Taxes, Bans, & Burgers: Global Food Policy and Obesity Prevention  
2302 McGavran-Greenberg Hall  
Spring 2016

NUTR 696-006, 1-credit
W 12:20 PM – 1:10 PM

Instructor: Lindsey Smith Taillie, PhD, MPH  
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Hours: by appointment

Description:
More countries across the globe are implementing policies to combat poor diet, obesity, and co-morbidities. This seminar will explore an array of regulatory options available to prevent obesity, including front-of-package labeling, taxation, marketing bans, portion size bans, SSB bans, and others. We will examine the social, political, and ethical context of how individuals make decisions about what to eat; how this context shapes the implementation of food policy; and how these policies in turn shape individual behavior and health, by employing a comparative framework over three countries (China, Mexico, and the US). We will also examine how and why food policies diffuse and interact across countries and regions.

For each country, we will first explore the underlying epidemiology of the health problem (obesity, diabetes, cardio-metabolic disease) and the dietary patterns contributing to this problem. We will then explore the underlying social structures, historical events, and ethical and public health frameworks that have shaped the country’s food environment and policy climate, as well as how individuals make decisions about food within those environments. We will also address the types of evidence required to implement food policy as well as measurement techniques for measuring the effects of food policy on food purchasing and intake.

This interdisciplinary class will draw upon readings from epidemiology, health policy, ethics, economics, anthropology, and sociology to address key elements of obesity preventive food policies in the US and across the globe.

Learning objectives: The course is designed for students to:
• Gain familiarity with the nutrition transition and global epidemiology of obesity and cardio-metabolic disease.
• Become acquainted with emerging global food policies and their potential effects on obesity and chronic disease
• Understand ethical frameworks for food policies, as well as the implications of these frameworks for policy implementation and effect on diet and disease
• Identify research strategies required to evaluate the diet and health impacts of these policies
• Develop independent thinking, practice critical evaluation and synthesize evidence across disciplines
• Understand the interaction of individual, society and state with regards to food policy, dietary behavior and health

What students can expect from instructor:
• Response to emails within 48 h (M-5); usually less
• Easy accessibility for individual appointments and correspondence

Expectations of students:
• Attend all classes. Attendance has an impact on your class participation grade. If you cannot attend, email me at least 24h in advance (preferably more) and we will discuss how to make up an absence.
• Be active participants in preparing for and engaging in class lecture and discussions.
• Follow the UNC-CH Honor Code at all times.

Honor Code:
The instructors are committed to treating Honor Code violations seriously and urge all students to become familiar with its terms set out at http://instrument.unc.edu. The definition of “academic dishonesty” includes, but is not limited to plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and more. Other forms of misconduct are also specifically addressed in the Honor Code (e.g., classroom disruption, resume fraud, and violation of campus technology policies). If you have questions, it is your responsibility to ask the instructor about the Code’s application.

Course Deliverables:
1. Readings and response. Students will be expected to complete all required readings prior to each seminar. By 9am the day of class, for each required reading, please send a brief email to the instructor with NUTR 696 in the subject line, addressing the following questions:
   a. What is a key insight, hypothesis, or conclusion this paper puts forth?
   b. What evidence supports this insight? What level of quality is the evidence?
   c. One question or critique. What did you find most interesting?

2. Policy brief. The final project will be a short “policy brief” (suggested 4-5 pages, no required minimum or maximum) on a policy that could be implemented in a specific country or region. The brief will describe the epidemiology of the health problem the policy is intended to address, describe the policy, map out a conceptual/biological framework for how this policy would address that health problem, briefly review existing evidence for the policy and its strength, discuss societal norms and ethical implications, and describe what types of measurements would be required to monitor policy effectiveness.
Readings and response will contribute 80% to your final grade; the policy brief will contribute 20%. Your final letter grade will be based on the total points you earn during the semester:

Graduate Student Letter Grades:  H= > 93%; P= >70-93%; L= 70-60%; F= < 60%
Undergraduate Student Letter Grades:  A= > 93%; B= >80-93%; C= 70-80%; D=>60-70%; F= < 60%

To get full points for class participation you must for each class: a) attend class (1pt); b) send instructor an email answering discussion questions as stipulated above (2pts); c) contribute thoughtful comments/questions during class (2pts) (80 pts total for all classes combined).

**Required Books:**

**Syllabus changes:**
The instructor reserves to right to make changes to the syllabus, including assignment due dates, when unforeseen circumstances occur that affect scheduling. These changes will be announced as early as possible so that students can adjust their schedules.

**Dates and readings**

**Jan 13 Introduction & Overview: Framing Global Food Policies**

**Recommended:**

**Jan 20—Introduction & Overview part 2: Framing Global Food Policies**
*Guest speaker/moderator: Jeff Sebo, PhD, Department of Philosophy*

**Jan 27 Nutrition Transition & Global Policy Options**
*Guest speaker/moderator: Barry Popkin, PhD, Department of Nutrition*

Recommended:

Feb 3. The One Child Policy: interaction of policy, family, and individual diet/disease
2. Feeding Little Emperors, Introduction, Chapters 1,2, and 6 (do one reading reaction for all 4 chapters)

Feb 10 China: the intersection of individual, policy and state—an example from tobacco
*Guest lecturer: Kurt Ribisl, Health Behavior

Readings TBA

Feb 17 China- Consumerism, Communism, & the Spread of tran-national corporations
2. Feeding Little Emperors Ch 5. Globalized Childhood? Kentucky Fried Chicken in Beijing

Feb 24 Latin America: Exporting Obesity

March 2 Latin America: Mexico’s SSB & Junk Food Tax

Recommended (please skim):
March 9 Evaluating Food Policy using Natural Experiments
*Guest moderator: Shu Wen Ng, PhD


March 16th (?)—No Class, spring break

March 23 Food marketing- the case in Mexico, Chile, & China, part 1


Recommended (good resource/reference):


March 30 Marketing Food Marketing Policy options—the case in Mexico, Chile, & China, part 2


DUE: ½ page on suggested topic for policy brief

April 6 US Public health/ethical frameworks for obesity policies in the US

April 13 SES and SSBs: do vulnerable subpopulations require different policies?


April 20 Food Labeling

2. 2nd reading TBA

**Recommended (both quite short)**


April 27 NYC's Portion size ban


**Recommended:**


**Wednesday May 4th—reading day**

**Final Paper Due—Date TBA**