

Politics of Food

Political Science 214 | Spring 2023 | 3 credits | **Quest III**
MWF, 10:20-11:20am | Sage Hall 2234

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 2023 COURSE DESCRIPTION

I bet you never thought of your kitchen as a battleground, but it is! You'll soon discover that food is one of the most intensely political topics around. In this course, we examine the way our modern food system was created and the impacts that it has on our consumption patterns, health, and environment. We also explore the inequities that are baked into our system and the methods by which communities have attempted to remedy them. 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. Additionally, if you are in this course by permission of the instructor and do NOT need credit for Quest III, you are still expected to fulfill all course requirements, including the community experience.*

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OACP: Elizabeth Ahnert (manager@oacptoday.org)

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COURSE MATERIALS

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

Bittman, Mark. *Animal, Vegetable, Junk: A History of Food, from Sustainable to Suicidal*. (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2021).

Other readings are available to you on Canvas.

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.

OUR COMMUNITY PARTNER

The **Oshkosh Area Community Pantry's** (OACP) mission is "to eliminate food insecurity" and to help create a "community where no one goes hungry." In working towards that vision, the OACP "respects the dignity of all guests and partners, understands and addresses the nutritional needs of guests, works to be adaptable and responsive to the food needs of the community, and acts responsibly to ensure the trust of donors, guests and partners" (<http://oacptoday.org>). 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. By being an active part of this course, you are a part of this vision. Never doubt the significance of your contribution.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

- *Describe* the way the global food system has evolved;
- *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 may 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.

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.

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

This course is designed to make you think; it is *not* a class where you can simply memorize material and regurgitate it on an exam. In fact, there are no exams. Instead, there are small projects designed to keep you engaged and challenged.

Attendance & Participation (20%): You can earn a solid participation grade by coming to every class, 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.

Reading Reflections (30%): This class only works well if you read what I've assigned and think about it before we meet. To that end, you'll complete very short (1-2 paragraphs) reading reflections before each class. This will help us to have better class discussions and ensure that I can *build* on course materials—rather than repeat them—in lectures. You will receive more guidance on this in class.

Exploration Assignment (25%): Each student will do a deeper dive into the course readings and present additional information on a topic of their choosing. These will be due on a staggered schedule. More information and a schedule will be provided in class.

Policy Project (25%): The final project for this course will be recommendation for change in the American food system. More details will be provided in class near spring break.

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

Political Science majors should take Political Methodology (245) in either their sophomore year or the first semester of their junior year. If you have questions about this requirement, your course schedule, possible internships, or career preparation please reach out to your faculty adviser. Students are encouraged to meet with their faculty advisers at least once per year. If you are unsure who your adviser is, you can check TitanWeb or email Ms. Angelee Hammond at hammond@uwosh.edu.

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.

Note II: we WILL sample different foods in this class. Please let me know if you have food allergies!

- January 30 Introduction to the course, Quest III, and Sustainability
Community Partnerships and Assignments/Expectations
READ: this syllabus
- February 1 The Foundations of a Food System: Food Creates Politics
READ: Bittman, Introduction and Chapter 1
- February 3 The Foundations of a Food System: Soil and Civilization
READ: Bittman, Chapters 2 and 3
- February 6 The Politics of Food: Famine
READ: Bittman, Chapter 4
- February 8 Visit from USP and Oshkosh Area Community Pantry Staff: *please bring laptops to class!*
- February 10 The Politics of Food: America Changes Everything
READ: Bittman, Chapter 5
- February 13 Agriculture Transformed: the American Farm
READ: Bittman, Chapter 6
- February 15 Agriculture Transformed: Soil to Dust
READ: Bittman, Chapter 7
- February 17 Agriculture Transformed: Big Business
READ: Bittman, Chapter 8
- February 20 Agriculture Transformed: Government in the Food Business
READ: Bittman, Chapter 9
- February 22 Agriculture Transformed: Salt, Sugar, Fat
READ: Bittman, Chapter 10
- February 24 Agriculture Transformed: Junk Everywhere
READ: Bittman, Chapter 11
- February 27 Agriculture Transformed: America & the World
READ: Bittman, Chapter 12

NOTE: Tonight is the first-ever *Colligan Lecture* on campus, and the guest speaker is alumna Jessica King. Her presentation is titled, "Transforming Trauma into Purpose Through Civic Engagement." I will tell you why this lecture is important to me (and to you!) in class today, but you should attend if you can: it's at 7:00pm in Reeve Ballroom. I will be there and would love to see you!

- March 1 Hungry in America: Fat and Starving
READ: Bittman, Chapter 13

- March 3 Hungry in America: Government as Nutritionist
READ: Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025. (Executive Summary)
https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/sites/default/files/2020-12/DGA_2020-2025_ExecutiveSummary_English.pdf
- March 6 Hungry in America: Government Assistance
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*. (New York: Routledge, 2014). (Canvas)
- March 8 Hungry in America: Living on SNAP
READ: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities: <https://www.cbpp.org/topics/snap-basics>
- March 10 Hungry in America: Food Banks and Pantries
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, 2017). (Canvas)
- March 13 Hungry in America: Food Banks and Pantries
READ: Fisher, Andrew. “The Politics of Corporate Giving.” Chapter 3 in *Big Hunger: The Unholy Alliance Between Corporate America and Anti-Hunger Groups*. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017) (Canvas)
- March 15 Hungry in America: Improving Food Pantries
READ: Martin, Katie S. “Promotion of Healthy Food” and “Connection to Community Services.” Chapters 6 and 7 in *Reinventing Food Banks and Pantries: New Tools to End Hunger*. (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 2021). (Canvas)
- March 17 Ending Hunger in America: What Would It Take?
READ: Feeding America, “Policy Recommendations for the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health.” <https://www.feedingamerica.org/take-action/advocate/policy-recommendations>
- March 20 SPRING BREAK | Eat Well!**
- March 22 SPRING BREAK | Drink Water!**
- March 24 SPRING BREAK | Go Outside!**
- From this point forward, our class will **not** meet on Wednesdays. The OACP is open during our class time on Wednesdays, so it is a great time for you to get a few hours in if you’re able. Also, the University considers the time you spend at the OACP as equivalent to time you spend in the classroom, as do I. Consider your Wednesdays “time off” for the time you have or will spend at the OACP.*
- March 27 Engineered Food
READ: Moss, Michael. “It’s All Related to Memory.” Chapter 3 in *Hooked: How Processed Food Became Addictive*. (New York: Random House, 2021). (Canvas)
- March 29 **Community Partner**

- March 31 What *Should* We Eat, Then?
READ: Boudreau, Catherine and Helena Bottemiller Evich. “How Washington Keeps America Sick and Fat.” *Politico*, November 4, 2019. <https://www.politico.com/news/agenda/2019/11/04/why-we-dont-know-what-to-eat-060299>
- April 3** **NO CLASS | Dr. Slagter traveling with Model UN Team**
- April 5** **NO CLASS | Dr. Slagter traveling with Model UN Team**
- April 7** **NO CLASS | Dr. Slagter traveling with Model UN Team**
- April 10 Feeding Kids: School Lunch
READ: Weaver-Hightower, Marcus. “The Whys and Hows of School Food in America.” Chapter 2 (pages 31-53 only) in *Unpacking School Lunch: Understanding the Hidden Politics of School Food*. (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022)
- April 12 **Community Partner**
- April 14 Feeding Kids: Reforming School Lunch in the U.K.
READ: Weaver-Hightower, Marcus. “A Canary in the Mine: School Food Reform in England.” Chapter 5 in *Unpacking School Lunch: Understanding the Hidden Politics of School Food*. (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022)
- April 17 This Can’t Last: Food and the Environment
READ: Bittman, Chapter 14
- April 19 **Community Partner**
- April 21 This Can’t Last: Food and the Environment
WATCH: Johan R ockstr om and Walter Willett, EAT-Lancet Commission. “What is a Healthy and Sustainable Diet?” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mnlbBhD-124&t=596s> (2019)
- April 24 This Can’t Last: Nutrient Collapse
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>
- April 26 **Community Partner**
- April 28 TBA (Depending on class final project needs)
- May 1 How Do We Move Forward?
READ: Lawless, Jennifer and Richard L. Fox, *Running from Office: Why Young Americans are Turned Off to Politics*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).
- May 3 **Community Partner**
- May 5 TBA (Depending on class final project needs)
- May 8 Conclusions
READ: Bittman, Chapter 15

May 10

Community Partner

May 12

NO CLASS | Enjoy Your Summer!

👉 This is the last day to submit OACP hours to fulfill your requirement.