**NUTR-GE 2294.001: 1 credit, pass/fail**

**FOOD SYSTEM POLITICS: NUTRITION, FOOD STUDIES, AND PUBLIC HEALTH**

**Spring 2021**

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**Time:** Fridays 12:30 – 2:10 pm ET

**Place:** Zoom (online, synchronous): [https://nyu.zoom.us/s/98598742326](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=https-3A__nyu.zoom.us_s_98598742326&d=DwMFaQ&c=slrrB7dE8n7gBJbeO0g-IQ&r=Wc4AKlajwvxraGmv9rtd0A&m=B1-SyLAo27Fz3GDGlHdQHH64eVK-4VVmvhEs3OURc4M&s=gCQp53Cx9kfGlcmuX9jcA8CG7k2dCOkDpkLnVKBdqYY&e=)

**Dates:** March 5, 12, 26; April 2, 9

**Office hours:** By Zoom or telephone appointment (arrange via e-mail)

“We should recognize that food systems are driven by economic factors and self-interests. Whether we like it or not, the “value” in food value chains is economic value, not nutritional value. Converting nutritious agricultural commodities into processed foods high in sugar, sweeteners and fat while low in micronutrients and fiber adds economic value in the supply chain but causes increased micronutrient deficiencies, obesity, diabetes and other chronic diseases. We need to look for win-wins in which economic and nutrition goals can be pursued simultaneously.” –Per Pinstrup-Anderson, [The Borlaug Blog](https://www.worldfoodprize.org/index.cfm/88533/18102/how_to_guide_food_systems_to_achieve_nutrition_objectives), 11-13-17

**Description and philosophy**

This brief survey course deals with the big-picture context of today’s most important global nutrition and public health—and, therefore, food system—problems: hunger and malnutrition (food insecurity), food overconsumption and its health consequences (obesity and noncommunicable diseases), and the effects of food production and consumption on the environment and climate—all in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The course is based on the premise that a rational policy for all nations is to create a food system that reduces malnutrition and obesity, promotes overall health, protects the environment, mitigates climate change, supports the livelihoods of participants, and is sustainable. Some stakeholder groups disagree with this premise. Hence: politics. Thus, this course asks: Should food choices be matters of individual responsibility or government policy? What are appropriate roles for individuals, government, the food industry, civil society, and other stakeholders in determining food systems and food choices? What are the most effective ways to advocate for healthier and more sustainable food systems and for stakeholder accountability?

**Objectives**

* Define what is meant by food system and food system policy.
* Describe how the Coronavirus pandemic has affected food systems.
* Identify the principal stakeholders in food system issues.
* Describe how stakeholders use the political system to influence food and nutrition policies.
* Identify appropriate food system roles for government, the food industry, and civil society.
* Describe food system barriers to consumption of healthful diets.
* Describe the principal methods used by food, nutrition, and public health advocates to improve food systems.

**Zoom etiquette:** Turn cameras on during class sessions and breakouts. Mute sound when not speaking. Be patient with the inevitable technical difficulties and delays.

**CLASS SCHEDULE AND READINGS**

**Note:** All references, as well as slides shown in class, are or will be posted on the NYU Classes website; look for them under Resources in folders labeled for each class session. Another way to get the references is through links given in the reading list.

**Reading guidelines**

* **Read:**Do the best you can to understand what is being said and the main points of the material, and to think critically about them. Note what you do and do not understand. Are you convinced by the arguments? So you agree with them? If not, why not?
* **Browse:**Get an idea of what is covered in the material and read what interests you
* **Also:** Pay attention to current events and news items related to course themes and bring them to class for discussion.

**I. March 5: Food policy and politics in the Coronavirus era**

**Topics**

* Effects of Covid-19 on food systems
* Covid-19: undernutrition, overnutrition, inequities
* Definitions of key concepts: food system, politics, policy, upstream/downstream

**Read**

* Parsons K, Hawkes C, Wells R.Brief 2. What is the food system? A Food policy perspective. In: Rethinking Food Policy: A Fresh Approach to Policy and Practice. London: Centre for Food Policy; 2019 (@NYU Classes—Resources).
* IPES. Special report: COVID-19 and the Crisis in Food Systems, April 2020.

<http://www.ipes-food.org/pages/covid19>

* Carducci et al. Food systems, diets and nutrition in the wake of COVID-19. Nature Food 2021;2:68-70. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s43016-021-00233-9>

**Browse**

* World Cancer Research Fund. NOURISHING database. <https://www.wcrf.org/int/policy/nourishing-database>

**II. March 12. Healthful diets: a food systems perspective**

**Topics**

* Concept: ultra-processed
* Triple-duty approaches: undernutrition, overnutrition, environmental effects
* Diet for planetary health
* US Dietary Guidelines 2020-2025

**Read**

* Monteiro C, et al. Ultra-processed foods: what they are and how to identify them. *Public Health Nutrition* 2019;22(5);936–941 (@NYU Classes—Resources).
* Hall K, et al. Ultra-processed diets cause excess calorie intake and weight gain: an inpatient randomized controlled trial of ad libitum food intake. *Cell Metabolism* 2019;30:67–77 (@NYU Classes—Resources). **Guidelines:** Look at the graph on the first page, read the introduction and Table 1, and browse the rest.

[Note: reading for this session continues on the next page]

* Willett W et al. Food in the Anthropocene: the EAT-Lancet Commission on healthy diets from sustainable food systems. *The Lancet*, January 16, 2019 (@NYU Classes—Resources).

**Reading guidelines**

Section 1: **Read** pages 1-15

Sections 2 and 3: **Read** pages 15-16

**Browse** from page 16 (global carbon budget) to 31.

Note Table 4, p 24, Figure 4, p 25, and Table 5, p 31.

Section 4: **Browse** pages 31-39

**Read** the Conclusion, page 39

**Consider:** Why did this report elicited so much press attention?

What contributions does it make to food systems thinking? Public health nutrition?

**Browse**

* Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025.

<https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/sites/default/files/2020-12/Dietary_Guidelines_for_Americans_2020-2025.pdf>

**[Note: March 19 is an NYU Holiday--no class that day]**

**III. March 26: Food insecurity in the Coronavirus era**

**Topics**

* Covid-19 and food insecurity: effects
* Policy responses: SNAP and Food Boxes

**Read**

* USDA/ERS. International Food Security Assessment, 2020-2030: Covid-19 Update. January 2021. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/pub-details/?pubid=100275>
* Laborde D et al. Covid-19 risks to global food security. Science. 2020;369:501-502. <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/369/6503/500>
* WAFOOD Survey Team. Economic security and food access in Washington State during the COVID-19 pandemic, June to July 2020. <https://nutr.uw.edu/resource/economic-security-and-food-access-in-washington-state-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/>
* Swinburn BA, et al. The Global Syndemic of Obesity, Undernutrition, and Climate Change: The Lancet Commission report. *The Lancet*, January 26, 2019 (@NYU Classes—Resources).

**Reading guidelines**

**Read** pages 1-5, and note Panel 2

**Browse** pp. 6-10

**Read**: Re-thinking obesity pp. 10-12

**Browse**: complex adaptive systems pp. 12-13.

**Read**: levers to convert policy inertia into policy traction pp. 13-20, but browse the tables.

**Read:** Panel 6 [Readings continue on next page]

**Browse**

* The Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy, and The CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute. New York Food 20/20: Vision, Research, and Recommendations During COVID-19 and Beyond. The Hunter College NYC Food Policy Center, September 2020.<https://www.nycfoodpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/ny2020-finalv2.pdf>

**IV. April 2. Big Ag and Big Food in the Coronavirus era**

**Topics**

* + Effects of agriculture and food consumption on the environment
  + Effects of climate change on agriculture and nutrition
  + Effects of Covid-19

**Read**

* Nestle M. The farm bill drove me insane. Politico, March 17,. 2016. <http://www.politico.com/agenda/story/2016/03/farm-bill-congress-usda-food-policy-000070>
* Swinburn BA, et al. The Global Syndemic of Obesity, Undernutrition, and Climate Change: The Lancet Commission report. *The Lancet*, January 26, 2019 (@NYU Classes—Resources).

**Reading guidelines**

**Browse:** transportation, urban design, land use p. 20-23, country contexts p. 24.

**Read:** Strengthening public sector governance, p. 24-28

**Browse**: right to wellbeing, p. 28-30, Framework convention p. 30-31

**Read** Private-sector challenges p. 31-34, Mobilising civil society p. 34-37

**Browse** Cultural influences p. 37-46

**Read** Recommendations p. 4-end.

Note principles related to governance, the food industry, and civil society. What is this report’s contribution to food systems thinking and to public health nutrition?

* Global Health Advocacy Incubator. Facing Two Pandemics How Big Food Undermined Public Health in the Era of COVID-19. November 2020. <https://advocacyincubator.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/GHAI-Facing-Two-Pandemics-Report-November-2020.pdf>

**V. April 9: Food systems advocacy**

***Topics***

* Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
* Advocacy agenda, goals, methods, rationale

[Continues on next page]

**Read**

* U.N. Sustainable Development Goals (click on the squares; sub-goals are under Targets)

<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

* Progress reports (click on the numbers and Read More): <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/>
* Hertz J. Afterword: Taking action to create change. In: Jayaraman S, De Master K, eds. Bite Back: People Taking On Corporate Food and Winning. Oakland: University of California Press; 2020: 209–221. (@NYU Classes—Resources)

**Browse: Additional advocacy resources**

* Healthy Food America. Sugar advocacy toolkit. <http://www.healthyfoodamerica.org/sugar_advocacy_toolkit>
* Philbrick IP, Leonardt D. How to participate in politics. New York Times, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/guides/year-of-living-better/how-to-participate-in-government?campaignId=7WWW8&tp=i-H43-A3-BiS-1fsTZd-1y-3NE9Z-1c-1fpxbm-VEri6>
* Union of Concerned Scientists. Healthy food in your community: A toolkit for policy change. October 2014. <https://www.ucsusa.org/sites/default/files/attach/2014/10/ucs-food-policy-toolkit-2014.pdf>
* Beautiful Trouble: tools for advocacy. <https://www.beautifultrouble.org/toolbox/?link_id=1&can_id=e0b07b5a29ba5cc50a1db87cb6edec96&email_referrer=email_1074762&email_subject=a-love-letter-to-the-movement#/>

**EVALUATION: GRADING IS PASS/FAIL**

For a passing grade, you will attend class, do the assigned reading, and upload three response papers on the NYU Classes website under the Assignments tab.

DUE: each week by 11:00 p.m. on the Wednesday prior to the next class. Options: March 10, 17, 31, April 7. File comments by three of these dates on material covered in lectures or reading.

Note that these are open-ended assignments. What questions do you have? What would you like to hear more about? What strikes you the most about what you have read, heard in lecture, or discussed? What do you agree or disagree with. Begin your response with the questions. Then write whatever your thoughts are about the topics covered.

Use no more than two pages, double-spaced. Be sure to put your name and e-mail ID at the top of the first page. Submit papers to NYU Classes under Assignments. Submissions will not be graded, but one of the instructors will read and respond to them (briefly). This is your chance to interact with us about course issues and we look forward to reading what you write.

**Repeat: A Passing grade requires attendance and three submssions of written questions and comments.**