

Consortium on Law and Values in Health, Environment & the Life Sciences

Student Proposal Cover Page

Applicant Information

Applicant Name: Michael Nordquist Date: 2/18/08
Project Title: Food Networks: Reconfiguring Political Action through Alimentary Practices
Department: Political Science College: College of Liberal Arts
Home address: 2711 Aldrich Ave S, Apt 1 City & State: Minneapolis, MN Zip: 55408
Faculty advisor name: Lisa Disch Email: ldisch@umn.edu Not applicable
Dept. Head's name: Raymond Duvall Dept. Head's email: rduvall@umn.edu
Dean's name: James Parente Dean's email: paren001@umn.edu

How did you hear about this funding opportunity? Department Email

Funding

\$6927

Amount of funding requested: _____

Funding justification: [a clear statement of what you will use the funds for without going into budget details]

Funds will be used for non-recurring salary for the Fall 2008 semester (\$5000), conference travel and attendance (\$1427), and research materials (\$500).

Approvals

Check all appropriate approvals required for your proposal. Approvals must be obtained prior to receipt of funding. If you have applied for approval but have not yet received it, indicate that below.

- IRB Date submitted: _____ Number: _____
 IACUC Date submitted: _____ Number: _____
 Other Explain: _____

For Use by the Consortium Office

- The proposal is 1000 words or less excluding budget, biographies, references and citations.
 The proposal includes a work plan with a specific timeline using months or quarters to identify work to be done and completion dates.
 The proposal includes a 1-2 paragraph biography of the applicant and all co-investigators.
 The budget form is complete including the funds sought for this project, other pending applications for this project, and the amount/source of matching or other funds.
 The applicant's faculty advisor is copied on the application email. Professional students w/o advisors check NA.
 All necessary approvals are pending or received.

Food Networks: Reconfiguring Political Action through Alimentary Practices

Concerns over the quality and security of the American food supply occupy many citizens' and consumers' minds today, to a degree not seen since Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* was published in 1906. The seemingly constant appearance of *E.coli* contamination in food products ranging from spinach to beef, the unsettling debates over the safety of genetically-modified goods, and the rising interest in "organic" and "whole" foods are only a few signs of the growing attention citizens are paying to how they nourish and sustain themselves and their families.¹ What has gone less noticed is how these food-related issues have taken on political significance. The relations among humans, food, and the processes and entities that take part in the production and distribution of food have become explicitly political. Eaters are actively determining the conditions under which they eat, and the many entities involved in food networks are making themselves felt in ways previously inconceivable.

To consider the changing relations among humans, food, and the politics of food networks, I am undertaking a study of the processes involved in food production, distribution, and consumption—food networks—and the popular political responses these processes have sparked. This project forms a chapter of my dissertation, which focuses on the theorization of an environmental politics that does not rely upon a concept of nature, but rather takes the changing ecologies and practices of local and specific environments as the basis for democratic politics. Food networks represent one of these particular environments, combining the action of humans, nonhumans, and the ever-changing relations among them in an inseparable network.

This project has three main parts:

¹ For instance, recent bestsellers addressing these topics include Eric Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation* (2005 [2001]), Michael Pollan's *Omnivore's Dilemma* (2006), and Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life* (2007).

- First, I examine the state of food production in the United States and the global networks of which it is a part. Existing interdisciplinary work within history, geography, political economy, and nutrition studies provides an overview of the numerous processes that go into food networks and the extent of its global reach.² I utilize the theoretical framework developed in previous chapters to analyze these food networks as combinations of human and nonhuman actors, highlighting the environmental importance of food networks and the part that nonhuman entities play in making these networks possible.
- Second, I focus on the role of human bodies as components of these global food networks, bringing attention to the undemocratic process through which American eaters are produced as mere extensions of these global food networks.³ I provide an account of the detrimental health and environmental effects that the current organization of food networks has upon human bodies and their social relations, including American obesity, fast and frozen food cultures, and the decreasing diversity of the American diet.
- Third, against these undemocratic tendencies in American dietary practices, resistant food practices such as the Slow Food movement and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) show citizens reconfiguring the conventional relationship that exists among humans and their food.⁴ The Slow Food movement, developed in opposition to fast food, is an attempt to redefine contemporary food practices through closer attention to how food is produced, emphasizing that food should be “good, clean, and fair,” that is, high

² Cook, Ian “Follow the thing: papaya.” *Antipode* 36, 624–64. 2004. Freidberg, Susanne. *French Beans and Bood Scares: Culture and Commerce in an Anxious Age*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2004. Hughes, Alex and Suzanne Reimer, editors, *Geographies of Commodity Chains*. London: Routledge. 2004.

³ Nestle, Marion. *Food Politics*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007. Kelly Brownell, *Food Fight*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004.

⁴ Henderson, Elizabeth and Robyn Van En, *Sharing the Harvest: A Citizens Guide to Community Supported Agriculture*. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2007. Petrini, Carlo, *Slow Food Nation: Why Our Food Should Be Good, Clean, And Fair*. New York: Rizzoli Ex Libris, 2007. Pollan, Michael, *In Defense of Food: An Eater’s Manifesto*. New York: Penguin Press, 2008.

quality with traditional natural tastes, grown without toxic pesticides or fertilizers, and purchased at an equitable price to the farmers and farmworkers who handle it. CSA is a movement of local farmers that deliver their produce, often organic, on a weekly basis to local consumers without going through a market or other middlemen. These movements represent how democratic action can and does occur through the practices of everyday alimentary practices and shows the political importance of food choices, from the seed to the table.

Contribution to Interdisciplinary Work on Health, Environment, and the Life Sciences

This project examines how knowledge produced within the life sciences can contribute to the political transformation of destructive environmental and public health practices, such as unsustainable agricultural processes and the lethal effects of the contemporary American diet. Putting the latest research in nutrition and environmental sciences into conversation with theoretical approaches to environmental politics opens the possibility for effective, well-informed political action that addresses the concerns of scholars in the fields of health, environment, and the life sciences.

This project attempts to make science and politics relevant to one another without subordinating democratic principles to technocratic experts, or vice versa. It brings the political nature of scientific questions to the forefront, while simultaneously recognizing the necessity of scientific knowledge for informed political decision-making. It navigates between science-skeptics, who question any product of scientific research, and science-fundamentalists, who hold science to be the panacea for all humanity's problems. This 'middle way' is a much-needed addition to a discussion whose participants often speak past one another.

While philosophical work often falls outside the scope of the life sciences, this project brings political and ethical concerns into debates about scientific research and environmental sciences. It recognizes the political nature of research being done in these fields, and frames environmental questions as always having political import. This project provides a model of practicing environmental, life sciences-based research and political activism that incorporates political concerns into the basic assumptions of these fields.

Work Plan

I am currently completing the preliminary research for this project, closely reading and analyzing the books, articles, and films I have gathered on food networks, the health consequences of contemporary dietary practices, and Slow Food and CSA. Currently revising chapters of my dissertation and preparing to teach a Summer Session course, I will begin writing this chapter in September 2008, revising through October and November. I have submitted a proposal to present this work at the Association of Political Theory in October in Middletown, CT, and the Western Political Science Association Meeting in March 2009 in Vancouver, BC. In November, I will share my work with a departmental dissertation writing group under the direction of Professor Bud Duvall, as well as the Minnesota Political Theory Colloquium. In December, I will prepare the paper for publication, submitting it to *Public Culture* or *Theory & Event*.

Biographical Information

Michael Nordquist is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Political Science, focusing on Political Theory and International Relations. Originally from eastern Pennsylvania, Michael graduated with honors from Ithaca College, Ithaca, NY, in 2002, with degrees in Politics and German Studies. Michael's interests lie in late modern and contemporary continental political thought, with an emphasis on democratic and environmental thought. He has presented his work at the Western Political Science Association (WPSA) annual meeting, and the Midwest Political Science Association annual meeting. This year, he is co-organizing the annual Environmental

Political Theory workshop preceding the WPSA meeting. Michael has received two Foreign Language/Area Studies Fellowships (2006-7, 2007-8), to continue his studies in Advanced French at the University of Minnesota, as well as a Graduate Research Partnership Project (2007) grant from the Graduate School to attend immersion language training in Paris over the summer. He has been co-coordinator of the Department of Political Science's Political Theory Colloquium for the past three years, and served on the Department's Graduate Work Committee and Graduate Student Life Committee. He plans to defend his dissertation in May 2009, and find a position as a professor to continue teaching and research.

Budget for Student Proposals

Project Title: Food Networks: Reconfiguring Political Action through Alimentary Practices
 Michael Nordquist, Department of Political Science

Instructions: add rows for multiple personnel.

Category	Description & justification	Requested funding	Matching/other funding	
		Amount	Amount	Source
Personnel: Michael Nordquist <i>Explain what hourly wage & fringe are based on-- departmental, community or other rate?</i>	Salary = 250 hrs (16.66hrs x 15weeks[9/2/08-12/12/08]) x \$16.77/hr (Department of Political Science graduate student assistant rate)	\$4,200		Dissertation Completion Fellowships**
	Health Insurance (Student Health Benefits Plan)	\$800		
	Salary will cover everyday living expenses (housing, food, transportation, etc.) to be able to conduct full time research on the proposed project.			
	Subtotal	\$5,000		
Speaker Honoraria	0 speakers x \$ 0 honorarium	0		
Supplies & Services	Supplies and services will include photocopying and printing documents necessary for the project such as online journal articles, book chapters, and draft copies (\$.10/copy x 2000 pages).	\$200		
Equipment <i>Equipment costs are allowable only if the justification clearly shows that the equipment is necessary for the project. Include explanation of what will happen to equipment at completion of project.</i>	Equipment will include books necessary for the project. Due to the constantly changing nature of the subject being studied, and in order to stay current with my research, it is often necessary to purchase new releases and popular books that University libraries do not carry or do not acquire quickly enough. These include books on the latest nutrition science, environmental politics and policy, and food politics in general. Following the completion of the project, I will maintain possession of the books.			
	Book purchases	\$300		
Travel <i>Travel costs must include a description of the purpose of the travel, start and stop dates of travel, transportation costs, housing costs, and allowable per diem (use University rates found at http://travel/umn.edu).</i>	Travel will include two conferences to present the results of the proposed project: 1.) Association for Political Theory Meeting, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT. October 9-12, 2008.			
	Airfare, MSP-Hartford, CT	\$475	\$150	Dept of Political Science Travel Funds
	Lodging, Middletown, CT (3 nights x \$44*)	\$132		
	Per Diem, Middletown, CT (4 days x \$32*)	\$128		
	Conference Registration	\$45		
	2.) Western Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Vancouver, BC, Canada, March 18-21, 2009			
	Airfare, MSP-Vancouver, BC, Canada	\$550	\$150	Dept of Political Science Travel Funds
	Lodging, Vancouver, BC, Canada (3 nights x \$94*)	\$282	\$200	GAPSA Travel Grant
	Per Diem, Vancouver, BC, Canada (4 days x \$60*)	\$240		
	Conference Registration	\$75		
	Total Travel Costs	\$1,927	\$500	Total Other travel funds
Travel costs requested		\$1,427		
Subtotal research supplies, equipment, travel, other		\$1,927	\$500	
TOTAL BUDGET		\$6,927	\$500	

*I have requested half of the per diem rate for lodging and meals; I will likely share a room with colleagues and will not need the full per diem for food.

**I am applying for the following Dissertation Completion Fellowships:
 Charlotte W. Newcombe Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship (\$23,000)
 ACLS/Mellon Doctoral Disseration Completion Fellowship (\$25,000)
 UMN Doctoral Disseration Fellowship (\$21,500)