

# POLS-2490 (1)

## Political Economy of Agriculture and Food

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**Dr. Jamey Essex / Fall 2019 / MW 5:30 - 6:50 pm / Erie Hall 2123**

Office: 1139 CHN / Office hours: T 2:00-4:00 pm, or by appointment

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### Course description

This course critically examines shifts in the political economy of agriculture and food, focusing on the political, economic, social, and geographic changes occurring in agro-food production and consumption systems. Analyzing agriculture and food through the examination of political and economic structures, institutions, and practices, this course focuses on the connections between people, places, and processes, and the ways in which one of the most basic of human needs is (and is not) met. We will approach these issues through readings drawn from fields such as geography, political science, political ecology, agro-food studies, rural sociology, and development studies.

### Course learning outcomes

Below are detailed the expected learning outcomes for this course. Outcomes may extend beyond those listed here, but this describes the basic standard against which I measure student work and success in the course.

- Describe, explain, and critically analyze major issues and phenomena of political science as they relate to structures, institutions, patterns, and practices of agricultural production, trade, and consumption.
- Critically analyze the different explanations provided for underdevelopment and the proposals to facilitate economic development as these relate to agriculture.
- Research and investigate political issues related to agriculture and food, synthesize data and information from varying sources and present descriptive and empirical evidence to support a central thesis.
- Confidently assert political and economic ideas and arguments, and defend them with sound reason and logic.
- Critically analyze political and economic ideas and arguments espoused by politicians, promoted by interest groups and reported by the media.
- Effectively and confidently communicate ideas, arguments and evidence through clear, concise and coherent written work.
- Engage in self-guided research.
- Through critical analysis, demonstrate understanding of political and economic traditions and practices in other societies as these relate to agriculture and food.
- Recognize and assess the value of social, political, economic, and environmental connections within and between places.

## Required readings

There are **two required books** for this course:

- Bobrow-Strain, Aaron. (2012) *White Bread: A Social History of the Store-bought Loaf*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Clapp, Jennifer. (2016) *Food (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)*. Malden, MA: Polity Press.

Both are available at the university bookstore and through online retailers, and (if possible) on hard copy reserve at Leddy Library. Other required readings include **several articles and book chapters** available via the course Blackboard site or on the internet, all for free. Many of the readings are challenging, but they are the basis for all other materials in the course and it is **essential** you read them for a full understanding of concepts, cases, and themes we will cover.

## Assignments and grades

Your grade in this course will be based on a paper assignment and two exams, which will consist of a mix of question types (e.g., multiple choice, fill in the blank, definition, short answer, reading interpretation, and/or essay), but they will be primarily focused on written answers and not multiple choice. It is possible that I will curve final course grades if necessary.

- **Midterm exam (35%) – in class on Monday, October 21**
- **Research paper (20%) – due in class on Monday, November 18**
- **Final exam (45%) – TBA**

During the final two weeks of the term, I will give out the Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) forms in class and you will be able to evaluate your experience and my teaching in this course. The official Faculty of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences grading policy can be found online at <https://bit.ly/2sK7AG6>. My primary concern is that I mark your work **fairly, accurately, and consistently**, and not that a particular expected distribution is met.

## Late Policy

All work is to be completed on time. If you must miss an exam for medical or personal reasons, you need to contact me beforehand or as soon as possible afterward (**i.e., usually within 24 hours**) to let me know. I only permit makeup exams and late submission of papers due to emergency or illness. You **must** provide me with a valid doctor's note or some other formal documentation. Makeup exams will be different from those given during the regularly scheduled time; makeup final exams may be offered according to a schedule determined by the Department of Political Science. Problems with marks and requests to reconsider or change marks must be **submitted to me in writing, within one week (7 calendar days) from when they are delivered in class, with a rationale** for why reconsideration of or a change to received marks is warranted. Please be mindful of the course schedule – with up to 130 students in this course, I must adhere strictly to these policies.

## Email and office hours

I am available in my office, 1139 Chrysler Hall North, on Tuesdays from 2:00 to 4:00 pm. If you need to see me but are unable to make it to these office hours, please contact me by email and we can arrange a suitable alternative meeting time, or you may visit the GAs during their office hours. As a general rule, I try to reply to emails within two working days of receiving them. **I do not usually answer student emails after 5:00 pm, or on the weekends.** If you email me and do not receive a reply within two working days, assume I did not receive your email, and try again. **I do not provide course materials or grades via email.** Please see me during office hours or check the course Blackboard site. Please also note that the university's email policy states that students must use their @uwindsor.ca email accounts to communicate with faculty. I also request you use appropriate etiquette when communicating with me via email – I will not reply to emails that do not include a subject line, a greeting, and your name.

## Students with learning/physical differences

If you have a learning or physical difference, please obtain the appropriate paperwork from the University and let me know as soon as possible so that necessary arrangements can be made. More information is available via Student Accessibility Services, located in the basement of Dillon Hall and online at <http://www.uwindsor.ca/studentaccessibility/>.

## Course expectations

Below I outline very clearly what I expect of you as a student in this course, and what you should expect of me as the instructor. For more information on the rules and regulations that govern student rights and responsibilities, please consult: University Senate Bylaws 31, 32, 33, and 54) at <http://www.uwindsor.ca/secretariat/49/senate-bylaws>; the Academic Integrity Office at <http://www.uwindsor.ca/academic-integrity/>; and relevant Faculty of Arts, Humanities, and Social Science policies at <https://bit.ly/2sK7AG6>.

In this course and in this classroom, I expect that you will:

- Attend class regularly (i.e., every Monday and Wednesday), arrive on time, and do all required reading;
- Pay attention, turn off your phone, refrain from distracting yourself and your classmates, and use your laptop for class-related activities only;
- Approach the course materials with an open mind and a serious attitude;
- Strictly adhere to the student code of conduct and observe the University's policies regarding academic honesty;
- Respect your fellow students' right to learn in a safe and hospitable classroom;
- Respect and take advantage of office hours, particularly if you are falling behind or having difficulty with the material;

- Understand that grades refer to the quality and precision of work being graded, not to your need for a particular grade or to an open-ended negotiation between you and me.

For my part, you can expect that I will:

- Arrive to class on time and well-prepared to lecture and facilitate discussion;
- Complete the grading of exams and assignments in a timely fashion;
- Reply to emails in a timely fashion, normally within two working days;
- Be available during my scheduled office hours, and will re-schedule them if necessary (i.e., I won't cancel them without making them up at some other time);
- Take your questions and ideas seriously, so long as they are relevant to the material;
- Maintain a relaxed but professional classroom space for learning and discussion;
- Treat all students equitably with regard to grading and class discussion.

### **Classroom etiquette and academic integrity**

Consistent with University of Windsor policy, cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic dishonesty and misconduct are not tolerated. **Relevant official university and faculty policies on plagiarism and academic misconduct are at <http://www.uwindsor.ca/academic-integrity/>.** Those suspected of violating these policies will be referred to the Associate Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences for potential disciplinary action. If you feel you need help with the materials, don't cheat – please see me or the GAs instead for assistance.

In class, you are expected to respect others' right to learn and discuss course themes and content in an environment conducive to learning and open engagement with your peers and the ideas and materials covered in the course. You should rely on facts, reason, and evidence to back your arguments. Racist, sexist, or otherwise inflammatory remarks and actions will not be tolerated.

## Course Schedule

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### Sept 9: Introduction to the course

- Berry, W. (1989 [2002]) "The Pleasures of Eating." Originally in *What Are People For?* New York: North Point Press. <https://www.ecoliteracy.org/article/wendell-berry-pleasures-eating>
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### Sept 11 and 16: Industrialization of agriculture

- Clapp, J. (2016), chapter 1, "Unpacking the World Food Economy"
  - Clapp, J. (2016), chapter 2, "The Rise of a Global Industrial Food Market"
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### Sept 18, 23 and 25: From Colonialism to the Green Revolution to Globalization

- McMichael, P. (2009) "A food regime genealogy." *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 36 (1): 139-169. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03066150902820354>
  - Latham, M. (2011) "Technocratic Faith: From Birth Control to the Green Revolution." Chapter 4 in *The Right Kind of Revolution: Modernization, Development, and US Foreign Policy from the Cold War to the Present*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 93-122. [focus especially on pages 93-99 and pages 109-122]
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### Sept 30 and Oct 2: International trade and the neoliberal era

- Clapp, J. (2016), chapter 3, "Agricultural Trade Liberalization"
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### Oct 7 and 9: Institutional power in the global food system

- Clapp, J. (2016), chapter 4, "Transnational Corporations"
  - Claeys, P. (2013) "From Food Sovereignty to Peasants' Rights: An Overview of Via Campesina's Struggle for new Human Rights." In *La Via Campesina's Open Book: Celebrating 20 Years of Struggle and Hope*. Jakarta: La Via Campesina. <https://viacampesina.org/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2013/05/EN-02.pdf>
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### Oct 14 and 16: Reading week

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### Oct 21: Midterm exam (35%)

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**Oct 23 and 28: Bread 1**

- Bobrow-Strain, A. (2012), preface + introduction + chapter 1

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**Oct 30 and Nov 4: Bread 2**

- Bobrow-Strain, A. (2012), chapters 2, 3, and 4

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**Nov 6 and 11: Bread 3**

- Bobrow-Strain, A. (2012), chapters 5 and 6 + conclusion

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**Nov 13 and 18: Food, finance, and land**

- Clapp, J. (2016), chapter 5, “Financialization of Food”
- Kaufman, F. (2010) “The food bubble: How Wall Street starved millions and got away with it.” *Harper’s Magazine*, July 2010: 27-34.
- **Nov 18 – paper due (20%)**

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**Nov 20 and 25: Food security**

- Huish, R. (2008) “Human Security and Food Security in Geographical Study: Pragmatic Concepts or Elusive Theory?” *Geography Compass*, 2 (5): 1386-1403.  
<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1749-8198.2008.00155.x>
- De Schutter, O. (2012) *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food: Mission to Canada*. New York: United Nations.  
[http://www.srfood.org/images/stories/pdf/officialreports/20121224\\_canadafinal\\_en.pdf](http://www.srfood.org/images/stories/pdf/officialreports/20121224_canadafinal_en.pdf)
- Wakefield, S., K.R. Fredrickson, and T. Brown. (2015) “Food security and health in Canada: Imaginaries, exclusions and possibilities.” *The Canadian Geographer*, 59 (1): 82-92.  
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/cag.12139>

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**Nov 27 and Dec 2: Labor and consumer politics**

- Bittman, M. (2015) “Can We Finally Treat Food Workers Fairly?” *The New York Times* online edition, 27 May. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/27/opinion/can-we-finally-treat-food-workers-fairly.html>
- Bowen, S., S. Elliott, and J. Brenton. (2014) “The Joy of Cooking?” *Contexts*, 13 (3): 20-25.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1536504214545755>

- DuPuis, E.M. (2007) "Angels and Vegetables: A Brief History of Food Advice in America." *Gastronomica*, 7 (3): 34-44. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/gfc.2007.7.3.34>
  - Guthman, J. (2017) "Willing (White) Workers on Organic Farms? Reflections on Volunteer Farm Labor and the Politics of Precarity." *Gastronomica*, 17 (1): 15-19. <http://gcfs.ucpress.edu/content/17/1/15.full.pdf+html>
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#### **Dec 4: The global system and alternatives**

- Clapp, J. (2016), chapter 6, "Can the World Food Economy Be Transformed?"
  - Berry, W. (1989 [2002]) "The Pleasures of Eating." Originally in *What Are People For?* New York: North Point Press. <https://www.ecoliteracy.org/article/wendell-berry-pleasures-eating> *[Yes, read it again]*
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**Date/Time/Room TBA: Final exam (45%)**