Syllabus

FOOD LAW & POLICY SEMINAR

George Mason University Law School

Law 481-001 | 2 credits | Fall 2015

Location

Hazel Hall

Day/Time

Mondays, 4:00 p.m.-5:50 p.m.
Beginning Aug. 24

Instructor

Baylen J. Linnekin
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Course Description

In this seminar, students will explore a variety of timely issues and topics in the field of Food Law & Policy, which looks at the basis and impact of those laws and regulations that govern the food and beverages we grow, raise, produce, buy, sell, share, cook, eat, and drink. Through readings that include law-review articles; features in the mainstream press; book excerpts; case law; research; reports; multimedia; and other materials produced by a variety of governmental and non-governmental sources, students will study the relationship between the laws and policies that structure our food system—and their intended and unintended consequences. The course focuses on myriad issues related to government action (or inaction) pertaining to food and discusses issues pertaining to laws and regulations created at all levels of government. Topics this course highlights may include New York City’s ban of large sweetened drinks; local regulations pertaining to food trucks, farmers markets, and urban farming; state cottage food laws and craft beer regulations; the U.S. Farm Bill and farm subsidies; the USDA school lunch program; the Food Safety Modernization Act; and local, state, and federal rules pertaining to GMO foods. Students will consider these topics as they relate to issues like obesity, sustainability, food waste, food freedom, food safety, and public health.

Grading

Your grade in this class is based on my evaluation of your work in three distinct areas:

- Class Participation – 20% (ongoing throughout semester)
- Short Writing Assignment – 10% (approximately 750 words; topic assigned by instructor)
• **Final Research Paper** – 70% (approximately 7,000 words, not including mandatory footnotes; topic must be approved by instructor; includes 10-minute presentation of research during final class meeting)

All students are expected to participate in every class meeting. Class participation includes discussion of the readings (with the instructor, peers, and any guest speaker(s)), responses to questions from the instructor, and participation in classroom exercises as assigned. Research and writing assignments include use of proper formatting (12 point Times New Roman font, 1” margins) and citations (Bluebook). The Short Writing Assignment is due during the semester. The Final Research Paper is due no sooner than ten days after our final class meeting. We will discuss these graded requirements in detail during the first class meeting and at other appropriate times during the semester.

Students may earn an “A” grade in this class only by demonstrating extraordinary effort and ability throughout the semester. If you are concerned about your grade at any time during the semester, please discuss your concerns with me as soon as they arise. While I do not grant extra credit, I reserve the right to increase your grade by up to one-half letter grade (e.g., from a B+ to an A-) based on any outstanding work you do in any one or more of the three areas above.

**Class Learning Objectives**

- Understand the past, present, and future of the field of Food Law & Policy
- Comprehend both the interplay and independence of federal, state, and local food laws and policies
- Develop and display critical thinking skills pertaining to the field
- Participate in thoughtful discussions about a variety of important issues in the field
- Use evidence from the field (and, where appropriate, from other fields and disciplines) to develop arguments and counterarguments
- Research, organize, and write an article (“Final Research Paper”) of publishable quality

**Readings**

As the course description states, readings in this course are drawn from a combination of law review articles; features in the mainstream press; book excerpts; case law; research; reports; multimedia; and other materials produced by a variety of governmental and non-governmental sources. I will send (e.g., by email) all assigned course materials, readings, and/or discussion questions to students no later than the week before each class meeting. The materials, readings, and discussion questions may arrive as attachments, links, or some combination of the two.

The readings and class discussions in this course are intended to demonstrate the rich variety of key issues and perspectives in the field of Food Law & Policy. This course is not (and is not intended to be) an exhaustive survey of the entire field. I encourage a student who is interested in Food Law & Policy issues that we do not cover in our class readings and discussions to focus on such issues in their Final Research Paper (pending my approval).
Class Schedule

I. Aperitif: Introduction

Class 1: Course introduction; discussion of syllabus, course requirements, grades; course overview; instructor and class introductions; introduction to food policy

Class 2: Overview: The Past, Present, and Future of Food Law & Policy

II. Appetizer: Federal Food Law & Policy

Class 3: The Farm Bill & Farm Subsidies

Class 4: The National School Lunch Fight

Class 5: The Food Safety Modernization Act

III. First Course: Federal & State Food Law & Policy

Class 6: The GMO Debate

Class 7: The Fight Over Raw Milk

Class 8: The Meat We Eat: Animal Slaughter; Foie Gras; Eggs; & “Ag Gag”

Class 9: Beer, Wine, & Sprits

IV. Second Course: State & Local Food Law & Policy

Class 10: Eating Local: Cottage Foods; Farmers Markets; Urban Ag; Foraging; Food Sovereignty

V. Dessert: Local Food Law & Policy

Class 11: Restaurants & Food Trucks

Class 12: Local Restrictions: Fast Food Laws; Soda Bans, Taxes, and Warnings; Sharing Food

VI. Digestif

Class 13: Food Freedom; Working in Food Law & Policy

Class 14: Student Presentations