**Food Law and Policy Day 1 Assignment (Spring 2024)**

In preparation for our first class, please complete this [short information form](https://forms.gle/PDnJK1PeTAAYNPgo8) so I can start to learn about you and your interests. Then read two articles that will introduce a number of topics and ideas that we will continue to explore throughout the course. Note that this is not a short assignment! I will do my best to keep reading assignments manageable. But because this is a 3-unit class that meets only once per week, you should expect more reading per class session than you have in classes that meet more frequently.

First, read [Margot Pollans, Eaters, Powerless by Design](https://repository.law.umich.edu/mlr/vol120/iss4/3/). This article touches on topics including food safety regulation, food labeling, organic food, food industry consolidation, genetically modified organisms, food disparagement law, animal welfare, environmental impacts of food production, food worker protections, anti-hunger policies, and more. As you read, please make note of the topics that particularly interest you (and any topics that are missing). I will be inviting your input before finalizing materials for the rest of the class. And you will also want to flag areas of interest for purposes of brainstorming about your paper topic.

Next, read [Andrea Freeman, Transparency for Food Consumers: Nutrition Labeling and Food Oppression](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0098858815591520). This shorter article provides more detail about the topic of nutrition labeling and also raises issues at the intersection of food and racial disparities. We will continue to explore this intersection throughout the class, which satisfies Berkeley Law’s Race and Law graduation requirement.

In addition to noting topics that are particularly interesting to you, please think about these questions in preparation for our class discussion. Please also make sure you have access during class to the assigned readings and your notes on these questions (printed out or on your laptop or other device) so you can easily refer back to them.

1. The Pollans article seems to critique current food policy in the United States both for over-regulating (“homogenizing” food safety regulations) and for under-regulating (relying on information controls instead of directly regulating provision of healthy food). Are these two arguments fundamentally inconsistent? What do they suggest about what, if anything, the government should do on behalf of eaters?
2. Pollans argues near the end of the article that good food policy promotes “food sovereignty.” What does that mean and is it promising?
3. Regarding nutrition labels, the focus of the Freeman article, have you noticed differences in nutrition labels over time (as requirements have changed) or in different places (reflecting state-by-state or international differences)? Have these differences had any impact on your understanding of the nutritional content of food? Have they had any impact on your food choices? Do your own experiences impact your views on nutrition labeling as public policy?
4. Freeman argues, on p. 326 that “[f]ood policy that focuses on consumer behavior is [an] important factor that is instrumental in creating and widening health disparities.” Similarly, Pollans argues on p. 673 that “information regulation is deceptive. It is ultimately a tool to maintain an unequal distribution of power in the food system because in practice it renders the theoretically responsible consumer helpless.” What counter-arguments to these claims can you imagine? What more would you want to know to evaluate them? If Freeman and Pollans are right, what does that suggest about how (if at all) the government should regulate food information provided to consumers?
5. For each article, take note of a source cited in the footnotes that looks interesting to you (including news stories, blog posts, etc.). Take a look at the source and be prepared to tell the class a little bit about what you learned.