

POSC 3101: Writing and Argumentation in Political Science The Politics of Food

Marquette University, Dept. of Political Science
Spring 2021; Monday, Wednesday 11:00-12:15, Wehr Life Sciences 108

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Office Hours: Monday/Wednesday 3:30-5:00 or by appointment on MS Teams

Course Overview:

This course uses food as a lens to analyze the social and political world. Food plays a central role in securing justice for human populations across several arenas: development policy, nutrition, migration, international aid, and environmental sustainability. The course moves through a set of specific foods, ranging from basic commodities such as corn and tomatoes to dishes that have attained important cultural and economic significance, such as Big Macs and General Tso's Chicken. These foods will be discussed through three perspectives:

1. *Consumption:* What are the ethical considerations in purchasing and eating foods—in terms of environmental impact and food security for the vulnerable? What shapes American diets and what are the implications for public health and inequality?
2. *Production:* How do agricultural market institutions balance the interests of small- and large-scale producers? What are the conditions of work in the fields, factories, and kitchens that produce these foods?
3. *Culture:* What role do these foods play in constructing national or ethnic identities? How does food signify culture for communities in the context of conflict and mass migration?

This course also focuses on developing students' research and writing skills. Throughout the semester, you will work on four assignments designed to feature different skills: (1) a reading summary, (2) a blog post, (3) a policy brief, and (4) an ethnographic case study. All of these assignments will offer an opportunity to practice skills of upper-level college writing. The policy brief and ethnographic case study will additionally be opportunities for you to collect and analyze empirical evidence. For each of these assignments, we will have intermediate deadlines and workshops for incremental feedback and improvement.

Course Objectives:

1. Understand how politics shapes what we and others eat.
2. Connect debates about justice and inequality to the world of food.
3. Analyze evidence and hone arguments about food and politics.
4. Improve your reading, writing, and research skills.

Student Assessment:

Your final grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

10%	Participation
5%	Reading Synthesis (Due 2/5)
15%	Blog Post (Due 3/5)
30%	Policy Brief (Due 4/9)
30%	Ethnographic Case Study (Due 5/10)
10%	D2L Posts and Discussion Questions

Participation

You are expected to attend every in-person and synchronous class session, as health permits and in line with campus COVID policies. If you must miss a class due to illness or some other exceptional circumstance, please notify the professor no later than the day before class. Students are expected to inform instructor of quarantine or isolation dates and to communicate regularly about their ability to participate during that time. There is no need to provide any medical documentation, but I expect you to participate in all assignments to the extent possible based on severity of symptoms. Further information on Marquette's policies for Attendance during COVID can be found [here](#).

Participation is central to success in this course. Given that much of class time will be focused on writing skills, it is essential that students have completed the assigned reading prior to showing up for class and are prepared to discuss and apply it. Several of our class sessions will take place in a workshop format with small groups. Your contribution to these small groups will be an important element in your learning experience and your participation grade.

Writing Assignment 1: Reading Synthesis

Learning Goals: (1) Synthesize and apply course readings; (2) Practice thesis-governed writing; (3) Develop clear, concise writing style.

Write a 250-word summary of "Part I: Corn" in Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma* in your own words. (Do not quote verbatim the language used in the book.) The summary should begin with a short paragraph summarizing the overall argument that ends with a thesis sentence. The rest of the summary should describe how each of the chapters contributes to that main argument.

1. One summary sentence for each chapter (1-7) in D2L Discussion Post (2/2)
2. Full summary due in D2L Dropbox (2/5)

Writing Assignment 2: Blog Post

Learning Goals: (1) Synthesize and apply course readings; (2) Practice thesis-governed writing and logical argumentation; (3) Develop clear, concise writing style.

Write a 500-word Blog Post about some issue related to food consumption. This post should use evidence from course readings (and can also incorporate other evidence) to make a central argument about some action that the government should take. For example: *The City of Milwaukee should promote community gardens.* OR *Milwaukee Public Schools should enhance nutritional education programs.*

1. Outline of blog post in D2L Discussion Post (2/23)
2. Blog post due in D2L Dropbox (3/5)

Writing Assignment 3: Policy Brief

Learning Goals: (1) Learn how to find data online; (2) Analyze statistical data and use it to make an argument; (3) Synthesize and apply course readings; (4) Practice thesis-governed writing; (5) Develop clear, concise writing style.

Imagine that you are a staffer for a government agency in the US or some other country, interested in promoting production of a new food. Write a 1,500-word brief analyzing the global or national market for that food. This brief should (1) incorporate statistical data on the production of that food product (e.g. across countries or US states); (2) build an argument that incorporates knowledge from course readings; (3) engage and cite at least four additional readings not on the syllabus. The brief should include a bibliography.

In preparation for this assignment, we will have a meeting with Leatha Miles-Edmonson, the Political Science librarian, who will help us look through online data sources, including a list curated at: <https://libguides.marquette.edu/polsci/posc3101>. Key sources for statistical data on agricultural production are available at [FAOSTAT](#) (global) and the [USDA](#) (United States). We will also learn to use Google Scholar to find sources.

1. Annotated bibliography with at least four sources in D2L Discussion Post (3/30)
2. Outline, including table or graph in D2L Discussion Post (4/4)
3. Policy Brief due in D2L Dropbox (4/9)

Writing Assignment 4: Ethnographic Case Study

Learning Goals: (1) Understand ethical principles of research with human subjects; (2) Practice interviewing and analysis of qualitative evidence; (3) Synthesize and apply course readings; (4) Practice thesis-governed writing; (5) Develop clear, concise writing style.

How does food relate to people's political identities? How are societal inequalities reproduced in the world of food? Conduct a case study with somebody who works in food—

a farmer, chef, restaurateur, grocer, etc. You will write a 1,500-word profile of that person, analyzing the role that food plays in their cultural identity and their political engagement.

1. Human subjects online course (CITI), post scorecard to D2L Dropbox (4/23)
2. Interview questionnaire in D2L Discussion Post (4/27)
3. Ethnographic case study due in D2L Dropbox (5/10)

D2L Posts and Discussion Questions

Throughout the semester, there are several opportunities to conduct smaller assignments in D2L. Each of these posts will be worth 1% of your grade. These take two forms:

1. Responses to discussion questions about films or other media, which should be posted under these questions in the main D2L Discussions page.
2. Preliminary assignments related to each of the writing products described above. Unless otherwise specified, these should be posted in the discussion forums for your small groups to discuss during workshops.

Required Readings:

You are required to attain a copy of the following book, available at Book Marq, the university bookstore, or you may acquire it through alternate means.

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

Additional readings will be posted to D2L.

Throughout the course, we will also consult material about researching and writing. Students are encouraged to seek alternative resources on their own. Two useful free resources are the [Online Writing Lab](#) and [UW Madison's Writer's Handbook](#).

Course Policies:

Communication

- *Office hours:* Office hours are for you, the student. Please reach out to discuss course material, assignments, or any other thoughts or concerns you may have.
- *Checking your email:* I expect you to check your email daily. I will send course announcements over email. It is your responsibility to make sure that the email account that is registered in D2L is the one that you check regularly.
- *Professor's email:* If you have a very short clarifying question, it may be appropriate to email the professor. I only ask that prior to emailing me you consult the syllabus and ask your classmates to see if it is something that has already been covered.

Laptops and Other Electronic Devices

Research has shown that students retain information better when they take notes by hand than when they take notes on a computer. For this reason, I have a no-device policy for in-person classes. Laptops may only be used by those with special learning needs that have consulted with me in advance. If you need advice on how to take notes effectively using paper and pen, you can come to office hours and I can suggest note-taking strategies. Cell phones should be turned off during class. If you have a special need to keep your cell phone on, such as to monitor a sick child, see me *before* class and I will make an accommodation. For online synchronous activities and workshops, I ask that students refrain from multi-tasking on their computers.

Grade Appeals

If you want to appeal an assigned grade, you must submit to me a typed, one-page statement explaining why the grade should be changed. Note that doing so gives me license to adjust the questioned grade either upward or downward. At the same time, I am more than happy to discuss your papers and exams during office hours with the goal of helping you to improve your performance the next time.

Academic Dishonesty

All students have participated in training activities at Marquette to learn about what constitutes academic dishonesty. Any instance of academic dishonesty in this course such as plagiarism, copying others' work, or consulting unauthorized sources during exams will be handled according to university policy. Violating students will automatically receive a zero on the assignment or exam in question and be referred to the Marquette University Honor Council: <http://www.marquette.edu/provost/integrity-index.php>. If you have any uncertainty about whether you are adhering to academic honesty standards, please consult with me in advance.

Ott Memorial Writing Center

Marquette's writing center is a place for *all* writers who care about their writing, because *every* writer can benefit from conversation with an interested, knowledgeable peer. Writing center tutors can help you brainstorm ideas, revise a rough draft, or fine-tune a final draft. You can find detailed instructions on how to schedule appointments and participate in remote tutorials on their registration page (<https://marquette.mywconline.com/>) and by emailing writingcenter@marquette.edu.

Class Format:

This class is operated through a hybrid format. We will meet for in-person class about half of the class sessions. Class sessions will take one of four formats, as noted in the table below:

1. *In person*: all students in person
2. *Online synchronous*: all students during class time in Teams
3. *Online workshop*: all students will meet with their small groups (4 students each) over Teams breakout sessions during the class time. Professor will rotate among groups.
4. *Online asynchronous*: at home assignment, post to D2L

Class Schedule:

Date	Format	Topic	Readings	Activity/Assignment
1/25 (Mon.)	In person	Course Introduction	Syllabus	
1/27 (Wed.)	Online-synchronous		Systems for Reading and Note Taking Developing a Thesis Statement	
2/1 (Mon.)	In person	Corn	Pollan, <i>Omnivore's Dilemma</i> , chapters 1-4	Write one summary sentence for each chapter (1-7) in "Industrial Corn." Post to D2L by 2/2
2/3 (Wed.)	Online-workshop		Pollan, chapters 5-7	Reading Synthesis due 2/5 in D2L Dropbox
UNIT ONE: CONSUMPTION				
2/8 (Mon.)	Online-synchronous	White Bread and the "Modern" Diet	Writing an Effective Blog Post	<i>Visit from Writing Tutor</i>
2/10 (Wed.)	Online-asynchronous			Watch The Poison Squad Respond to D2L disc. questions by 2/12
2/15 (Mon.)	In person		Bobrow-Strain, <i>White Bread</i> , chapters 2 and 5	
2/17 (Wed.)	Online-asynchronous		How Food Ads Make Us Overeat	Listen to this podcast: Advertising and Race Respond to D2L disc. questions by 2/19
2/22 (Mon.)	In person	Big Macs and Inequality	Chatelain, <i>Franchise</i> , Intro. and chapters 1-2	Post outline of Blog Post to D2L by 2/23
2/24 (Wed.)	Online-workshop			
3/1 (Mon.)	In person		Fielding-Singh, "A Taste of Inequality"	
3/3 (Wed.)	Online-asynchronous			Blog Post due 3/5 in D2L Dropbox
UNIT TWO: PRODUCTION AND TRADE				
3/8 (Mon.)	Online-asynchronous	Tomatoes and Globalization		Watch The Man Who Tried to Feed the World Respond to D2L disc. questions by 3/12
3/10 (Wed.)	NO CLASS: Mental Health			

3/15 (Mon.)	In person		Paarlberg, <i>Food Politics</i> , chapter 6 "Product of Mexico" LA Times (4-part series)	
3/17 (Wed.)	Online-synchronous		<i>Skim</i> FAO: "Writing Effective Policy Briefs"	
3/22 (Mon.)	In person	Coffee and Development	Paarlberg, chapter 9 Jaffee, <i>Brewing Justice</i> , chapters 1-2	
3/24 (Wed.)	Online-synchronous		Writing an Annotated Bibliography	<i>Visit From Librarian</i>
3/29 (Mon.)	In person	Beef and the Environment	Paarlberg, chapter 10 "Can a Burger Help Solve Climate Change?" The New Yorker	Post annotated bibliography with at least four sources by 3/30
3/31 (Wed.)	Online-workshop			Post outline with 1 table or graph to D2L by 4/4
4/5 (Mon.)	Online-asynchronous			Suggested office hours meetings with professor this week
4/7 (Wed.)	Online-workshop			<i>Policy Brief due 4/9 in D2L Dropbox</i>
UNIT THREE: CULTURE				
4/12 (Mon.)	In person	Bread and Nationalism	Ferguson, "Culinary Nationalism" "Baking Bread in Lyon" The New Yorker	
4/14 (Wed.)	Online-asynchronous		Fujii, <i>Interviewing in Social Science Research</i> , chapters 3-4	Respond to D2L disc. questions by 4/16
4/19 (Mon.)	In person	General Tso's Chicken and Immigration	Lee, <i>Fortune Cookie Chronicles</i> , chapters 1 and 5	
4/21 (Wed.)	Online-asynchronous			Complete CITI training and upload completion report to D2L Dropbox by 4/23
4/26 (Mon.)	In Person	BBQ and Race	Twitty, <i>The Cooking Gene</i> , chapters 1 and 16	Post interview questionnaire to D2L by 4/27
4/28 (Wed.)	Online-workshop			
5/3 (Mon.)	FINAL CLASS CELEBRATION			
<i>ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY DUE: Monday 5/10 in D2L Dropbox</i>				

Bibliography

- Bobrow-Strain, Aaron. 2012. *White Bread: A Social History of the Store-Bought Loaf*. Boston: Beacon Press.
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