ: Glenn, Brian J. "Some Introductory Thoughts on the American Welfare State" and "Nutrition Assistance." Chapters 1 and 4 in *The American Welfare State: A Practical Guide*. 2014. New York: Routledge.
- February 24 School Lunch: Chicken Nuggets, Please
READ: Poppendieck, Janet. "School Food 101." Chapter 1 in *Free For All: Fixing School Food in America*. 2010. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- February 26 School Lunch: Cafeterias and COVID
READ: <https://www.chalkbeat.org/2020/6/23/21300529/school-lunch-as-we-know-it-is-over-coronavirus-school-nutrition-directors>

WEEK FIVE

- March 1 But *Why* Does It Taste So Good?
READ: Moss, Michael. "How Do You Get People to Crave?" and "Convenience with a Capital C." Chapters 2 and 3 in *Salt, Sugar, Fat: How the Food Giants Hooked Us*. 2014. New York: Random House.
- March 3 Poverty and Eating on the Cheap
READ: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities: <https://www.cbpp.org/topics/snap-basics>
- March 5 Oh, SNAP: Two Views
READ: Rampersaud, Sapna. "The Abuse and Unhealthy Consequences of Food Stamps." *The National Review*, June 16, 2017. <https://www.nationalreview.com/2017/06/food-stamps-frequent-abuse-unhealthy-consequences> AND Thomhave, Kalena. "Stop Talking About SNAP Fraud." *The American Prospect*, May 11, 2018. <https://prospect.org/article/stop-talking-about-snap-fraud>

WEEK SIX

- March 8 Feeding the Hungry?
READ: Fisher, Andrew. 2017. "The Charity Trap." Chapter 2 in *Big Hunger: The Unholy Alliance Between Corporate America and Anti-Hunger Groups*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press
- March 10 Giving Back?
READ: Fisher, Andrew. 2017. "The Politics of Corporate Giving." Chapter 3 in *Big Hunger: The Unholy Alliance Between Corporate America and Anti-Hunger Groups*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- March 12 Fighting Back?
READ: Araby, Jim. "Progress Over Poverty through Political Power." Excerpt from Part Six in Jayaraman, Saru and Kathryn De Master, eds. 2020. *Bite Back: People Taking on Corporate Food and Winning*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press. **Also WATCH:** "The Way We Think About Charity is Dead Wrong." (19 minutes)
https://www.ted.com/talks/dan_pallotta_the_way_we_think_about_charity_is_dead_wrong?language=en

WEEK SEVEN

- March 15 There Are No Black People in Africa
READ: Coates, Ta-Nehisi. 2014. "The Case for Reparations." *Atlantic*. Available at: <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>
- March 17 Race and the Food System
READ: Hinson, Waymon R. and Edward Robinson. 2008. "'We Didn't Get Nothing': The Plight of Black Farmers." *Journal of African American Studies* 12: 283-302.
- March 19 Continued Inequities
READ: Horst, Megan and Amy Marion. 2019. "Racial, ethnic, and gender inequities in farm ownership and farming in the U.S." *Agriculture and Human Values* 36:1-16.

SPRING BREAK WEEK

March 22 **SPRING BREAK | Eat Your Vegetables!**

March 24 **SPRING BREAK | Drink More Water!**

March 26 **SPRING BREAK | Go Outside!**

NOTE: From this point forward you will have Wednesdays off. This is because the University considers the time you spend working with your Community Partner as equivalent to the time you spend in the classroom.

WEEK EIGHT

March 29 Back to Nature: Can “Organic” Save Us?

READ: Pollan, Chapters 8-9

March 31 Community Partners

April 2 Grass and Animals at Polyface Farm

READ: Pollan, Chapters 10-11

WEEK NINE

April 5 Markets (Local)

READ: Pollan, Chapters 13-14

April 7 Community Partners

April 9 Markets (Global)

READ: Gottlieb, Robert and Anupama Joshi. “The Food System Goes Global.” Chapter 5 in *Food Justice*. 2010. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

WEEK TEN

April 12 Crises in the Heartland

READ: Semuels, Alana. “They’re Trying to Wipe Us Off the Map:’ Small American Farmers are Nearing Extinction.” *Time*, November 27, 2019. <https://time.com/5736789/small-american-farmers-debt-crisis-extinction/> **AND:** Held, Lisa. 2021. “How Four Years of Trump Reshaped Food and Farming.” *Civil Eats*. Available at: <https://civileats.com/2020/11/02/how-four-years-of-trump-reshaped-food-and-farming/>

April 14 Community Partners

April 16 It’s Not What You Think It Is (It’s Worse)

READ: Evich, Helena Bottemiller. “The Great Nutrient Collapse.” September 13, 2017. *Politico, The Agenda*. <https://www.politico.com/agenda/story/2017/09/13/food-nutrients-carbon-dioxide-000511>

WEEK ELEVEN

April 19 Are Pigs Different from Dogs?

READ: Foer, Jonathan Safran. “Slices of Paradise/Pieces of Shit.” Chapter in *Eating Animals*. 2009. New York: Little, Brown. Read up to page 164.

April 21 Community Partners

April 23 Do Animals Have Rights?

READ: Foer, Jonathan Safran. “Slides of Paradise/Pieces of Shit.” Chapter in *Eating Animals*. 2009. New York: Little, Brown. Read the rest of the excerpt.

WEEK TWELVE

April 26 Review for Examination

April 28 Community Partner

April 30 **NOT-QUITE MIDTERM EXAMINATION**

WEEK THIRTEEN

May 3 Make It Yourself

READ: Pollan, Chapters 15-16

May 5 Community Partner
May 7 Kill It Yourself, Too
READ: Pollan, Chapters 17-18

WEEK FOURTEEN

May 10 The Omnivore's Dilemma
READ: Pollan, Afterword
May 12 Community Partner; last day to submit hours for credit
May 14 **NO CLASS** | Final Papers **DUE** (submitted as PDFs to Canvas)