

June 6, 2023

THE INTERNATIONAL LAW OF FOOD  
INT 7435 01

Professor David A. Wirth

July 2023

COURSE INFORMATION AND SYLLABUS

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Class sessions:

Monday-Thursday, July 10-20  
9:00 –noon

Office: TBA

Classroom: TBA, check class schedule

I. OBJECTIVES

Food is essential to human survival. It is also a source of interest, pleasure, concern, and profit to individuals, industry, and governments. Inevitably, we make decisions about the food we eat, some with great particularity such as those who describe themselves as vegans. Food quality and dietary choices are a major issue, with the obesity epidemic that originated in the United States now spreading abroad. Many of us have preferences about where our food comes from, as demonstrated by the “Farm to Fork” and “locavore” movements. The popularity of organic food responds to a concern among some about how food is grown. And all of us are concerned about the purity and safety of the food we eat, with outbreaks of foodborne illness in cantaloupes and contamination such as the European horse meat scandal dominating headlines.

Increasingly, issues related to food are international in dimension. For example fifteen percent of the total U.S. food supply is imported, including 50% of fresh fruits, 20% of fresh vegetables, and 80% of seafood. Food insecurity continues to be a serious problem in the twenty-first century, as 870 million people in the world do not have enough to eat. In 2011, nearly 4 billion tons of food aid was provided internationally, reaching more than 65 million people. At the same time, our own country produces significant food surpluses – nearly 3 billion metric tons in 2008 -- largely as a result of agricultural subsidies, and the United Nations reports annual food surpluses globally.

As the numerous issues connected with food have become ever more international, there has been a commensurate need for the adoption of rules and the creation of institutional infrastructure to govern interactions between governments, to regulate the behavior of food suppliers, and to protect public health and safety. This course examines those issues on the international level through the lens of law and governance.

There are no prerequisites, and no prior familiarity with either public international law or domestic regulatory law is assumed in this seminar-style course. Basic principles in both areas will be

elaborated by the instructor as necessary to facilitate discussion, and every component is designed to include all background necessary to a complete understanding of the material.

Much of the course addresses basic analytical skills associated with the study of the law governing the relations between states, and to that extent provides an introduction to international law. The course also provides an introduction to some substantive areas of international law, such as trade and human rights, as well as exposure to international institutions such as the UN Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Trade Organization. It is also designed to familiarize students with working with the texts of primary legal materials, such as treaties, statutes, and regulations. Depending on the number of students enrolled, the course may include a simulated multilateral negotiation on the subject of food labeling, in the context of the UN Codex Alimentarius.

This preliminary syllabus is based on experience in prior years and is representative of the schedule students can anticipate. The actual schedule may vary, depending on the particular situation at the time of delivery. This preliminary syllabus will be updated to reflect developments in the coronavirus crisis, which is unfolding at the time of drafting.

## II. OFFICE HOURS AND E-MAIL

I generally plan to be available for the hour immediately after class, noon to 1 PM, Monday through Thursday. *If you would like to meet with me then, please be sure to let me know immediately before or after class or during a break.* Students who wish to agree a different, mutually convenient time with me should talk to me before or after class or during a break.

Because of the way that TWEN is configured, you may receive notifications from me that appear to come from an M.I.T. address. This is an artifact of the way TWEN is designed, and I will not receive replies sent to this address.

Similarly, I do not monitor my VLS email address. I believe there is an auto-reply there directing you to the email above, [wirthd@bc.edu](mailto:wirthd@bc.edu), which is the only account I monitor, during the summer and otherwise.

## III. COURSE WEBSITE

A TWEN website will be established for this course, which can be accessed from [lawschool.westlaw.com](http://lawschool.westlaw.com) using your Westlaw password. The website will contain this syllabus; an initial course announcement in advance of the first meeting; a cumulative list of assignments to date; supplemental handouts; and web links to the texts of relevant international instruments discussed in the course. If you are uncertain of the current assignment, consult the documentation on the website.

Note that you are not automatically registered for the website by virtue of your registration in the course and must manually sign up to obtain access. The instructions for adding a course are set out at [lawschool.westlaw.com](http://lawschool.westlaw.com). If you have any difficulties registering for the website, please consult the library staff.

## IV. SIMULATED MULTILATERAL NEGOTIATION

The course will include a simulated multilateral negotiation of a Codex Alimentarius standard on labelling for “natural” products of agricultural origin. Students will be assigned roles as governmental representatives or non-state observers. The purposes of the negotiation include the assimilation of the course material through active learning techniques and exposure to the real-world dynamics of international diplomacy.

The negotiation will be conducted over three sessions during the span of the course. ***Each round of negotiations will require a written work product in advance*** (an opening statement or a negotiating proposal, as the case may be) as indicated on the schedule below.

Detailed instructions will be distributed in writing and explained in advance of the first session. The negotiation itself will not be graded, but all course participants are expected actively to contribute to the exercise.

#### V. FOOD SAFETY NEWS ONLINE SUBSCRIPTION

This publication is what is known in the biz as a "trade paper." Typically these are small operations with low circulation often to a narrow industry niche, and consequently high costs. Not surprisingly, subscription rates have tended to be quite high, often prohibitively so even for academic libraries. Somewhat to my surprise, apparently one can get a free subscription to this one, by going to <http://www.foodsafetynews.com/>. Enter your email address, and click “Subscribe” on the right-hand side of the page. Highly recommended – but not necessarily over lunch!

#### VI. EXAMINATION AND GRADING

The principal component of the grade in this course will be a three-hour, limited open-notes written final examination. The examination will be held at 9 AM on Saturday, June 22.

The examination and your preparation for it should be learning experiences. Accordingly, the examination will emphasize broad-gauge synthesis of the subject matter from the beginning to the end of the course in a problem solving context. The examination will most likely consist of two essay questions that will require application of the principles discussed in class and in the readings to concrete, fact-based scenarios to test your mastery of both the depth and breadth of the course material. I will make every effort to make a sample examination available on the course website.

The final will be a limited open notes examination, held in ExamSoft format. Students may access their own notes, and any outlines prepared by them or by themselves in collaboration with other students (i.e., group outlines). Students may also access any of the materials published or linked on the course website. Students may not access commercially prepared outlines, treatises, hornbooks, or study aids, or any published material other than that assigned and required for the course. Paper copies of documents identified under “Web Links” and other course materials from the course website are allowed. No internet access is permitted. “E-readers” *are not* permitted in the examination room.

The examination will be graded anonymously. It is expected that you will routinely attend, be prepared for, and participate in all class sessions. In borderline cases, adjustments to final grades will be

made to reflect the quality of individual class participation.

## VII. READING ASSIGNMENTS

There is no published text on this subject matter suitable for teaching purposes, and consequently none for purchase.

The bulk of the readings will be excerpts from the professional legal literature, most of which is available to the public without copyright restriction. The readings can be found (1) in web links on this syllabus; (2) in the "Course Materials" folder on the course website; or (3) in the "Web Links" folder on the course website, and in some cases all three. Every effort has been made to assure that the links are operative as of this writing. Materials in the "Course Materials" and "Web Links" folder have been arranged roughly to track the ordering in this syllabus.

I have requested that the following compendia be placed on reserve for this course:

- Gabriela Steier & Kiran Patel, International Food Law and Policy, K3626 .I58 2016
- Gabriela Steier & Kiran Patel, International Farm Animal, Wildlife, and Food Safety Law, K3626 .I57 2017

Because of the multi-author, fragmented, compartmentalized treatment of the subject matter, these volumes are not suitable for use as primary texts. But you may find them helpful in reading further into specific topics addressed in the course.

Reading assignments will be given in two components each:

- material identified to be read closely, principally primary documentation. You should be familiar with the operative significance of this material and, accordingly, should read it with some attention to detail; and
- background material intended to provide context for the operative significance of the "read closely" material.

The number and variety of the readings have been chosen with an emphasis on primary documents, so as to expose students to the diversity of sources in this rapidly evolving field. In cases where that is possible, they have been edited to focus on the relevant portions. Otherwise, the assignment clearly directs you to the relevant passages – many of which are quite brief, in some instances as short as one sentence.

***Note that there is a reading assignment is to be prepared in advance of the first day of class, Monday, July 10.***

The following are the TENTATIVE daily assignments for the first five classes of the course.

We will move through the assignments and the syllabus in sequential order, covering all of the material in class by the end of the course. Material that may not be completed in class one day will be

held over until the next. In other words, we will complete discussion of all the material, even if the class discussions do not correlate precisely with the assignments. *When the reading assignment includes discussion questions, you should come to class prepared to answer those questions.*

**Class 1: Monday, July 10, 2023**

This introductory class provides basic background that supports the analytical subjects presented in the remainder of the course. In the first class, we will as a group construct a typology of the international law of food, in anticipation of the remainder of the course. Please think about the following questions beforehand:

- What kind of issues would you expect to be dealt with internationally, as opposed to domestically, or perhaps some combination of both? Give some thought not just to substantive subject matter areas (e.g., food safety), but also the attributes or criteria that such issues (which are multiplying rapidly even as the course takes place) might have in common.
- What food-related issues would you expect to benefit (or suffer, for that matter) from the application of public policy in the form of law? Specifically international law? (Don't worry about what "international law" is for the time being, we'll deal with that as we go along).

This class will also include an introduction to the negotiation simulation, the first round of which will be conducted on Wednesday, July 12.

Then, the following:

**The International Human Right to Food**

**Read closely:**

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights article 25, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Pages/Language.aspx?LangID=eng>
- David Martin, "How Rhetoric Became Rights" ("Web Links" folder on course website). Through what analytical transformation did "rhetoric" become "rights?" What is the difference between them?
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, article 11, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CESCR.aspx>
- Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights General Comment No 12, [http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=E%2fC.12%2f1999%2f5&Lang=en](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=E%2fC.12%2f1999%2f5&Lang=en). Click on the pdf document under "English." This document will also be posted on the course website under "Course Documents."
- FAO Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security, <http://www.fao.org/3/y7937e/y7937e00.htm>. Read only the actual text of the Guidelines, beginning at page 9. What do the Guidelines aim to achieve, and how from and institutional, structural, and legal point of view would they accomplish those goals?

Also take a look at the UN organogram, “Course Materials.”

**Background:**

- "Food," in Andrew Clapham & Susan Marks, *International Human Rights Lexicon* (OUP, 2005). TWEN course website under “Course Documents.”
- Olivier De Schutter, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, <http://www.srfood.org/en/special-rapporteur>. Read just this introductory page. (The current special rapporteur is Michael Fakhri, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-food/mr-michael-fakhri>, but De Schutter’s web page describes the role in greater detail).
- Contribution of the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Olivier De Schutter, to the inquiry launched by the International Development Committee of the Parliament of the United Kingdom in advance of the June 2013 G8 Summit, [http://www.srfood.org/images/stories/pdf/otherdocuments/2012.12.17%20-%20srrtf\\_uk%20inquiry%20global%20food%20security.pdf](http://www.srfood.org/images/stories/pdf/otherdocuments/2012.12.17%20-%20srrtf_uk%20inquiry%20global%20food%20security.pdf)

**Class 2: Tuesday, July 11, 2023**

**Food Security**

This class will address issues of food aid and international assistance, as well as the role of multilateral institutions (UN Food and Agriculture Organization, World Bank) national and supranational institutions (U.S. Agency for International Development, EU institutions) and other international institutions (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change). While not part of the readings as such, give some thought as to how non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as Oxfam, Care, and Save the Children fit into a broader understanding of agenda-setting and implementation of food security policy.

**Read closely:**

- Rome Declaration on World Food Security, <https://www.fao.org/3/w3613e/w3613e00.htm>. Read just the text of the declaration, stopping at “World Food Summit Plan of Action.” This is a short document. Please read the entire thing. What is the policy purpose of this instrument? Its legal status?
- Sustainable Development Goals (excerpted) (Website, “Course Documents”). Focus on Goal 2 (food).
- Text of 2009 G-8 communique on food security, L’Aquila Joint Statement on Global Food Security (“Course Materials”). Scan the document to get a sense of its purpose and legal force. How does this instrument mesh structurally, if at all, with the UN and FAO instruments?

**Background:**

- World Bank Food Security Strategy, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/food-security>.
- FAO, 1996 Rome Declaration background, Lessons from the Green Revolution, <http://www.fao.org/docrep/003/w2612e/w2612e06a.htm>
- 7 U.S.C. § 3103, <http://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/7/3103>, skip to subsection (19), which defines “sustainable agriculture.” How does this definition differ from the approach of the green revolution, addressed in the two previous items?
- Laudato si’, the Pope’s encyclical on climate change, [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html). Focus on paragraph 175, in which the encyclical mentions food security, one of the few references to food in the instrument. How in Francis’s view is food security related to climate change? What policy responses does he recommend to assure the poor of the world an adequate supply in a world in which climate will almost certainly be significantly disrupted by climate change that is already occurring and will continue to occur?
- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 6<sup>th</sup> Assessment Report, Working Group II (2022) (“Course Materials”). Read paras B.1.3 (beginning on page 11) through B.5.4 (page 21).
- Paris Agreement, [http://unfccc.int/files/essential\\_background/convention/application/pdf/english\\_paris\\_agreement.pdf](http://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/convention/application/pdf/english_paris_agreement.pdf). Search for “food” in this instrument to see how the global community proposes to address the relationship between climate change and food security.

### **Class 3: Wednesday, July 12, 2023**

#### **Food Safety in the United States: The Food Safety Modernization Act**

##### **Closely:**

- Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) (“Course Materials” on website). This is now the principal legal vehicle currently protecting the integrity of the food supply in the U.S., including imported food. How, as a legal and analytical matter, does it address the issue of the integrity of imported food?
- Foreign Supplier Verification Program (FSVP) (“Course Materials,” on website). This is FDA’s proposal for implementing regulations with respect to imported food. (You should assume for our purposes the proposed and final regulations are the same, which is to a considerable extent the case). Who or what is the primary audience at which this document is directed? (Probably not you or the instructor in this course.) How does FDA flesh out the basic requirements of the statute so as to give life to its mandate of protecting the American public from the hazards of imported food?
- Wirth, Private Voluntary Standards and New U.S. Food Safety Legislation The Food Safety Modernization Act and Imported Food (powerpoint, “Course Materials” on website).
- Czarnezki, Lin, et al., Global Environmental Law: Food Safety and China (“Course Materials”).

Focus on the case study of cadmium-contaminated rice. Cadmium is a heavy metal, like lead and mercury, with very serious health consequences even when consumed in small doses. Think as well about the trade implications, beginning on page 7. If you were the Administrator of U.S. FDA, knowing of this apparently pervasive problem, what provisions would you put in your MOA (Memorandum of Agreement) with China?

- U.S. FDA – China MOU (“Course Materials”). What is this instrument designed to do, and how does it do it?
- U.S.-China MOU no. 2 (weblinks). What is this instrument designed to do, and how does it do it?

### **Background:**

- To get a sense of the shape of the food safety problem in the U.S., take a look at The 10 Biggest Foodborne Illness Outbreaks of 2015, <http://www.foodsafetynews.com/2015/12/the-10-biggest-u-s-foodborne-illness-outbreaks-of-2015/#.V0Ts0fkrKUK> (the most recent I could find collected in one place). [Here](#) is a link to two that are ongoing as of this writing: infant formula and Daily Harvest. What do these incidents have in common? How are they different one from another? What challenges do they present to investigators, such as the Centers for Disease Control, in identifying the source of the outbreak and curtailing it? In line with current events, think about the analogy to COVID tracing.
- U.S. Department of Agriculture: <http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=food-safety>
- Food and Drug Administration: Federal Food Drug and Cosmetic Act (FFDCA), first adopted 1906. Here is an overview of its application in the Peanut Corp. Case: <http://www.marlerblog.com/legal-cases/the-federal-food-drug-and-cosmetic-act-overview-of-food-adulteration-and-criminal-sanctions/#.U4VkDnJdUrV>. FSMA is an amendment to this statute.

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The second half of this class will be devoted to the first round in the Food Simulation.

Consult the “Simulated Negotiation” folder on TWEN for general instructions. You will be given confidential instructions tailored specifically for your role individually beforehand. Come prepared to make an opening statement on behalf of your delegation, including an opportunity for each member of the delegation to speak.

### **Classes 4&5: Thursday, July 13 & Monday, July 17, 2023**

This class examines the potential for divergences in national regulatory policies to manifest as trade disputes. In particular, these sessions address the WTO Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures, as applied in the GATT Tuna-Dolphin, EC-Hormones and EC-Biotech disputes, and the WTO Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade, as applied in the Tuna II labeling dispute, protected designations of origin, and the COOL case.



The important thing to understand about these disputes is that they focus on whether a food safety standard is **too rigorous** (i.e., excessively protective of public health or natural resources), and **not** whether it is too weak. Why would the international trade regime address this seemingly counter-intuitive issue? How does the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures distinguish between those measure that are acceptable under the trade regime, and those that are not? (Beginning of answer: science).

**Read Closely:**

- “The World Trade Organization” (“Course Materials” on website). This includes the famous tuna/dolphin dispute.
- Risk assessment general background & Risk assessment, low dose extrapolation (“Course Materials” folder on website) What public policy responses would you consider appropriate for each of the curves in the second of these documents? What is the graph telling us about the behavior of a “threshold” pollutant or food contaminant at low doses? Of a chemical characterized by the “supralinear” curve?

**Background:**

- Wirth, *The World Trade Organization Dispute Over Genetically Modified Organisms: The Precautionary Principle Meets International Trade Law*, 37 Vermont L.R. 1153 (2013) (Edited version on “Course Materials”).
- “The WTO Appellate Body Knocks Down U.S. “Dolphin-Safe” Tuna Labels But Leaves a Crack for PPMs” (“Course Materials” on website)
- “The WTO Ruling on U.S. Country of Origin Labeling (“COOL”)” (“Course Materials” on website)

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The second round of the simulated negotiation will be held during the second half of class on Monday, the 17<sup>th</sup>. Written proposals should be posted in advance on the course website under the folder “Forums/Delegation proposals.”

**Class 6: Tuesday, July 18, 2023**

**Resources of the Global Commons: Fisheries**

This class addresses fisheries agreements as challenges to the collective management of common resources. The class also addresses alternative means of protecting commercially important species, such as listing bluefin tuna (used in sushi) and endangered sharks (commercially harvested for their fins) by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES).

**Read closely:**

- FAO, State of the World’s Fisheries, 2012, Read pp. 52-62, “The Status of Fishery Resources”,

<http://www.fao.org/docrep/016/i2727e/i2727e.pdf>

**Background:**

- The Economist, Governing the Oceans, Feb. 22, 2014 (posted on website under “Course Materials”)
- A net with holes: the regional fisheries management system, <http://www.savethehighseas.org/publicdocs/RFMO.pdf>
- Pauly, et al., Global Trends in World Fisheries: Impacts on Marine Ecosystems and Food Security (“Course Materials”), <http://rstb.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/360/1453/5.full.pdf+html>
- S. Cullis-Suzuki, et al., Failing the High Seas: A Global Evaluation of Regional Fisheries Management Organizations (“Course Materials” has full document in case you have difficulty accessing), [http://scholar.google.com/scholar\\_url?hl=en&q=http://www.vliz.be/imisdocs/publications/211447.pdf%26embedded%3Dtrue&sa=X&scisig=AAGBfm38dFK2Hd3BizkL6kSohHUjYacCCw&oi=scholar](http://scholar.google.com/scholar_url?hl=en&q=http://www.vliz.be/imisdocs/publications/211447.pdf%26embedded%3Dtrue&sa=X&scisig=AAGBfm38dFK2Hd3BizkL6kSohHUjYacCCw&oi=scholar)
- With respect to bluefin tuna and shark fins, see “WWF Applauds Government for Issuing Shark Fin and Bluefin Tuna Internal Ban” (“Course Materials”). What is the relationship between this action by the Hong Kong government and the larger multilateral process?

**Class 7: Wednesday, July 19, 2023**

**Geographical Indications**

**Readings:**

- Wirth, Geographical Indications and Sustainability (“Course Materials”)
- FAO, GIs and Sustainability (“Course Materials”). Read only pp. 49-70, 83-90 (§§ 2.1-2.3, § 2.5).

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The third and final round of the simulated negotiation will be held during the second half of class today. Written proposals should be posted in advance on the course website under the folder “Forums/Delegation proposals.”

**Class 8: Thursday, July 20, 2023**

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