Syllabus: Econ 1137

Nom-nomics: The Economics of Food  
Autumn 2018 – TENTATIVE

First year Seminar

# Course overview

## Instructor

Instructor: Dr. Darcy Hartman

Office: Arps 363

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Course Meeting Time: TBD (This course will meet weekly for the full semester, with an expected 13-14 class sessions.)

## Course Description

Eating is something that we do every day, but we don’t often take the time to think about how that food gets to our tables. What determines our food choices? Where is our food coming from? Why do we keep making bad choices when we know what we should eat to stay healthy? Are we going to run out of food? In this seminar, we will use the economic lens to discover the answers to these questions and more. We will cover some basic economic concepts to help you digest the readings. Supply and demand, market structures, production possibilities – these are some of the principles that we will apply to bring about a deeper understanding of food.

## Course goals

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

* Explain determinants of food demand and supply
* Discuss food from a global perspective
* Provide incentives and disincentives to change outcomes related to food consumption and production issues
* Identify tradeoffs that exist in the food sector on a local, national and international level
* Develop oral and written communication skills

## Course materials

There is no required text to purchase for this course. All reading materials will be posted on Carmen in the weekly modules. Additionally, there may be videos posted that you will be expected to watch prior to class.

# Grading and faculty response

## Grades

| Assignment or category | Points |
| --- | --- |
| Weekly discussions and class participation | 30 points total |
| Discussion reflections | 25 points total |
| Country presentation | 15 points |
| Final exam | 30 points |
| Total | 100 points |

*See course schedule, below, for due dates*

## Weekly discussions and class participation

A seminar style class works best with all students actively participating. You are expected to contribute regularly to the discussions with relevant comments and questions.

You are expected to attend class regularly. More than two missed classes will result in a significant point loss for participation. Excused absences will not count against you.

You need to come prepared to class, having read the assigned readings and considered the discussion prompts for that class.

You need to be present during the class period. This means putting away your electronic devices and engaging with your classmates.

You are expected to keep the conversation respectful. Avoid drifting off into unrelated topics. Don’t monopolize the conversation. The class should be fun. Remembering these basics will help to ensure that it is.

## Discussion reflections

Each week, there will be discussion prompts and questions that correspond to the readings. You should have thought about these before class to help prepare for our meeting. You will write a reflection each week based on these prompts. Typically, there will be three or four short essay questions. Each reflection should not exceed one page total. Your answers should reflect your thoughts on what was covered for the week. These will be due on Friday after the discussion has taken place.

## Weekly discussions and class participation

In the second half of the semester, I will pair students up to do a short country presentation. Students will pick a country based on certain criteria, and discuss some basic facts about consumption, production and trade related to that country, along with a current food related event. These presentations will range from 5-10 minutes.

## Final exam

There will be a take home final exam at the end of the semester. This will be due the Friday of final exam week (December 7). It will be posted on Carmen, and you will have 75 minutes to take the exam. The exam will be an essay question. You are expected to work alone on this exam, but you are welcome to use materials from class to help with your response.

## Grading scale

93–100: A   
90–92.9: A-   
87–89.9: B+  
83–86.9: B  
80–82.9: B-   
77–79.9: C+   
73–76.9: C  
70 –72.9: C-   
67 –69.9: D+   
60 –66.9: D  
Below 60: E

Please note that I do not round up grades, and I do not curve.

## Faculty feedback and response time

I am providing the following list to give you an idea of my intended availability throughout the course. (Remember that you can call **614-688-HELP** at any time if you have a technical problem.)

### Grading and feedback

Assignments will be graded within one week of the completion deadline. Participation will receive a final grade. Please speak to me if you are concerned about your participation.

### E-mail

I will reply to e-mails within **two business days**.

# Other course policies

## Academic integrity policy

The Ohio State University’s Code of Student Conduct (Section 3335-23-04) defines academic misconduct as: “Any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University, or subvert the educational process.” Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to) plagiarism, collusion (unauthorized collaboration), copying the work of another student, and possession of unauthorized materials during an examination. Ignorance of the University’s Code of Student Conduct is never considered an “excuse” for academic misconduct, so I recommend that you review the Code of Student Conduct and, specifically, the sections dealing with academic misconduct.

**If I suspect that a student has committed academic misconduct in this course, I am obligated by University Rules to report my suspicions to the Committee on Academic Misconduct.** If COAM determines that you have violated the University’s Code of Student Conduct (i.e., committed academic misconduct), the sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the University.

If you have any questions about the above policy or what constitutes academic misconduct in this course, please contact me.

Other sources of information on academic misconduct (integrity) to which you can refer include:

* The Committee on Academic Misconduct web pages ([COAM Home](http://oaa.osu.edu/coam.html))
* Ten Suggestions for Preserving Academic Integrity ([*Ten Suggestions*](http://oaa.osu.edu/coamtensuggestions.html))
* Eight Cardinal Rules of Academic Integrity ([www.northwestern.edu/uacc/8cards.htm](http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/8cards.html)

## Accommodations for accessibility

**The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact information:** [**slds@osu.edu**](mailto:slds@osu.edu)**; 614-292-3307;** [**slds.osu.edu**](http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/)**; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue**.

# Course schedule (tentative)

(Please note – the readings listed below are subject to change)

| Week | Dates | Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 8/21-8/26 | Introduction – some basic economic concepts  Chapter 3 – Principles of Microeconomics |
| 2 | 8/27-9/2 | Food demand – what determines what we eat?  "Rising Dough in the Pizza Industry" The Economist, 2/26/2015  "Consumer Research with Big Data: Applications from the Food Demand Survey", AJAE, March 2017 |
| 3 | 9/3-9/9 | Food supply – what happened to the family farm?  "Supersized Family Farms Transform Agriculture", WSJ, Oct. 2017  Chapter 8 – Principles of Microeconomics |
| 4 | 9/10-9/16 | Government programs and their impact – should we give poor households food boxes?  "Trumps Harvest Box Isn't Viable in SNAP Overhaul", NYT, Feb. 2018  Chapter 4 – Hubbard and O'Brien, Microeconomics |
| 5 | 9/17-9/23 | A global look at food - why do my berries come from South America?  Chapter 2, 20 – Principles of Microeconomics  "Why Does America Regulate the Trade in Raisins?", The Economist, April 2013  "Consumers' Welfare and Off-Season Produce Imports", ERAE, Nov. 2015 |
| 6 | 9/24-9/30 | Food security – do we have enough to eat?  The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World – FAO, 2017  "On Food Security and the Economic Valuation of Food", Food Policy, May 2017 |
| 7 | 10/1-10/7 | Food and health – why is fast food so cheap?  "Why Fast Food Is Cheap. Really Cheap.", MarketPlace, March 2016  "Is Junk Food Really Cheaper", NYT, Sept. 2011 |
| 8 | 10/8-10/14 | Fall break? |
| 9 | 10/15-10/21 | Food waste – is dumpster diving a reasonable alternative to grocery shopping?  "Just Eat It" documentary  "A New Market for Old and Ugly Fruit and Vegetables", Economist, Jan. 2018 |
| 10 | 10/22-10/28 | Food and poverty – how do diets change as incomes increase?  "The Association Between Socioeconomic Status and Adult Fast Food Consumption in the U.S.", Economics and Human Biology, Nov. 2017 |
| 11 | 10/29-11/4 | Obesity – in a land of overabundance, what are the extra calories costing us?  "Fast Food Prices, Obesity, and the Minimum Wage", Economics and Human Biology, March 2013  "An Economy of Scales: A Selective Review of Obesity's Economic Causes, Consequences, and Solutions", Journal of Health Economics, Sept. 2015 |
| 12 | 11/5-11/11 | Local food scene – what is a food desert? And why do they exist?  "Identifying and Measuring Food Deserts in Rural Ohio", Journal of Extenstion, June 2012  " Food Deserts and Food Swamps: A Health Crisis in Ohio", Public News Service, July 2015  Food Access Mapping, columbus.gov |
| 13 | 11/12-11/18 | Fair trade – who picked your coffee beans?  "The Problem with Fair Trade Coffee", Stanford Social Innovation Review, Summer 2011  "Will Fair Trade Coffee Stunt Your Economic Growth?", Journal of Markets and Morality, Spring 2013 |
| 14 | 11/19-11/25 | Thanksgiving break – Thanksgiving dinner price index  American Farm Bureau Federation, Thanksgiving price index report |
| 15 | 11/26-12/2 | Food and the environment – is your hamburger killing the rainforest?  "Meat and Greens", Economist, Dec. 2013  "Almond Milk Sales are Soaring, But Is It Good for You?" Fortune, May 2015  Chapter 13 – Principles of Microeconomics |
| 16 | 12/3-12/7 | Final Exam |