

History/Political Science 389: Food and Environment

Lecture: Monday and Wednesday 11:00-11:50 CPS 229

UWSP – Political Science Department

Dr. Brad Martins

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Office Hours: Mon/Wed 12:30pm-1:30pm 472

CCC

HIST 389 Discussion: Friday 11:00-11:50 CPS 231

POLI 389 Discussion: Friday 11:00-11:50 CCC 114

UWSP – History Department

Dr. Neil Prendergast

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Office Hours: Wednesday 2-5pm 473 CCC

Recently, Americans of all sorts have been arguing—quite passionately—about their food. Is it best to shop for organic food? Does the South Beach diet result in weight loss? Are ‘paleo’ foods really better for us? If you’re like most people, then you probably do not know the answers to all the food questions that fill the headlines. But you’re probably interested in knowing what, exactly, is going on. What are all these debates about?

We hope this course will help you understand those headlines better. In fact, we designed this course because we wanted to know ourselves. When we started talking about the course over a year ago, we knew that sorting out answers to questions framed by the media would be a bad idea. Even if we could decide that eating like an early human (that’s the ‘paleo’ diet) was the healthy choice, the answer would not last long. Next year, there will be another food craze. And we’re not nutritionists. We’re one historian and one political scientist. What we can offer is something different than an answer to the questions posed on the Food Network and across the internet. We can help explain why those questions are the ones being asked.

History/Political Science 389 gets into the deep layers of conflict that are at the core of our food system. This semester, we’ll look closely at how seemingly uncontroversial topics are, in fact, conflicts and power plays. You will get to know key actors in the food system, from the Iowa Beef Packers to bracero workers to home economists. We’ve divided the semester into a series of case studies that allow for deep investigation. We want you, by the end of the semester, to sense the rich historical and political depth of the American food system. As a class, we’ll explore the food pyramid, school lunch, health food, obesity, and organics.

Each of these topics lets us understand the connection between food and environment in a slightly different way. (We will, by the way, encourage you to think about what the term ‘environment’ means in its fullest sense.) In our unit on organics, for example, the connection to environment will be very clear: organics mean a reduction of synthetic chemicals into agricultural watersheds. But we’ll also consider cities as environments. In the layout of an urban area, some places offer more food choices than others—notably suburbs and their supermarkets compared to inner cities and their mini-marts. We’ll talk a lot about how the creation of place is part of our food system.

Since our overall goal is to have you understand the structure behind today’s food debates, we’ll take up a guiding question for the semester, one that we’ll ask in different ways in each unit:

Why is food controversial?

As we turn this question over in case study after case study, you will begin to think deeply about the nature of conflict. Cultural assumptions, the use of science, marketing, and much else will come under our magnifying glass. By the end of the semester, you’ll be able to look at any food debate, sort out the arguments, and evaluate what’s at stake. No matter where you fall on the political spectrum, this is an important skill.

Enduring Understanding:

Thinking about food helps us understand how the environment, culture, and politics fit together.

Learning Outcomes: After taking this course, students will be able to:

- identify the positions in the food debate.
- explain how past choices affect current foodways.
- explain why food choices are controversial.
- evaluate food policy.

Course Structure: Since our goal is to understand food in connection with the environment, we designed the tasks to make us better and better at that. Take a quick look at any of our units. Each one has a guiding question. To answer these questions, each unit has us traveling a path.

Units usually begin with a lecture or two to provide a common starting point before delving into a source for perspective. As a class and in our smaller Friday discussions we will devote time to understanding that perspective before adopting that perspective as a writer to illuminate some aspect of food.

Mondays and Wednesdays will most often be a lecture, with Dr. Prendergast leading on Mondays and Dr. Mapes-Martins leading on Wednesdays. On Fridays, you will meet in smaller groups. *If you're registered for POLI 389, then you will have a discussion group with Dr. Mapes-Martins in CCC 114. If you're registered for HIST 389, then your discussion group with Dr. Prendergast is in CPS 231.*

This pattern orients us with a big picture, lets us dive into the nitty gritty of a controversy, assess the argument of someone examining the whole conflict, and forces us to evaluate the controversy ourselves, using writing and discussion as our tools. Examining conflict this way moves us from merely remembering facts to evaluating what is at stake in disagreements about food. Completing this pattern again and again, unit after unit, makes this high-order thinking second nature.

Why history and political science matter together: You might reasonably wonder why history and political science are useful for understanding how food connects us to the environment. After all, it seems like an ecology course might be the best place to start (and we encourage you to take one!). There are at least three good reasons.

First, it is impossible to trace a meal back to a farm without encountering layer upon layer of government policy.

Second, the food system didn't get here overnight. It happened over time. Policies have histories. Cultural tastes have histories. And farms have histories.

Third, when Americans fight about food, they fight over policy and use history to claim what is (and is not) true. So it's good to know how policy works and it's good to know your history.





Dr. Martins's: Office Hours:

Office hours are the time I set aside for my students. If these times don't fit your schedule, you can also request a different time by going to my online planner and making an appointment.

Open Door: 472 Collins Classroom Center
Monday and Wednesday 12:30pm-1:30pm
Appointments: <http://bit.ly/YJsN7A>

Dr. Prendergast's Office Hours: You are welcome to visit me in my office. I set aside office hours so that I have the chance to talk with students one-on-one. During that time (Wednesday 3-5pm 473 CCC), I do not have any other commitments. My only commitment is to speak with my students.

Open Door: 473 Collins Classroom Center
Wednesday 2:00pm-5:00pm

Appointments: nprender@uwsp.edu

Course Materials:

Text Rental:

1. Susan Levine, *School Lunch Politics: The Surprising History of America's Favorite Welfare Program*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008). ISBN: 978-0-691-14619-5.

Books for Purchase:

2. Warren Belasco, *Appetite for Change: How the Counterculture Took on the Food Industry, 2nd Updated Ed.* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007). ISBN: 978-0-8014-7329-6.
3. Tracie McMillan, *The American Way of Eating.* (New York: Scribner, 2012). ISBN: 978-1439171967
4. Timothy Pachirat, *Every Twelve Seconds.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011). ISBN: 978-0300152678

Desire2Learn (D2L): All reading and viewing materials not included in the purchased books will be provided to you through the University's learning management system, [Desire2Learn](#).



Grading: Given the unique character of this course, you might wonder which professor will be grading your work. If you're enrolled in HIST 389, then Dr. Prendergast will grade ALL of your work. If you're enrolled in POLI 389, then Dr. Mapes-Martins will grade ALL of your work. On every assignment, we will work closely with each other to make certain our standards are the same.

We're using a somewhat unique grading formula that we believe encourages the best possible student work. Here is how it works: Your final course grade will be your final project grade, if you complete all semester assignments. The reassuring part is that if you indeed complete all semester assignments, the lowest course grade you can get is a B-.

Why did we decide upon this scheme? The major reason is that we want your final course grade to reflect how far you got this semester, not what your understanding was in the early weeks—a problem of point-based grade schemes. Another reason is that we wanted to make certain everyone completes daily work, but we did not want to be punitive about small assignments.

There is a little about the scheme. What happens if you miss an assignment? For up to three times, nothing. Beyond that, you lose two percent from your course grade for each assignment missed. In short, you can miss three with no consequences.

Letter grades for the semester follow the typical pattern:

A 93-100	B+ 87-89.99	C+ 77-79.99	D+ 67-69.99	F 59.99 and below
A- 90-92.99	B 83-86.99	C 73-76.99	D 60-66.99	
	B- 80-82.99	C- 70-72.99		

Assignments:

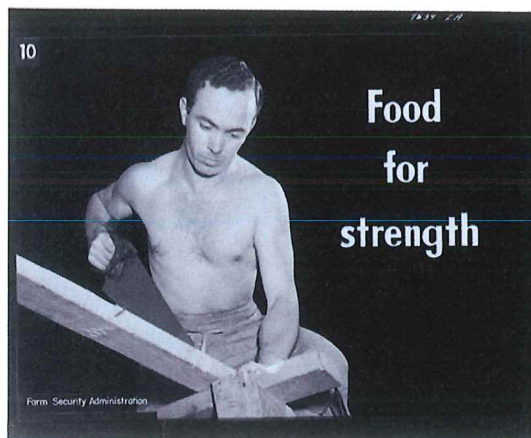
One, Two, Threes: Nearly every Monday (see Schedule), you must turn in a short document about that week's readings. It will contain description of one significant policy or law from the reading; descriptions of two key individuals or organizations from the reading; and descriptions of three important events from the reading. Descriptions can be a sentence or two each. Be prepared to discuss. *You must turn in a hard copy at the beginning of class on Monday. No handwritten work will be accepted.* Save a copy for yourself, by the way.

Author Quotes: Nearly every Wednesday (see Schedule), you must turn in a document containing one quote from the reading that illustrates a main theme of the reading. Be prepared to discuss. *You must turn in a hard copy at the beginning of class on Wednesday. No handwritten work will be accepted.* Save a copy for yourself, by the way.

Takeaway Lessons: Nearly every Friday (see Schedule), you must turn in a document that explains the main relevance of the week's materials. Be prepared to share and discuss. *You must turn in a hard copy at the beginning of class on Friday. No handwritten work will be accepted.* Save a copy for yourself, by the way.

Presentation: In the last two weeks of the semester, every student will conduct a very brief presentation focused on one image from your final project. Details will be available ahead of time.

Final Project: Due at the final exam period, this long piece of writing will pull together course themes. More detail will be provided in a separate assignment sheet. For now, simply know that you will take on the role of Secretary of Agriculture and provide the incoming President with a report on the future of organic food.



Course Policies: During the class, cell phones and other electronic devices are prohibited. If you are a parent or are otherwise obligated to be available to your family via cell phone, then please discuss that situation with us, so we know that you have a good reason for keeping your phone turned on.

For information on plagiarism, consult <http://www.uwsp.edu/centers/rights>. See Chapter 14, *Student Academic Standards and Disciplinary Procedures*, pages 5 -10, for the disciplinary possibilities if you are caught cheating. As instructors deeply concerned with fairness in the classroom, we pursue each and every case of plagiarism and cheating. Please note that turnitin.com is used for the essay assignments.

The eatwell plate

Use the eatwell plate to help you get the balance right. It shows how much of what you eat should come from each food group.



Department of Health in consultation with the Welsh Assembly Government, The Scottish Government, Northern Ireland and the Irish Government

Life Happens:

We understand you have a life outside this class. We also understand that life might make it difficult to complete some assignments, attend class, or simply to do well. We do our best to be flexible because we know some circumstances are out of your control and our control. We're on your team. We also know that some real learning has to take place in this class. You will have more opportunities in life if you can analyze, think critically and communicate effectively. This class has to be one of your priorities. We do our best to be flexible, but need to adhere to some standards. If something comes up, let's talk.

Equity of Educational Access: If you have a learning or physical challenge which requires classroom accommodation, please contact the UWSP Disability Services office with your documentation as early as possible in the semester. They will then notify me, in a confidential memo, of the accommodations that will facilitate your success in the course. Disability Services Office, 103 Student Services Center, Voice: (715) 346-3365, TTY: (715) 346-3362, <http://www.uwsp.edu/special/disability/studentinfo.htm>.

Note: The syllabus is a general plan for the course. Deviations announced in class may be necessary.

Week One		
	Wednesday, September 2 Introduction Syllabus	Friday, September 4 <u>Reading:</u> Belasco, "Why Study Food?," 1-13. [D2L]
Week Two		
Monday, September 7 <i>1-2-3 List Due</i> <u>Reading:</u> Levine, "Introduction" and "Ch. 3 & 4" <i>School Lunch Politics</i> , 1-9, 54-88.	Wednesday, September 9 <i>Author Quote Due</i>	Friday, September 11 <i>Takeaway Lesson Due</i>
Week Three		
Monday, September 14 <i>1-2-3 List Due</i> <u>Reading:</u> Levine, "Ch. 6 & 7," <i>School Lunch Politics</i> , 105-150. Harrington, "The Invisible Land," 1-18. [D2L]	Wednesday, September 16 <i>Author Quote Due</i>	Friday, September 18 <i>Takeaway Lesson Due</i>
Week Four		
Monday, September 21 <i>1-2-3 List Due</i> <u>Reading:</u> Levine, "Ch 8 & Epilogue," <i>School Lunch Politics</i> , 151-192.	Wednesday, September 23 <i>Author Quote Due</i>	Friday, September 25 <i>Takeaway Lesson Due</i>
Week Five		
Monday, September 28 <i>1-2-3 List Due</i> <u>Reading:</u> Belasco, "Pt. 1," <i>Appetite for Change</i> , 15-108.	Wednesday, September 30 <i>Author Quote Due</i>	Friday, October 2 <i>Takeaway Lesson Due</i>

Week Six		
Monday, October 5 <i>1-2-3 List Due</i> <u>Reading:</u> Belasco, "Pt. 2," <i>Appetite for Change</i> , 111-182.	Wednesday, October 7 <i>Author Quote Due</i>	Friday, October 9 <i>Takeaway Lesson Due</i>
Week Seven		
Monday, October 12 <i>1-2-3 List Due</i> <u>Reading:</u> Belasco, "Pt. 3," <i>Appetite for Change</i> , 185-255.	Wednesday, October 14 <i>Author Quote Due</i>	Friday, October 16 <i>Takeaway Lesson Due</i>
Week Eight		
Monday, October 19 <i>1-2-3 List Due</i> <u>Reading:</u> McMillan, "Pt. 1," <i>The American Way of Eating</i> , 1-100. Schlosser, "In the Strawberry Fields" [D2L]	Wednesday, October 21 <i>Author Quote Due</i>	Friday, October 23 <i>Takeaway Lesson Due</i>
Week Nine		
Monday, October 26 <i>1-2-3 List Due</i> <u>Reading:</u> McMillan, "Pt. 2," <i>The American Way of Eating</i> , 101-184. Halpern, "Citizen Walmart," 36-43. [D2L]	Wednesday, October 28 <i>Author Quote Due</i>	Friday, October 30 <i>Takeaway Lesson Due</i>
Week Ten		
Monday, November 2 <i>1-2-3 List Due</i> <u>Reading:</u> Pachirat, "Ch. 1-3," <i>Every Twelve Seconds</i> , 1-84. Schlosser, "On the Range," 133-147. [D2L]	Wednesday, November 4 <i>Author Quote Due</i>	Friday, November 6 <i>Takeaway Lesson Due</i>

Week Eleven		
Monday, November 9 <i>1-2-3 List Due</i> <u>Reading:</u> Pachirat, "Ch. 4-6," <i>Every Twelve Seconds</i> , 85-161.	Wednesday, November 11 <i>Author Quote Due</i>	Friday, November 13 <i>Takeaway Lesson Due</i>
Week Twelve		
Monday, November 16 <i>1-2-3 List Due</i> <u>Reading:</u> Pachirat, "Ch. 7-9," <i>Every Twelve Seconds</i> , 162-256.	Wednesday, November 18 <i>Author Quote Due</i>	Friday, November 20 <i>Takeaway Lesson Due</i>
Week Thirteen		
Monday, November 23 <i>Final Assignment Explanation</i>	Wednesday, November 25 <i>Optional 'Feedback' Meetings</i>	Friday, November 27 Thanksgiving No Class
Week Fourteen		
Monday, November 30 <i>Presentations</i>	Wednesday, December 2 <i>Presentations</i>	Friday, December 4 <i>Discussion</i>
Week Fifteen		
Monday, December 7 <i>Presentations</i>	Wednesday, December 9 <i>Presentations</i>	Friday, December 11 <i>Discussion</i>