Food Policy and Politics – Fall 2020
University of Vermont

Monday and Wednesdays
REMOTE Teams Class
3:30pm- 4:45pm
3 credits

Instructor
Dr. Meredith T. Niles
mtniles@uvm.edu
@MeredithNiles1
802-656-4337
www.meredithtniles.com

Office Hours: Virtual dropins on Teams Wednesdays 2:00-3:00pm and by appointment

Teaching Assistant
Maya Moore (Only after October 12)
Maya.Moore@uvm.edu

Technical Support for Students
Students, please read this technology check list to make sure you are ready for classes.
https://www.uvm.edu/it/kb/student-technology-resources/

Students should contact the Helpline (802-656-2604) for support with technical issues.

Course Overview:
The food system contains a complex mix of relationships, stakeholders, and feedbacks that operate across a diversity of goals. For example, farmers and agricultural systems may aim to maximize productivity and minimize costs while consumers seek to purchase food with minimal environmental impacts and maximum health benefits. Vice versa, many consumers lack the capacity to purchase or access food, which may be at odds with farmer goals of accessing high-end, niche markets with specialty products. These complexities are intertwined with sweeping sets of policies that influence the food system across many attributes from food safety to environmental conservation to nutrition. These policies affect the food system across many different scales of government from local to federal to global. To have a clear understanding of the global food system across many sectors it is crucial to also connect these sectors and actors to the policies that influence their decision-making and behaviors. This enables us to analyze how food system stakeholders influence and drive the policy process.

This is a systems course that will focus on understanding the food policy process, the policymakers, stakeholders, issues, goals and feedbacks at the interface of food policy and politics. While the course is
remote, the class is designed to offer opportunities for hands-on, engaged activities through small group discussions, guest speakers, in-class debates, and case studies. The course is designed so that students will have a clear understanding of the policy and regulatory process in the United States for students to critically assess the relationships between policymakers, policies and food system stakeholders.

Of course, COVID-19 has deeply affected the food system in many ways, and food policy has shifted substantially to address these new challenges. The course will dig into some of these changes, and the impact of COVID-19 on food policy and systems throughout the semester. It is also a presidential and Congressional election year! The course will provide opportunities to learn more about the food policy proposals of federal candidates.

**Course Goals and Objectives:**
This course will provide students with a systems perspective on food policies and politics across the entire food system. Often food policy courses focus on one particular aspect—either nutrition or agricultural policy—this course will provide overview of all aspects of food policy.

Students will achieve the following learning objectives:

1. Define the policy process and policymakers for creating, implementing and enforcing state, and federal laws, regulations and policies *(The Food Policy Process)*
2. Identify multiple food system stakeholders and how they interact in policy systems to affect the food system *(The People in the Food Policy Process)*
3. Describe the issues facing the food system and their potential policy interventions *(The Problems the Food Policy Process Attempts to Change)*
4. Demonstrate through policy debates how different policy interventions may affect multiple components of the food system *(The Feedbacks in the Food Policy Process)*
5. Assess the policy proposals of potential federal candidates *(The Politics of the Food Policy Process)*

**Course Modality:**
This course is offered in a remote modality, meaning we will meet at the normally scheduled time live for lectures, debates, discussions, and questions. The live course WILL be recorded and uploaded to blackboard in case you cannot attend a class. However, it is expected that in general, students will attend the live courses. There will be grading aspects associated with in-person attendance, including live polling, sharing news stories, asking questions, etc.

The course will meet via Microsoft Teams; however, all of the course materials will be located in Blackboard.

**Course Reading and Materials:**

The course readings will be made available on the blackboard site, with the exception of the Food Policy in the United States book, which is the required textbook. **All readings will be placed in the folder for the relevant class prior to class, and should be read in preparation for that class.**
News and Blogs:
Food policy is happening all the time. For this reason we will start every class with an open discussion of current news in food policy. These discussions are part of your expected participation. To stay up to date you may want to browse some blogs on current agriculture and food policy topics. These include:

1. Politico Morning Agriculture (blog of Politico, one of the leading newspapers on Capitol Hill) (http://www.politico.com/tipsheets/morning-agriculture)
2. The Fern AG Insider (Food and Environment Reporting Network) (https://thefern.org/ag_insider/)

Academic Blogs:
4. Marion Nestle’s blog Food Politics (she’s a nutrition professor) (http://www.foodpolitics.com/)
5. Jason Lusk’s blog (he’s a food and agriculture economics professor) (http://jaysonlusk.com/)
6. Park Wilde’s US Food Policy blog (he’s an economist/food policy professor) (http://usfoodpolicy.blogspot.com/)
7. Marc Bellemare’s blog (he’s an agricultural economics professor) (http://marcfbellemare.com/wordpress/)

Course Expectations and Evaluation

Class Expectations
Even as a remote course, this is designed to be interactive and provide opportunities for engaging with your instructor, peers, and external guests. Students are expected to be active learners and will participate in many activities both within and out of class that give you an understanding of our policy systems and politics in action. As a result, it is expected that you attend the remote courses live to fully engage in learning and discussion. The UVM attendance policy clearly outlines expectations for attendance.

This is a political course, which means that people will be expressing their political opinions through debate, class discussions, i-clickers, and in other ways. To facilitate a learning experience, which includes understanding diverse perspectives, it is crucial that we first and foremost respect a difference of opinion.

I am deeply committed to creating a learning environment in which a diversity of political opinions is welcome and accepted as part of a learning experience. To achieve that, all students are expected to respect their peers, Dr. Niles and their TA by listening to different perspectives even if they do not hold the same opinion or belief. Debate is a natural part of politics, but debate will always be conducted with respect in this class.

Recording Class Sessions
Our class sessions will be audiovisually recorded for students in the class to refer back to, and for enrolled students who are unable to attend live. Students who participate with their camera engaged or utilize a profile image are agreeing to have their video or image recorded. If you are unwilling to consent to have your profile or video image recorded, be sure to keep your camera off and do not use a profile image. Likewise, students who un-mute during class and participate orally are agreeing to have their voices recorded. If you are not willing to consent to have your voice recorded during class, you will need to keep your mute button activated and communicate exclusively using the "chat" feature, which allows students to type questions and comments live.
Out of Class Expectations
Politics and policy can be a very formal process with a high degree of professionalism. In this class it is highly likely that you will be engaging with policymakers and other professionals working within the policy system or working to influence the policy system. It is expected that you represent yourself, our course and UVM with the highest level of professionalism in these instances. Furthermore, please consider these aspects when interacting with Dr. Niles, TAs and others in email exchanges.

Citing Appropriate Sources
For your assignments you will be expected to use proper citations and sources appropriate to the policy topic that you choose. While some aspects of the assignment may provide an opportunity for you to give your opinion on a topic, many assignments require research and sources that should be properly cited. Please use the APA citation style for all assignments (see: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/)

Special Needs or Accommodations
It is my job to make your learning experience as productive as possible, if there is anything I can do to help facilitate this, please let me know. If you have specific requirements that require ongoing accommodations, please contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) and ensure that they send me the appropriate documentation.

Course Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percent of Grade</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Engagement (including activities, polls, and sharing news, reflections before class through Yellowdig) plus in class comments and discussion.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-Class Policy Debate</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Varies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackboard Quizzes</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Candidate Policy Perspective</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Idea due September 27, final due October 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>TBD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Debate Due Dates and Topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Written Materials Due</th>
<th>In Class Debate Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Should we subsidize agriculture?</td>
<td>September 26</td>
<td>September 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Should plant-based milk be allowed to call itself milk?</td>
<td>October 10</td>
<td>October 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Should SNAP benefits be extended during COVID-19?</td>
<td>October 19</td>
<td>October 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Should dietary guidelines include sustainability?</td>
<td>November 9</td>
<td>November 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Should slaughterhouses stay open during COVID outbreaks?</td>
<td>November 16</td>
<td>November 18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Should all alcoholic beverages have nutrition labels?

Specific rubrics will be given out prior to the Policy debate, and the political candidate perspective assignment so that you are aware of the grading process.

Note that final exam dates are NOT flexible. These dates are set by the Office of the Registrar and cannot be changed.

In Class Participation
You are expected to attend class; and your participation will be determined in class in the following ways: 1) i-clicker questions; 2) your participation in discussion orally or through the chat during class of current news events related to politics and 3) your participation in class activities, debates, and with guest speakers orally or through the chat. In some instances it may be necessary to miss class including for student athletes, religious holidays or because you are sick. These instances require either medical documentation (in the case of your illness) or prior discussion with the instructor. If you know you will miss class for religious holidays or athletic travel you must notify Dr. Niles by the end of second week of class.

YellowDig for Discussions and News
In this course we will use a discussion tool called YellowDig. Our class discussion forum is an important part of our learning experience and by participating in discussions, you will broaden your understanding of the course content and help to create a stronger online learning community.

Here is how it will work. For full maximum credit, need to earn a total of 1500 points for discussion for the course. Each week we encourage you to earn a max of 100 points. The collection of points begins on Monday and runs until the following Monday by midnight (then resets every week). You can earn 100 points by posting, commenting, and interacting with your classmates for each assignment in Yellowdig. You can mix and match how you receive your max of 100 points/week. Your earned assignment points in Yellowdig will automatically be transferred into Blackboard. Each action is worth certain points as follows:

A new post of at least 40 words earns 30 points
A comment of at least 20 words on an existing post earns 40 points
If your post generates comments, you receive 5 points for each of them
Receiving a reaction from another user, you receive 2 points for each of them

All posts on Yellowdig should follow the principles of Our Common Ground:

RESPECT. We respect each other. We listen to each other, encourage each other and care about each other. We are strengthened by our diverse perspectives.

INTEGRITY. We value fairness, straightforward conduct, adherence to the facts, and sincerity. We acknowledge when things have not turned out the way we had hoped. As stewards of the University of Vermont, we are honest and ethical in all responsibilities entrusted to us.
INNOVATION. We want to be at the forefront of change and believe that the best way to lead is to learn from our successes and mistakes and continue to grow. We are forward-looking and break new ground in addressing important community and societal needs.

OPENNESS. We encourage the open exchange of information and ideas from all quarters of the community. We believe that through collaboration and participation, each of us has an important role in determining the direction and well-being of our community.

JUSTICE. As a just community, we unite against all forms of injustice, including, but not limited to, racism. We reject bigotry, oppression, degradation, and harassment, and we challenge injustice toward any member of our community.

RESPONSIBILITY. We are personally and collectively responsible for our words and deeds. We stand together to uphold our common ground.

No inappropriate posts will be allowed, and Dr. Niles will be monitoring the site.

In Class Policy Debate and Activities
We will have multiple debates in class throughout the semester. You will personally be responsible for only one debate, and will be assigned a small group to work with. Your debate position will be assigned to you and you will be required to argue points from that perspective, regardless of whether it is your own opinion. You will be given a number of articles or other sources to consider in writing your perspective. A written overview of the group position will be turned in prior to class and you along with others who have the same position to argue will debate against those with an alternative perspective in class and help facilitate a class discussion. There will be 5-6 total debates, and students will be assigned to their respective debates during the second week of class.

Political Candidate Policy Perspective
It is a federal election year, including a presidential election year! One of your assignments will include choosing a Congressional or presidential candidate, and researching their proposed food policy perspectives or their record. We will be educating each other on these different perspectives prior to the election. Additional details will be given out prior to the due date.

Blackboard Quizzes
There will be weekly Blackboard quizzes, typically 15-20 points total. The quizzes will be designed to provide feedback on learning from the week and ensure students are mastering content throughout the semester.

Submitting Assignments and Late Assignments
All assignments are due on the day of their due date as determined by Dr. Niles. Late assignments will receive the following reduction in points:

- Less than 24 hours late: -10% of total points
- 1-3 days late: -20% of total points
- 4-6 days late: -40% of total points
- More than 7 days late: generally not accepted, unless there are specific excusable absences or reasons as discussed with Dr. Niles
**Exams**
A mid-term exam will be given halfway through the course and a comprehensive final exam will be given in the course that will assess your understanding of the course objectives and assignments and the materials we learned and discussed in class. The final exam date for this course is TBD.

**Proposed Course Topics, Materials and Assignments**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class/ Date</th>
<th>Class Topic</th>
<th>Assignments/ Other Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class 1 Monday August 31st</td>
<td>Introduction to the course and food policy</td>
<td>Blackboard Reflection: Which politician do you admire and why? Student survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 2 Wednesday September 2nd</td>
<td>Discussion of political values. Introduction to the <strong>US Food Policy Process</strong> (Legislative)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday September 7- no class LABOR DAY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 3 Wednesday September 9</td>
<td>Review Legislative Process- Bill discussion and practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 4 Monday September 14</td>
<td>Introduction to the <strong>US Food Policy Process</strong> (Federal Agencies and Rulemaking)</td>
<td>Guest speaker- Nick Rose, PhD Student, Food Systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 5 Wednesday September 16</td>
<td><strong>People and Policymakers</strong> in Food Policy: Who Influences Food Politics and how?</td>
<td>Guest speaker: Peter Larkin, Former CEO of the National Grocers Association and NGA Political Action Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 6 Monday September 21</td>
<td>Our Biggest Food Policy: <strong>The Farm Bill Overview</strong></td>
<td>Political Candidate idea due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 7 Wednesday September 23</td>
<td>Challenges and Issues in Food Policy: The Farm Bill: <strong>Agriculture Programs and Subsidies</strong></td>
<td>Guest Speaker: Dr. Margaret Brown- AgResearch New Zealand, and farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 8 Monday September 28</td>
<td>Debate 1: Should we subsidize agriculture?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 9 Wednesday September 30</td>
<td>Challenges and Issues in Food Policy: <strong>Agriculture and Environmental Policies</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 10 Monday October 5</td>
<td>Challenges and Issues in Food Policy: <strong>Animal Agriculture and Policies</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 11- Wednesday October 7</td>
<td>Challenges and Issues in Food Policy: <strong>Animal Alternatives Policies</strong></td>
<td>Guest speaker: Dr. Emily Morgan, Assistant Professor, UVM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 12- Monday October 12</td>
<td>Debate 2: Should plant-based milk be allowed to call itself milk?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 13 Wednesday October 14</td>
<td>Challenges and Issues in Food Policy: <strong>Nutrition, Diet and Health-Food Security before and since COVID-19</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 14 Monday October 19</td>
<td>Our Biggest Food Policy: <strong>The Farm Bill Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program- and SNAP during COVID-19</strong></td>
<td>Political candidate perspective due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 15 Wednesday October 21</td>
<td>Debate 3: Should SNAP benefits be extended during COVID-19?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 16 Monday October 26</td>
<td>Challenges and Issues in Food Policy: <strong>Child Nutrition Policies (WIC and the National School Lunch Program)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 17- Wednesday October 28</td>
<td>Q&amp;A with the Vermont Congressional delegation/staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 18- Monday November 2</td>
<td>Food Policy on the Ballot- where do the candidates stand?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 19- Wednesday November 4</td>
<td>Reflection and discussion on the election</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 20- Monday November 9</td>
<td>Challenges and Issues in Food Policy: <strong>Nutrition, Diet and Health (Dietary Guidelines, Nutrition, and Sustainability)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 21- Wednesday November 11</td>
<td>Debate 4: Should dietary guidelines include sustainability?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class 22- Monday November 16</td>
<td>Actors and Feedbacks in Food Policy: <strong>Food Waste Policies</strong></td>
<td>Guest Speaker: Josh Kelly, Materials Management Section Chief Vermont Agency of Natural Resources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Specific COVID-19 Policies
General statement regarding potential changes during the semester:
http://catalogue.uvm.edu/

The University of Vermont reserves the right to make changes in the course offerings, mode of delivery, degree requirements, charges, regulations, and procedures contained herein as educational, financial, and health, safety, and welfare considerations require, or as necessary to be compliant with governmental, accreditation, or public health directives.

Green and Gold Promise:
The Green and Gold Promise clearly articulates the expectations that UVM has for students, faculty, and staff to remain compliant with all COVID-19 recommendations from the federal CDC, the State of Vermont, and the City of Burlington.
The Code of Student Conduct outlines policies related to violations of the Green and Gold Promise. Sanctions for violations include fines, educational sanctions, parent notification, probation, and suspension.

Intellectual Property Statement/Prohibition on Sharing Academic Materials:
Students are prohibited from publicly sharing or selling academic materials that they did not author (for example: class syllabus, outlines or class presentations authored by the professor, practice questions, text from the textbook or other copyrighted class materials, etc.); and students are prohibited from sharing assessments (for example homework or a take-home examination). Violations will be handled under UVM’s Intellectual Property policy and Code of Academic Integrity.

Additional UVM Policies and Resources

Religious Holidays:
Students have the right to practice the religion of their choice. If you need to miss class to observe a religious holiday, please submit the dates of your absence to me in writing by the end of the second full week of classes. You will be permitted to make up work within a mutually agreed-upon time. https://www.uvm.edu/registrar/religious-holidays
Academic Integrity:
The policy addresses plagiarism, fabrication, collusion, and cheating. 
https://www.uvm.edu/policies/student/acadintegrity.pdf

Grade Appeals:
If you would like to contest a grade, please follow the procedures outlined in this policy: 
https://www.uvm.edu/policies/student/gradeappeals.pdf

Grading:
For information on grading and GPA calculation, go to https://www.uvm.edu/registrar/grades

Code of Student Conduct:
http://www.uvm.edu/policies/student/studentcode.pdf

FERPA Rights Disclosure:
The purpose of this policy is to communicate the rights of students regarding access to, and privacy of 
their student educational records as provided for in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) 
of 1974.  
http://catalogue.uvm.edu/undergraduate/academicinfo/ferparightsdisclosure/

Promoting Health & Safety:
The University of Vermont’s number one priority is to support a healthy and safe community:  
Center for Health and Wellbeing:
https://www.uvm.edu/health
Counseling & Psychiatry Services (CAPS)  
Phone: (802) 656-3340  
C.A.R.E. If you are concerned about a UVM community member or are concerned about a specific event, we encourage you to contact the Dean of Students Office (802-656-3380). If you would like to remain anonymous, you can report your concerns online by visiting the Dean of Students website at https://www.uvm.edu/studentaffairs

Final Exam Policy:
The University final exam policy outlines expectations during final exams and explains timing and process of examination period. https://www.uvm.edu/registrar/final-exams

Alcohol and Cannabis Statement:
The Division of Student Affairs has offered the following statement on alcohol and cannabis use that 
faculty may choose to include, or modify for inclusion, in their syllabus or Blackboard site:  
Statement on Alcohol and Cannabis in the Academic Environment  
As a faculty member, I want you to get the most you can out of this course. You play a crucial role in your 
education and in your readiness to learn and fully engage with the course material. It is important to note that alcohol and cannabis have no place in an academic environment. They can seriously impair your
ability to learn and retain information not only in the moment you may be using, but up to 48 hours or more afterwards. In addition, alcohol and cannabis can:

- Cause issues with attention, memory and concentration
- Negatively impact the quality of how information is processed and ultimately stored
- Affect sleep patterns, which interferes with long-term memory formation

It is my expectation that you will do everything you can to optimize your learning and to fully participate in this course.