

Department of Nutrition, Food Studies, and Public Health
Steinhardt School / New York University

FOOD-GE.2244 ADVANCED TOPICS IN FOOD STUDIES: FOOD SOCIOLOGY
FOCUS: *FOOD ADVOCACY*
Spring 2013

Registration information

3 credits

Time: Mondays, 4:55 - 6:35 p.m.

Place: 194 Mercer (across from Coles), Room 308

Instructor: Marion Nestle, Paulette Goddard Professor of Nutrition, Food Studies, and Public Health marion.nestle@nyu.edu (see www.foodpolitics.com). Office hours are most Mondays before class and by appointment (via e-mail), 411 Lafayette, 5th Floor.

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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND INTRODUCTION

Historically, scholars have examined food production and consumption from the distinct perspectives of their particular academic disciplines. This course, in contrast, unites agriculture, food, nutrition, and public health by addressing how these otherwise distinct disciplines affect--and are affected by--social institutions. It emphasizes how individuals studying any of these disciplines can work to improve systems of food production and consumption.

Sociology is based on the premise that human activities—including those related to food--are influenced by social groups and institutions; they are not, therefore, immutable. They can, and often should, be changed. The methods of sociology aim to uncover answers to questions about how and why social groups and institutions function the way they do. Sociological analysis establishes a theoretical basis for practical applications of advocacy for social change.

Food sociology questions how and why social groups—families, institutions, governments--affect and are affected by systems of food production and consumption, how these systems affect the environment and human health, and how individuals and groups can influence and improve food systems. Thus, food sociology addresses how and why societies:

- Organize agricultural production (sustainable v. industrial, organic v. natural, local v. global).
- Manage the distribution, purchase, preparation, and consumption of food.
- Balance social and scientific considerations in establishing nutrient and food quality standards, and in determining the effects of nutrients, foods, and diets on health.
- Decide whether and how to improve the dietary intake of individuals and populations.
- Act to change aspects of food systems and select particular methods, strategies, and develop and employ tactics for doing so.

From the perspective of food sociology, food becomes the medium through which to ask fundamental questions about the nature and values of modern social institutions. If, as many believe, the goal of sociology is to describe human society so as to improve human welfare, then the goal of food sociology is to describe systems of food production and consumption in order to improve the health of people and their environment.

Food advocacy. Today, interest in such issues is so widespread that efforts to improve food systems are considered by some to constitute a social movement. If so, food sociology seeks to describe this movement, and to ask:

- Why is the movement occurring at this moment in history?
- Which social groups hold a stake in its outcome?
- How do social groups and institutions influence the movement's development and outcome?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the movement?
- Whether and how the movement can sustainably achieve political power?
- How can individuals and groups effect change within the movement?

Course objectives

- Identify goals and targets of food advocacy
- Distinguish between short- and long-term advocacy goals
- Identify structural, political, and personal barriers to food advocacy
- Describe the methods used by food advocates to achieve goals and overcome barriers
- Explain how food advocacy theories and facts inform and apply to practices and actions
- Distinguish the roles of individuals, groups, and coalitions in food advocacy
- Describe methods for evaluating the effectiveness of food advocacy
- Identify resources—people, information, funding—to support and promote food advocacy

READINGS (FOOD ADVOCACY THEORY)

The course requires extensive reading as a basis for class discussion and advocacy work. All students are expected to do the reading for every class, to try to make sense of it, and to bring to class sessions related thoughts, comments, and questions.

Books: Most texts have been published within the last few years (two in 2013) and represent distinct, current points of view on food issues and what needs to be done about them. Copies are or will be available at the bookstore and *on reserve* at Bobst Library. In familiarizing yourself with all of them, focus your reading on the parts of the books most relevant to your personal advocacy goal. Note (a) how the authors identify their work as advocacy, (b) what they are advocating for, (c) how they advocate, (d) whether their advocacy goals are convincing, (e) how they overcome or suggest overcoming advocacy barriers, and (f) how they support their advocacy work.

- Winonah Hauter. *Foodopoly*. New Press, 2012.
- Marion Nestle. *Pet Food Politics: The Chihuahua in the Coal Mine*. UC Press, 2008.
- Michele Simon. *Appetite for Profit: How the Food Industry Undermines Our Health and How to Fight Back*. Nation Books, 2006
- Peter Pringle, ed. *A Place at the Table*. PublicAffairs, 2013. *Available February 5.*

- Nick Saul and Andrea Curtis, *The Stop: How the Fight for Good Food Transformed a Community and Inspired a Movement*. Random House, Canada, 2013. Available March 19.

And

- Andrew Boyd and Dave Oswald Mitchell, eds. *Beautiful Trouble: A Toolbox for Revolution*. OR Books, 2012. Available in hard copy but entire text is online at <http://beautifultrouble.org/all-modules/>.

Papers: Additional articles are posted on NYU Classes or linked to Internet URLs.

Current events: Read a daily newspaper or news source of your choice—in hard copy or online—to keep up with current events related to class topics.

ADVOCACY WORK (PRACTICAL APPLICATION)

This course is experiential as well as didactic. It requires you to select a goal for food advocacy, engage in advocating for that goal, and evaluate your advocacy experience. To do this, you will:

- Select an advocacy goal as soon as possible.
- Research the factual basis for the need for advocacy for that goal.
- Identify individuals, groups, and resources working toward that goal.
- Develop an action plan for advocacy.
- Engage in that plan to the extent possible.
- Keep a running log of your activities.
- Evaluate your experience.
- Describe all of this as an advocacy case study (described at the end).

Advice: Start on this right away. Keep a running log of what you do (a two-column table listing date and activity, for example). Note and save lists of print, internet, media, and advocacy group resources on your topic.

ADVOCACY GUEST LECTURES

People actively engaged in food advocacy will meet with the class to discuss what they are advocating for, why, and how. In listening to their talks, note—and ask about--theoretical and practical aspects, just as for the reading: (a) how do speakers identify their work as advocacy, (b) what are they advocating for, (c) how do they do their advocacy work, (d) are their advocacy goals convincing, (e) how do they overcome barriers, and (f) how do they support their advocacy work?

EXPECTATIONS

- Inform instructor *in advance* by e-mail if you are not going to be in class.
- Class begins on time: arrive on time.
- Inform instructor *in advance* if you need to leave early.
- Complete assigned work on time; there will be penalties for late work.
- Plan ahead: no incomplete grades are given (except in dire, documented emergencies).
- Take responsibility for your own learning. Do the reading. If you don't understand something, ask. If something isn't working, complain (politely, of course).
- Most of all, enjoy the course. Have fun!

COURSE OUTLINE

CLASS	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENTS
		Note: Unless URLs are given, readings are available online in <i>NYU Classes</i> or are from assigned books.
1. January 28	Introduction and overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Berry W. The pleasures of eating. In: <i>Bringing it to the Table: On Food and Farming</i>. Counterpoint, 2009:227-234. Michael Pollan, Vote for the Dinner Party. <i>New York Times</i>, October 10, 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/14/magazine/why-californias-proposition-37-should-matter-to-anyone-who-cares-about-food.html?pagewanted=all. Nestle M. Foreword to Fairfax SK et al. <i>California Cuisine and Just Food</i>. MIT Press, 2012:xi-xiv.
2. February 4	Social movements: food advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carolan, M. Introduction. <i>The Sociology of Food and Agriculture</i>. Routledge, 2012:1-8, 10. Belasco W. Looking backward, and forward. In: <i>Appetite for Change: How the Counterculture Took on the Food Industry</i>, second updated edition. Cornell U Press, 2007:243-255. Andy Fisher on the future of the food movement. February 17, 2011. http://www.foodandcommunityfellows.org/blog/2011/andy-fisher-on-the-future-of-the-food-movement Gottlieb R, Joshi A. An emerging movement. In: <i>Food Justice</i>, MIT Press, 2010:221-238. Stevenson GW, Ruhf K, Lezberg S, Clancy K. Warrior, Builder, and Weaver Work: Strategies for Changing the Food System. In: Hinrichs CC, Lyson TA, eds. <i>Remaking the North American Food System</i>. U. Nebraska Press, 2007: 33-62. Ackerman-Leist P. Collaborative possibilities. In: <i>Rebuilding the Foodshed: How to Create Local, Sustainable, and Secure Food Systems</i>. Chelsea Green, 2013: 233-253.
3. February 11	Identifying goals and targets; establishing facts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Appetite for Profit</i>: focus on Intro, Chapters 1-4, 13, & Appendix 1, 3, 4. Browse other parts. <p>DUE: Advocacy Goal: One-page statement of advocacy goal and rationale based on preliminary research, plus at least 3 references cited in text and listed as endnotes.</p> <p>Invited guest: Daniel Simon, <i>White House and NYU gardens, SNAP to Health</i></p>

February 18	President's Day holiday	Read <i>Foodopoly</i> over the break: Focus on Intro, Parts I, II, and VI. Focus on one other part: III (organics), IV (safety), V (factory farms), VI (GMOs). Browse the rest.
4. February 25	Identifying goals, establishing facts, continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Foodopoly</i> <p>DUE: Advocacy Plan: Two-page statement of advocacy goal, rationale, and references, plus a one-page description of the advocacy plan</p>
5. March 4	Case study: advocating for safe food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Pet Food Politics: The Chihuahua in the Coal Mine</i>: This is a quick read; skim the parts that slow you down. • Explore topics covered on Bill Marler's blog site: http://www.marlerblog.com/
6. March 11	Case study: advocating against hunger: groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>A Place at the Table</i>: Focus on Preface, Intro, Chapters 6, 7, 9, 13-16, 18, 19. Browse the rest, including the Appendix. <p>Invited Guest: Curt Ellis, <i>King Corn</i>, <i>Slow Food</i>, <i>FoodCorps</i></p>
March 18	Spring break	View film: <i>A Place at the Table</i>
7. March 25	Advocating against hunger: individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Stop</i>: Focus on Prologue, Chapters 1-4, 9-10. Browse the rest. <p>DUE: Advocacy Rationale: Draft of advocacy rationale statement, with references, with running log attached.</p>
8. April 1	Advocacy: theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dorfman L, Sorenson S, Wallack L. <i>Working Upstream: Skills for Social Change</i>, Berkeley Media Studies Group, 2009. Chapter 5: 93-136. http://bmsg.org/sites/default/files/bmsg_handbook_working_upstream.pdf • <i>Beautiful Trouble</i>, Theories
9. April 8	Advocacy: community organizing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Working Upstream</i>, Chapter 6: 137-158. http://bmsg.org/sites/default/files/bmsg_handbook_working_upstream.pdf • <i>Beautiful Trouble</i>, Principles (first half) <p>Invited guest: Ralph Loglisi, <i>Wholesome Wave</i></p>

10. April 15	Advocacy: coalition building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Working Upstream</i>, Chapter 7: 159-178. http://bmsg.org/sites/default/files/bmsg_handbook_working_upstream.pdf • <i>Beautiful Trouble</i>, Principles (second half) <p>DUE: Project Check-In: Draft description of experience to date, with running log attached (submit as one document).</p>
11. April 22	Advocacy: media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Working Upstream</i>, Chapter 8: 179-202. http://bmsg.org/sites/default/files/bmsg_handbook_working_upstream.pdf • Brecher J, Costello T, Smith B. Social movements 2.0. <i>The Nation</i>, January 15, 2009. http://www.thenation.com/article/social-movements-20 • <i>Beautiful Trouble</i>, Tactics <p>Invited guest: Patrick Martins, <i>Heritage Foods</i>, <i>Heritage Radio</i></p>
12. April 29	Advocacy: evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Working Upstream</i>, Chapter 9: 20-236. http://bmsg.org/sites/default/files/bmsg_handbook_working_upstream.pdf
13. May 6	To be arranged	
14. May 13	To be arranged	
<i>May 20, 5:00 p.m.</i>		DUE: Final advocacy project

EVALUATION

1. Attendance and participation (45%)

This is based on your presence in class, your contribution to class discussion, your completion of assignments on time, your work on your advocacy plan, and your posts of weekly questions based on the reading.

Weekly questions: You will post one to two short comments or questions related to the readings on the NYU Classes "Forum" page each week. You should read your colleagues' postings and comment on them or pose an insightful question of your own. Questions and comments should address matters covered in the reading that you think need clarification, explanation, alternative hypotheses, or further discussion. These will help guide in-class discussions each week.

DUE: no later than **12 noon Monday** (anything later will not be credited).

2. Advocacy toolkit and case study (55%)

You will submit drafts of various pieces of your final project by the dates indicated. Some of these will be graded (to give you an idea of where they stand), but you will have the opportunity to revise them for your final project and grade.

At the end of the semester, you will turn in an advocacy project that includes:

- A title page with a summary
- A position paper documenting the need for the goal of your advocacy (no more than 5 pages of text; references, figures, tables, and other supporting materials can be extra)
- A case study documenting your advocacy plan, what you actually did to advocate for your goal, and a critical evaluation of what you think you accomplished and what more needs to be done (no more than 5 pages of text with supporting materials—what you actually produced letters, op-eds, fliers, announcements, anything else—as attachments). Also attach your running log.
- A list of resources—books, films, other documents, groups, and any other items—useful for anyone interested in your topic.

Submission Guidelines

Please **submit** all assignments (the advocacy goal, the advocacy plan, advocacy rationale, project check-in, and final project) to NYUClasses no later than 4:00 pm on date for which that assignment is due. Please see the "Course Outline" section above or the NYUClasses "Assignments" page for these due dates. Please **attach** your assignment with a file name according to the following format: Last.First_Paper1 where Last is your last name, First is your first name, and Paper1 is the assignment name. For example, John Smith would turn his *Advocacy Goal* assignment in using "Smith.John_AdvocacyGoal" as a file name. If your paper includes several parts--such as an appendix, log sheet, or list of references--please **include this in one document**, using a "page break" to separate pages (rather than including these as separate attachments).

Writing Instructions

These will be handed out early in the semester and will include suggestions for writing (use grammar and spell checks!), format (double space, no right justification), and reference style, among others.

RESOURCES

Blogs (selected examples)

- Mark Bittman <http://bittman.blogs.nytimes.com/>
- Barry Estabrook <http://politicsoftheplate.com/>
- Bill Marler <http://www.marlerblog.com/>
- Tom Philpott <http://www.motherjones.com/tom-philpott>
- Michele Simon: <http://www.appetiteforprofit.com>

Advocacy groups (general)

In summer 2012, Vivian Wang, an NYU undergraduate, identified food advocacy groups and organized them as [an Excel spreadsheet](#) by categories in tabs at the bottom. The Harvard Food Law Society has [a career guide to relevant organizations](#), also by category.

Advocacy groups (national examples)

- Berkeley Media Studies Group (advocacy through media) <http://ewg.org/>
- Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI): <http://www.cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy>
- Environmental Working Group <http://ewg.org/>
- Food and Water Watch <http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/>
- Food Research and Action Center <http://frac.org/>
- Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity: <http://www.yaleruddcenter.org>
- Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy: <http://www.iatp.org/>
- National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition: <http://sustainableagriculture.net/>

U.S. government food and nutrition websites

- Nutrition.gov http://www.nutrition.gov/nal_display/index.php?info_center=11&tax_level=1
- Food and Nutrition Information Center, National Agricultural Library http://fnic.nal.usda.gov/nal_display/index.php?tax_level=1&info_center=4
- USDA policy topics: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Browse/view.aspx?subject=PolicyTopics>
- FDA food regulation: <http://www.fda.gov/Food/default.htm>
- FTC regulatory policies: <http://www.ftc.gov/>

Legislation tracking

- Congress: <http://www.govtrack.us/>
- Food Policy Action: <http://www.foodpolicyaction.org/>

International organizations

- [Food and Agriculture Organization \(U.N.\)](#)
- [World Health Organization \(U.N.\)](#)
- [International Food Policy Research Institute \(IFPRI\)](#)