

## International Agribusiness Studies

### Overview and purpose of the course

Our consistent and overarching theme of this course is **how to investigate and understand the power of business as a political actor**, especially the role of multinational corporations vis-à-vis the role of states and civil society actors. In the years of 2019 and 2020, this course provided a comprehensive analysis of social, economic, political, cultural and environmental issues surrounding specific agricultural products along the agri-food value chains (a global flow of the food from upstream to downstream across borders). Then, in the year of 2021, we turned our attention to one of the ongoing structural processes with profound influences on agri-food systems and rural economies around the world: financialisation. Through reading a relevant textbook, we critically examined the impacts of financialisation in the food industry and in farming and forestry, as well as the impacts on rural actors and communities. In both cases, what we kept in mind in our review and discussion was **power relations within and behind the process of agri-food businesses development and transformation**.

As a matter of necessity, our subsequent question is **how powerful business actors are able to exert a direct and indirect influence on the process of international and national policy making (agenda setting) and governance of agri-food systems**. In this semester, we are going to read together several books (chapters) and articles on the topic of a rising trend of multistakeholder governance for global challenges, such as food insecurity and climate change. As often dubbed and criticized as “multistakeholderism” or “corporate takeover of governance”, the main driving force behind these multistakeholder approaches to global governance is multinational corporations, business associations, and private foundations. They are powerful enough to form their own global governance platforms and coalitions involving other actors, and to construct discourses to legitimise themselves as if having governmental authority and make their own agenda and standards normalised. In order to tackle this question, we will take a perspective of political economy, political sociology, and governance studies, not business management or project management, as a theoretical and methodological foundation.

➔ While keeping the above-mentioned main topic (corporate power over agri-food governance with a focus on their discursive power as well as institutional power, such as multistakeholderism), we are going to read academically written and published articles on the political economy of healthy and sustainable food systems, instead of books and reports on “multistakeholderism” itself. Articles we are going to read together are published in International Journal of Health Policy and Management as a special issue on Political Economy of Food Systems. They include several review articles using various methods of literature search, review, and analysis, while some others use narrative review methods to analyse policy making and governance processes. Through reading these articles, we are expected to learn how to conduct qualitative literature reviews and narrative analyses.

### Course objectives

By the end of this course, having read the literature and participated in the educational activities, students should be able to acquire a deep understanding and critical insight into the process and mechanism of global governance and the role of powerful corporate actors and private foundations: how and in what way they are able to exert their influence on global governance; and if and how it is possible to challenge such a hegemonic regime and bring global governance more democratic and genuinely participatory.

## Course schedule and contents

Volume & Issue: Volume 10, Special Issue on Political Economy of Food Systems, December 2021

[https://www.ijhpm.com/issue\\_694\\_706.html](https://www.ijhpm.com/issue_694_706.html)

Week 1 – April 11)

- Guidance

Week 2-3 – April 18)

- Editorial, The Political Economy of Healthy and Sustainable Food Systems: An Introduction to a Special Issue | Phillip Baker; Jennifer Lacy-Nichols; Owain Williams; Ronald Labonté
  - Abstract --- Today's food systems are contributing to multiple intersecting health and ecological crises. Many are now calling for transformative, or even radical, food systems change. Our starting assumption in this Special Issue is **the broad claim that the transformative changes being called for in a global food system in crisis cannot – and ultimately will not – be achieved without intense scrutiny of and changes in the underlying political economies that drive today's food systems.** The aim is to draw from diverse disciplinary perspectives to critically evaluate the political economy of food systems, understand key challenges, and inform new thinking and action. We received 19 contributions covering a diversity of country contexts and perspectives, and revealing inter-connected challenges and opportunities for realising the transformation agenda. We find that a number of important changes in food governance and power relations have occurred in recent decades, with a displacement of power in four directions. First, *upwards* as globalization has given rise to more complex and globally integrated food systems governed increasingly by transnational food corporations (TFCs) and international financial actors. Second, *downwards* as urbanization and decentralization of authority in many countries gives cities and sub-national actors more prominence in food governance. Third, *outwards* with a greater role for corporate and civil society actors facilitated by an expansion of food industry power; and increasing preferences for market-orientated and multi-stakeholder forms of governance. Finally, power has also shifted *inwards* as markets have become increasingly concentrated through corporate strategies to gain market power within and across food supply chain segments. The transformation of food systems will ultimately require greater scrutiny of these challenges. **Technical 'problem-solving' and overly-circumscribed policy approaches that depoliticise food systems challenges, are insufficient to generate the change we need, within the narrow time-frame we have. While there will be many paths to transformation, rights-based and commoning approaches hold great promise, based on principles of participation, accountability and non-discrimination, alongside coalition building and social mobilization, including social movements grounded in food sovereignty and agroecology.**
- Addressing Malnutrition: The Importance of Political Economy Analysis of Power | Helen Walls; Nick Nisbett; Amos Laar; Scott Drimie; Shehla Zaidi; Jody Harris

Week 4-5 – May 2)

- Ultra-Processed Profits: The Political Economy of Countering the Global Spread of Ultra-Processed Foods – A Synthesis Review on the Market and Political Practices of Transnational Food Corporations and Strategic Public Health Responses | Rob Moodie; Elizabeth Bennett; Edwin Jit Leung Kwong; Thiago M. Santos; Liza Pratiwi; Joanna Williams; Phillip Baker
- Redressing the Corporate Cultivation of Consumption: Releasing the Weapons of the Structurally Weak | Sharon

Friel

Week 6-7 – May 23)

- Challenges to Establish Effective Public-Private Partnerships to Address Malnutrition in All Its Forms | Jessica Fanzo; Yusra Ribhi Shawar; Tara Shyam; Shreya Das; Jeremy Shiffman
- Drawing on Strategic Management Approaches to Inform Nutrition Policy Design: An Applied Policy Analysis for Salt Reduction in Packaged Foods | Helen Trevena; Bruce Neal; Shauna M. Downs; Teresa Davis; Gary Sacks; Michelle Crino; Anne Marie Thow

Week 8-9 – June 6)

- International Trade and Investment Agreements as Barriers to Food Environment Regulation for Public Health Nutrition: A Realist Review | Kelly Garton; Anne Marie Thow; Boyd Swinburn
- What You Don't Know About the Codex Can Hurt You: How Trade Policy Trumps Global Health Governance in Infant and Young Child Nutrition | Katheryn Russ; Phillip Baker; Michaela Byrd; Manho Kang; Rizki Nauli Siregar; Hammad Zahid; David McCoy

Week 10-11 – June 20)

- Understanding the Political Challenge of Red and Processed Meat Reduction for Healthy and Sustainable Food Systems: A Narrative Review of the Literature | Katherine Sievert; Mark Lawrence; Christine Parker; Phillip Baker
- The Basic Determinants of Malnutrition: Resources, Structures, Ideas and Power | Jody Harris; Nicholas Nisbett

Week 12-13 – July 4)

- "Part of the Solution:" Food Corporation Strategies for Regulatory Capture and Legitimacy | Jennifer Lacy-Nichols; Owain Williams
- Can Labelling Create Transformative Food System Change for Human and Planetary Health? A Case Study of Meat | Christine Parker; Rachel Carey; Fiona Haines; Hope Johnson

Week 14-15 – June 18) \*national holiday

- Achieving Food System Transformation: Insights From A Retrospective Review of Nutrition Policy (In)Action in High-Income Countries | Amanda J. Lee; Katherine Cullerton; Lisa-Maree Herron
- Policy Action Within Urban African Food Systems to Promote Healthy Food Consumption: A Realist Synthesis in Ghana and Kenya | Andrew Booth; Amy Barnes; Amos Laar; Robert Akparibo; Fiona Graham; Kristin Bash; Gershim Asiki; Michelle Holdsworth

Officially, our classes are supposed to be held face-to-face in Seminar Room 108 (from 13:30 till 16:30), we will quite likely have classes online throughout the semester. You can use the seminar room to connect the internet and join our zoom meetings. This is mainly because it is hard and tricky to have active discussions while wearing masks, and partly because we still have some students whose entry to Japan has been and will be delayed (having class in a hybrid style of "face-to-face plus online" is annoying and disturbance and should be avoided).

## International Political Economy of Agriculture (Autumn/Winter 2022)

**Instructor: Shuji Hisano**

**Schedule: 1330-1630 on alternate Mondays (Oct 3, 17, 31, Nov 14, 28, Dec 12, 26, Jan 16, 30)**

### Overview and purpose of the course:

This course provides a comprehensive and critical view on the development and current state-of-affairs of agriculture and food governance at the global, national, and local levels, by referring to various theoretical frameworks and concepts of international political economy and agri-food sociology, especially with a focus on the unequal power relations between various actors. We will discuss issues and prospects of agriculture and food governance from the perspectives of “sustainable development” and “food sovereignty”. In the previous semester, our focus was on the concept of “food as a commons” that has re-emerged as a transformative narrative and framing to challenge the mainstream paradigm of food as a commodity, to broaden our imagination to explore and practice alternative paradigm of food and food systems. In this semester, we will be reading the Handbook of Critical Agrarian Studies together to learn origins, concepts and methodologies of critical agrarian studies, a field of research that unites scholars from various disciplines concerned with understanding the process of agrarian change: the processes, implications, and limitations of pervasive capitalist penetration into the agricultural sector and rural livelihoods and landscapes. We will pick up three to four chapters of the Handbook that consists of 72 chapters in total. The remaining relevant chapters will be discussed next year.

### Course objectives:

Through this course, students will acquire critical and interdisciplinary approaches to social, economic, political, cultural, and environmental issues surrounding agriculture and food, and gain insight into fundamental social science issues such as “structure and agency”, “commodification and alienation”, and “power of discourse”.

### Course schedule and contents:

Every year, textbooks used in this course are different, but we use either introductory books with high international recognition for textbooks so that even beginners of agri-food studies or international political economy and sociology can learn effectively, or handbook-style books with theoretically and conceptually elaborated introduction chapter and well-structured chapters that cover most of important issues and problems and include rich case studies. In the past years, we read the following books together:

- [2019] Jason Konefal & Maki Hatanaka, eds., *Twenty Lessons in the Sociology of Food and Agriculture*, Oxford UP, 2019.
- [2020] Jessica Duncan, Michael Carolan & Johannes S.C. Wiskerke, eds., *Routledge Handbook of Sustainable and Regenerative Food Systems*, Routledge, 2020.
- [2021] Jose Luis Vivero-Pol, Tomaso Ferrando, Olivier De Schutter & Ugo Mattei, eds., *Routledge Handbook of Food as a Commons*, Routledge, 2018.

In this semester, we will read a book or two on the above-mentioned topic. Apart from that, we will use the following handbook as a reference:

- H. Akram-Lodhi, Kristina Dietz, Bettina Engels and Ben M. McKay, eds. (2021) *Handbook of Critical Agrarian Studies*, Edward Elgar Publishing. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781788972468>

A PDF of selected chapters will be shared among the participants. So, you don't need to buy a book nor borrow a book from the Econ library.

3 Oct	Guidance and Introduction   1. Introduction to the Handbook of Critical Agrarian Studies
17 Oct	2. Frontiers, regimes and learning from history / 3. Origins of peasant studies / 4. The diversity of classical agrarian Marxism
31 Oct	7. The agrarian question / 8. Class / 9. Land
14 Nov	11. Labour / 12. Labour and social reproduction / 13. Peasants / 14. Gender
28 Nov	20. Agricultural markets / 21. Financialization / 24. Agrarian/land reform
12 Dec	25. Food regimes / 26. Crisis / 27. Food sovereignty, food security and the right to food
26 Dec	28. Qualitative research / 29. Quantitative research / 30. Geographical research / 31. Questions and answers
16 Jan	39. Land grabs / 41. Biofuels / 42. Industrial fisheries and oceanic accumulation
30 Jan	46. Contract farming / 47. Biotechnology / 48. Agroecology

### **Basic rules in class**

- One or two students are assigned to prepare a summary presentation of book chapter(s) or journal papers, including questions, reflections and some points for discussion
- Summary part of the presentation should not be detailed too much
- Handout (a summary, questions and discussion points) needs to be circulated via email 2-3 days beforehand
- A student who will be assigned for the next class is appointed to be a facilitator, who introduces presentation(s), manage time, collects and organises questions and points for discussion, and facilitate discussion
- All the participants are required to actively join the discussion
- Anybody can present anything additional but closely relevant to the chapter(s) with or without a handout

### **Course requirements:**

No prerequisite knowledge or skill required other than English language ability sufficient to interact actively in class.

### **Evaluation methods and policy:**

Grading will be carried out on a basis of active class participation (70%) and assignment presentation/report (30%).

### **Study outside of class (preparation and review):**

Students are required to read the assigned articles and book chapters for each class as well as other relevant reading materials so that they will be able to actively participate in discussions.