Tufts University, Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy

Fall 2017

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Time/Location: Thursdays, 1:30 to 4:30 pm; Jaharis, Behrakis Auditorium; other locations as necessary:

Graduate Credits: 1 credit
Prerequisites: Graduate standing

Course Description: Nutrition 203 is an introductory policy course that will allow students to become familiar with policy processes (domestic and international), typologies of policy initiatives (laws, global initiatives, interventions, legal restrictions, systems, and institutional mandates), and to be able to critically analyze and discuss how policy and science interact with regard to food and nutrition.

Course Objectives: Upon completion of this course, students will have gained an understanding of:
   a) The difference between policies and programs
   b) Legislative and policymaking processes and procedures in the United States
   c) National and international governance structures and policy initiatives, institutions, and some key organizations involved in nutrition policy and programming
   d) The role of qualitative and quantitative evidence in influencing the policy agenda
   e) How policy debates influence the scientific agenda, and vice versa
   f) A variety of policy-making tools and the situations in which they are most appropriate
   g) Common challenges to policy-making and factors of progressing a policy agenda.

Texts or Materials:
There is no required textbook for this course. Weekly readings will be posted on the class website on Canvas. If you have any problems accessing the class website please inform one of the teaching assistants as soon as possible. Readings are grouped by date, and it is expected that readings will be completed in advance of each class. Not all readings will be discussed in class, rather they will serve as a basis upon which class lectures and discussions will build.

**Academic Conduct:**
Each student is responsible for upholding the highest standards of academic integrity, as specified in the Friedman School’s Policies and Procedures manual (http://nutrition.tufts.edu/student/documents) and Tufts University policies (http://uss.tufts.edu/studentAffairs/documents/TuftsStudentHandbook.pdf) It is the responsibility of each student to understand and comply with these standards, as violations will be sanctioned by penalties ranging from failure on an assignment and the course to dismissal from the school.

**Assessments and Grading:**
Class assignments and their overall contribution to your grade are as follows:

- a) Case study analysis  
  *Written analysis* 10%
  *Oral presentation* 10%
- b) Assignment 1: Op-ed 15%
- c) Assignment 2: Policy memo 15%
- d) Debate performance 10%
- e) Class attendance and participation 5%
- f) Final paper 35%

**Summary description of assignments:**

*a) Case Study Analysis:* There will be three case studies, the topic of which is a current debate in domestic or international nutrition programming and policy. For each case study, ⅓ of students in the class will be assigned to a group representing a different constituency. Each student will be assigned to participate in one case study, so by the end of the semester, everyone will have participated once.

The topic of the three case studies are as follows:

1) Healthy Food Systems  
2) Sustainable Diets  
3) The process of developing federal US Dietary Guidance

For each case study, each group will be responsible for preparing a 5-minute oral testimony before class, presenting their testimony on the day of assignment discussion, and submitting a written copy of the oral testimony. Following the presentation of all groups, the remaining group members who did not present a testimony should be prepared to discuss and defend the perspective of the constituent group they represent.

*b) Opinion Editorial (Op-ed):* The goal of an op-ed is to convince the readership of a particular publication of a specific point-of-view. Of course, the readership and argument will change, depending on the publication in which the op-ed is published, and the audience towards which it is directed. For this assignment, each student must write an op-ed regarding a current nutrition issue that relates to *state or local level governance, the activities of non-*
profit organizations, or community-level policy. Your op-ed should be written for publication in a local newspaper and address the general population.

c) Policy memo: The goal of a policy memo is to provide concise background, analysis, and guidance in a specific area of public policy. A well-written policy memo requires efficient use of language to summarize a complicated issue, and convince the reader of a particular position. For this assignment, each student will choose an area of policy related to a current area of food and nutrition that they would like to address, and a specific policy-maker to whom you are writing. Your memo should be written for delivery to an influential policy-maker of your choice.

d) Debate performance: At the beginning of seven selected classes, there will be one or two “mini debates” on a current issue of food and nutrition policy, specifically relating to the topic of the day’s lecture and assigned readings. Each mini debate will involve eight students – four assigned to the “pro” side and four assigned to the “con” side, and will work as follows:

- Two representatives from the “pro” side gets 2 minutes of uninterrupted time to present an opening argument
- Two representatives from the “con” side gets 2 minutes of uninterrupted time to present an opening argument
- The remaining 2 representatives from the “pro” side gets 2 minutes to rebut the arguments of the “con” side
- The remaining representatives from the “con” side gets 2 minutes to rebut the arguments of the “pro” side

The class will then get 2 minutes to ask questions of each team, and will vote on which team had the most convincing argument.

e) Class attendance and participation: This class is meant to be participatory, and involve lively discussion during the lectures, case studies, and debate sessions. As such, it is expected that students will come to class having completed the readings and ready to participate in discussions, and in questioning after the case studies and debates.

f) Final paper: For the final paper, each student is expected to choose one topic in nutrition policy that is viewed as controversial, describe and provide an evidence-based critique of the conflicting points of view on the topic, and provide a policy recommendation for action on the topic. The paper has a limit of 10 pages, excluding tables and figures. Expectations for a semester-long term paper will be discussed further in class. Assignments received after their deadline will not be accepted or graded unless extension is approved in advance. Students who are unable to complete an assignment exam on time for any reason should notify the instructor by email, text message, or phone call prior to the deadline with a brief explanation for why the extension is needed.

Accommodation of Disabilities:
Students with documented disabilities are entitled to academic accommodation appropriate to their needs. If you require accommodations for this course, please contact Dr. Kennedy or Dr. Webb confidentially prior to the end of the second week of classes.
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Course Topics, Learning Objectives and Assignments:

**Week 1 (9/7): International Food and Nutrition Policy (Webb)**

**Learning objectives**

Students should be able to discuss/critique the following:

- Tools for policy intervention;
- The standards of evidence for making policy;
- How are policies formed and implemented in various settings (i.e. institutional policy, supranational policy, corporate policy);
- Reasoning and rationale in policy arguments from different stakeholder perspectives;
- Overview of the SDGs and understanding of the different opinion on their broad scope.

**Required readings**


**Optional readings**

- A series of short blogs on science, evidence, and the role of research for policy:
  - Hannay, T. 2011. Stop the Deluge of Science Research. [http://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2014/aug/05/why-we-should-publish-less-scientific-research](http://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2014/aug/05/why-we-should-publish-less-scientific-research)
  - Oezler, B. 2014. Lessons from Brazil’s war on poverty. [http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/lessons-from-brazils-war-on-poverty/#b07g09t20w14](http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/lessons-from-brazils-war-on-poverty/#b07g09t20w14)
**Week 2 (9/14): Healthy Food Systems (Kennedy)**

*Learning objectives*

Students should be able to discuss/critique the following:

- A Healthy Food System
- Typologies of Food Systems
- Public Sector Strategies in Creating a Healthy Food System
- Role of the Private Sector in Improving the Food System.
- Food Systems’ role in achieving the Right to Food.

*Activity*

- *Case Study 1: Healthy Food Systems*

*Assignment*

- *Written testimony from case study groups presenting; due on Canvas by class time*

*Required readings*


**Week 3 (9/28): Food Security: US and Global (Kennedy)**

*Learning objectives*

Students should be able to discuss/critique the following:

1. US and global approaches to food security;
2. Role of organizations and actors in shaping food security policies;
3. Current controversies in food and nutrition security;
4. Implications of the Right to Food;
5. New paradigms for food and nutrition security.

*Activity*

- *Case Study 2: Sustainable Diets*

*Assignment*

- *Written testimony from case study groups presenting; due on canvas by class time*

*Required Readings:*
• FAO Proceedings World Food Summit, 1996

Week 4 (9/21): US Food and Nutrition Policy (Kennedy)

Learning objectives
Students should be able to discuss/critique the following:
• How a bill becomes a law in the US;
• The budget process;
• Interactions between House and Senate on legislation;
• Key stakeholders and their strategies to influence legislation on food and nutrition;
• Funding for the Human Nutrition Research Centers – science to policy, policy on science.

Activity
• In class debate: GMO Labeling – do we have a right to know, or is ignorance bliss?

Required readings
• Stachowiak, Sarah. Pathways for Change: Theories about How Policy Change Happens. Organizational Research Service
• Project Vote Smart: Introduction https://votesmart.org/education/government#.V3WN-jkrI6g
• Project Vote Smart: How A Bill Becomes A Law https://votesmart.org/education/how-a-bill-becomes-law#.V3WNRTkrI6g

Optional readings
Week 5 (10/6) : Metrics for Food and Nutrition Policy Design (Webb)

Learning objectives
Students should be able to discuss/critique the following:

- Indicators for measuring inputs, process, impact of food/nutrition policy and programs;
- Alternative Frameworks for food and nutrition policies and programs;
- Appropriateness of quantitative and qualitative measures for food security;
- Data sources and recent trends in policy choices and food/nutrition security outcomes.

Activity

- **In class debate: Stunting – the only metric that matters, or a misleading indicator?**


Required readings


Week 6 (10/12): Nutrition Sensitive Development (Webb)

Learning objectives
Students should be able to discuss/critique the following:

- The concept of nutrition-sensitive development;
- The range of theoretical frameworks underpinning nutrition-sensitive development;
- How USAID’s Feed the Future and UN led Scaling Up Nutrition are approaching this concept;
- Country specific plans for implementing nutrition sensitive development;
- How the US discusses ‘nutrition-sensitive agriculture.’

Activity

- **In class debate – Nutrition sensitive agriculture: to invest or not?**

Required readings

- Per Pinstrup Andersen. *Nutrition Sensitive Food Systems: from rhetoric to action. Lancet.*
2013.


**Optional readings**

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**Week 7 (10/19): The US Farm Bill and Agricultural Policy (Griffin)**

**Learning objectives**
Students should be able to discuss/critique the following:
- Survey of the development to the contemporary Farm Bill, including overview of authority and title within this omnibus legislation;
- Discussion of linkages and contradictions between titles in the Farm Bill;
- Identification of key players is development of the Farm Bill;
- Overview of the research agenda of National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).

**Activity:** Debate Glyphosate

**Required readings**
- Overall NIFA http://nifa.usda.gov/

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**Week 8 (10/26): Micro Nutrient Malnutrition (Ghosh)**

**Learning objectives**
Students should be able to discuss/critique the following:
- Evidence base for micro nutrient interventions;
- Costs, benefits, efficacy and effectiveness of micro nutrient interventions;
- Scaling up nutrition intervention programs dealing with hidden hunger;
- Major drivers of international policy and global campaigns on hidden hunger;
- Issues in translating global recommendations to country level activities;
- Issues in translating country level policy at the district level.

**Activity:** Debate – Micro nutrient sachets: sustainable development strategy or not?

**Assignments**
- Assignment 1: Op-ed; due on Trunk by 11:59
Required Readings


Week 9 (11/2): Maternal and Child Nutrition Policies (Kennedy)

Learning objectives

Students should be able to discuss/critique the following:

- Formulation of global agendas in nutrition – evidence base for maternal and child interventions - how, what, when?
- Costs, benefits, efficacy and effectiveness of maternal and child programs;
- Scaling up nutrition intervention programs;
- Major drivers of international policy and global campaigns;
- Issues in translating global recommendations to country level activities;
- Issues in translating country level policy at the district level;
- Role of capacity building in forwarding nutrition agendas at global and country levels;
- The role of WIC in improving health outcomes among women and children under 5 in the US, and debates surrounding the program.

Activity

- In class debate: *Breastfeeding – a woman’s right to choose, or choosing in the best interest of the child?*

Required readings


Additional Readings


Week 10 (11/9): Non Communicable Diseases: Trends, Policies and Programs (Kennedy)
Learning objectives
Students should be able to discuss/critique the following:

- Current trends in non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and obesity;
- Underlining causes of obesity and NCDs;
- Selected case studies of the Nutrition Transition including US, China, Ethiopia;
- Role of dietary patterns in etiology of NCDs;
- Evidence from interventions for NCDs and obesity.

Activity
- In class debate: SSB taxes – sweet solution or sour government meddling?
- Debate: Obesity and Ultrafoods: Is there a link?

Assignment
- Assignment 2: Policy memo; due on Trunk by 11:59

Required readings
  [http://iris.wpro.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665.1/10892/9789290617037_eng.pdf?ua=1](http://iris.wpro.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665.1/10892/9789290617037_eng.pdf?ua=1)

Additional readings
- Moscow Delaration on NCDs. (2011) First Global Ministerial Conference on Healthy Lifestyles and Noncommunicable Disease Control. World Health Organization

Week 11 (11/16): Normative Guidance and Policy Formulation (Kennedy)

Learning objectives
Students should be able to discuss/critique the following:

- Development and Uses of Dietary Guidelines;
- General steps used to develop a front-of-package nutrient rating systems and symbol (FOP system);
- Range of potential purposes of a FOP system;
- Advantages and disadvantages of the major types of FOP systems currently in use;
- Advantages and Disadvantages of the FDA Nutrition Facts Label;
- My Pyramid and other tools for implementation of Dietary Guidelines.

Activity
- Case Study 3: Dietary guidance for formation of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans

Assignment
• **Written testimony from case study groups presenting; due on canvas by class time**

**Required readings**

- IOM/FNB. Front-of-Package Nutrition Rating Systems and Symbols Phase I report (brief)
- IOM/FNB Front-of-Package Nutrition Rating Systems and Symbols Phase II report (brief)

**Week 12 (12/1): Emergency Response and Livelihoods (Webb)**

**Learning objectives**

Students should be able to discuss/critique the following:

- Distinguish between chronic versus acute emergencies, and between emergencies and ‘non-emergency’ settings, problems and solutions;
- Uses of food in achieving emergency response goals;
- Nutrition interventions;
- Do US responses to disasters differ from anywhere else?

**Required readings**

- Checchi F and W.C Robinson. 2013. Mortality among populations of southern and central Somalia affected by severe food insecurity and famine during 2010-2012. A Study commissioned by FAO/FSNAU and FEWS NET from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health. Rome, Washington. [Executive summary, and browse the rest according to interest.]

**Optional readings**


**Week 13 (12/8): What have we learned about policy? (Webb)**

**Learning objectives**

Students should be able to discuss/critique the following:

- Distinctions and linkages among policies, programs and other interventions;
- Distinctions and linkages among governmental and non-governmental actions;
- Distinctions and linkages among agricultural, food and nutrition actions.

**Required readings**