

POLI 359
**Special Topics in Comparative Politics: The Politics of Food in the US
and Italy**

Fall 2022

Florence, Italy

Monday & Thursday 3:00-5:30

Instructor: Kendra Stewart, Ph.D.

Phone: (843) 478-3741 (cell)

Email: stewartk@cofc.edu

Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

Why is it that everyday US schools battle with both childhood obesity and childhood hunger? How have government policies shaped the growing, distribution and processing of food in the US and Italy and how does that affect the health and wealth of citizens and local communities? This course will delve into these and other questions surrounding issues of nutrition policy, hunger, farming practices, food waste and community activism. From the global to the national to the local level, food policy will be examined along with the important social problems stemming from policies and potential solutions developed to deal with these problems with a focus on the US, Italy and the EU.

This study abroad experience provides students with the unique opportunity to observe first-hand how food systems are similar and different between the US and Italy/the EU. You will use the perspectives developed over time as CofC students and US residents along the academic readings from class to make observations about how the Italian deal with some of the same challenges we do in the US. A variety of experiential learning opportunities will take place over the semester in order to develop a deeper understanding of the culture and role of food in Italy.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of the course students should be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the evolution and basic issues and challenges surrounding food creation and distribution in the US and Italy;
- Critically evaluate food policy in the United States and Italy;
- Demonstrate an understanding of how communities in the US and abroad deal with issues of food safety, ethics and insecurity;
- Display skills in critical analysis and effective communication.

Required Course Materials

- 1) Paarlberg, Robert, [*Food Politics: What Everyone Needs to Know*](#). 2010 Oxford Press.
- 2) Nestle, Marion, [*Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health*](#) 2013 University of California Press.

- 3) Waters, Alice, [*We Are What we Eat: A Slow Food Manifesto*](#). 2021 Penguin Books.

Other readings can be found electronically on OAKS.

Attendance and Participation: ***Regular class attendance is absolutely necessary*** in any course, but is critical in this class. You must keep up with the readings, in-class assignments, and course projects. Please feel free to ask questions in class – I will do everything I can to help you succeed so do not hesitate to come see me if you are struggling or falling behind.

Assignments and Grading

Students are expected to complete assigned readings prior to class and to lead and participate in discussions. Your final grade will be based on the following components of the course:

Participation (100 points):

Each student will be expected to come to class prepared and to participate. This course will be taught as a seminar, not a lecture, with the intent that students will be active in the course discussions. This course is an opportunity for us to learn together and from each other, rather than in the more traditional model. In order to develop and ensure this type of environment, participation will be encouraged and graded through two means.

First, for the semester each student will be put into a group and each group will have a reading they will be in charge of for leading the class discussion on for a total of **six** classes worth 15 points each (**90 points total**). Each student will be expected to lead at least one of these class discussion over the course of the semester. This will mean that you come to class with a series of questions/reflections stemming from the day's reading to steer the conversation for that class period. At the beginning of each class your group will have 10 minutes to meet and plan their discussion. Your group should have 3-5 questions/reflections that showcase your reading and comprehension of the material under review and highlight that you have been thinking about the reading and its application to your experience in Italy. There are no perfect questions, only questions that suggest you are engaged and challenging yourself to think through the political, economic, historical, geographic and other facets of food policy. In that sense, questions like "what was the central argument in Nestle's chapter 5?" will not be acceptable. While questions that help the class to understand the industrialization of farming such as "how does Nestle draw an analogy between industrial processing of corn and our digestive system, and how is this process advantageous?" would show that you are really thinking. There are no right or wrong answers and it is possible to err in your interpretation of the readings, and you will not be penalized for that. At the end of each class each group will hand in one paper with their questions/reflections for the group grade.

At the end of the 5 weeks of class time each group will have the opportunity to anonymously rate the members of the group on a scale of 1-10 based on their participation in the group. I will take the average of the points given for each student for up to 10 points towards your total participation grade (**10 points**).

Research Paper (100 points):

Over the semester you will undertake an independent research project to investigate some aspect of food insecurity, food policy or community response to it. As part of your grade you will do a brief presentation on your research paper findings. A separate handout will have the specific requirements for your project and presentation. The final paper is due the last day of class. *Research project total: 100 points*

Reflections (100 points):

Knowledge of the course readings and discussions will be demonstrated through written reflections due throughout the semester. Reflections will be handed out separately and will demonstrate your understanding of various readings and how they connect to what you are observing and experiencing in Italy.

All late assignments will be marked down one letter grade for each day they are late. Assignments that are more than 5 days past due will not be accepted.

The course grade will break down as follows:

Participation	100
Reflections	100
Research Project	100
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TOTAL	300

The following grading scale will be used:

A 279-300	A- 270-278	B+ 264-269
B 249-263	B- 240-248	C+ 234-239
C 219-233	C- 210-218	D+ 204-209
D 189-203	D- 180-188	F 179 and below

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism, or presenting another’s works or ideas as one’s own, is a form of stealing. The instructor reserves the right to examine any source used by the student before giving a grade on an assignment, and to give and “incomplete” in the course if necessary, to allow time to obtain sources. Students should be prepared to show source material to the instructor for the purpose of verifying information. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and students will receive an F on any assignment or exam the instructor determines is in violation of the academic honesty policy. Academic dishonesty includes the following offenses:

- 1) Claiming as your own work a paper written by another student.
- 2) Turning in a paper that contains paraphrases of someone else’s ideas but does not give proper credit to that person for those ideas.
- 3) Turning in a paper that is largely a restatement in your own words of a paper written by someone else, even if you give credit to that person for those ideas. The thesis and organizing principles of a paper must be your own.

- 4) Turning in a paper that uses the exact words of another author without using quotation marks, even if proper credit is given in a citation, or that changes the words only slightly and claims them to be paraphrases.
- 5) Turning in the same paper, even in a different version, for two different courses without the permission of both professors involved.
- 6) Using any external source (notes, books, other students, etc.) for assistance during an in-class exam, unless given permission to do so by the professor.

College of Charleston Honor Code and Academic Integrity

Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when identified, are investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved.

Incidents where the instructor determines the student's actions are related more to a misunderstanding will be handled by the instructor. A written intervention designed to help prevent the student from repeating the error will be given to the student. The intervention, submitted by form and signed both by the instructor and the student, will be forwarded to the Dean of Students and placed in the student's file.

Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly by the instructor and/or others having knowledge of the incident to the Dean of Students. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive a XF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. This grade will appear on the student's transcript for two years after which the student may petition for the X to be expunged. The F is permanent. The student may also be placed on disciplinary probation, suspended (temporary removal) or expelled (permanent removal) from the College by the Honor Board.

Students should be aware that unauthorized collaboration--working together without permission-- is a form of cheating. Unless the instructor specifies that students can work together on an assignment, quiz and/or test, no collaboration during the completion of the assignment is permitted. Other forms of cheating include possessing or using an unauthorized study aid (which could include accessing information via a cell phone or computer), copying from others' exams, fabricating data, and giving unauthorized assistance.

Research conducted and/or papers written for other classes cannot be used in whole or in part for any assignment in this class without obtaining prior permission from the instructor.

Students can find the complete Honor Code and all related processes in the *Student Handbook* at <http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/index.php>

Disability Statement

If there is a student in this class who has a documented disability and has been approved to receive accommodations through SNAP Services, please feel free to come and discuss

this with me during my office hours. If you are in need of accommodations for this course due to a disability, please contact the Center for Disability Services at SNAP@cofc.edu or (843) 953-1431.

Course Schedule

The instructor reserves the right to make necessary adjustments to this schedule. Required texts are listed by the last name of the first author. E-reserve readings can be found in OAKS under “Content.”

Date	Assignment
<i>August 24 & 31 @ 1:00</i>	<i>Syllabus Review</i> Zoom link on OAKS
<i>September 12</i>	<i>Introduction</i> First Reflection due <i>All:</i> Paarlberg Chapter 1 Nestle Introduction OAKS: Winne Chapter 2 <i>In class:</i> “How a National Food Policy Could Save Millions of American Lives” <i>Food Inc.</i>
<i>September 15</i>	<i>Introduction to Food Politics</i> <i>Group readings:</i> Nestle Chapters 1, 2, & 3 OAKS 2) Lang, etc. Chapter 2 <i>In Class:</i> “Dems Prep for Major Fight” Food based dietary guidelines in Italy <i>Food Inc., Cont’d</i>
<i>September 19</i>	<i>Culture, Politics & Food</i> <i>All:</i> OAKS: Lang Chapter 7 <i>We are What we Eat</i> <i>In class:</i> The Slow Food Festival
<i>September 22</i>	<i>The Food System</i> Second Reflection due <i>All:</i> Paarlberg Chapter 11 <i>Group Readings:</i> Nestle Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7

In class: [The Common Agriculture Policy](#)

September 26

The Ethics of Food

Group Readings:

Paarlberg Chapters 3 & 10

Nestle Chapters 8 & 13

All: OAKS: *Sugar, Salt & Fat*

In class:

[“National Quality System for Animal Welfare...”](#)

[“Deaths of Farmworkers in Cow Manure Ponds...”](#)

September 29

Food and the Environment

Third Reflection due

Group Readings: Paarlberg Chapters 6, 9 & 12

OAKS: 1) Lang Chapter 6

In Class:

[“Why Your Organic Milk May Not be Organic”](#)

[“Italy Introduces New Regulations to Promote Organic...”](#)

October 3

Food Loss & Waste

Fourth Reflection due

All: OAKS: 1) Corner on Food Loss 2) Food Loss on the Farm 3) Hallmark of a Sustainable Farming Industry 4) Analyzing Retail Food Loss 5) Food Loss and the American Household, 6) What to do about Food Loss

In Class:

Film: *Just Eat It*

[“The Staggering Environmental Footprint of all the Food that we Just Throw in the Trash”](#)

October 6

Food Safety and Science

Group Readings: Paarlberg Chapter 13

Nestle Chapters 11, 12 & 14

In Class;

[“USDA Pilot Program Fails to Stop Contaminated Meat”](#)

[“Walmart’s Answer to Aldi and Amazon...”](#)

[“Five Myths About Corn”](#)

[Food Safety in the EU](#)

October 10

Obesity & Hunger

Fifth Reflection due

Group Readings: Paarlberg Chapters 4, 5 & 7
Nestle Chapter 9

In Class:

[“You Are What You Grow”](#)

[“Latin America’s War on Obesity...”](#)

October 13

The Future of Food Politics
All: Paarlberg Chapter 15
OAKS: Winne Chapter 10

October 17

Sixth Reflection due

October 24

Seventh Reflection due

October 31

Eighth Reflection due

November 10

Ninth Reflection due

November 14

Final Reflection due

November 28

Research Presentations Due

December 1

Final Research Paper Due