

Hong Kong University of Science and Technology  
Division of Public Policy (Spring 2026)

## PPOL 6101A

### Special Topics in Public Policy: Food Security and Agricultural Development

**Lecture:** Wednesdays, 12:30 – 3:20 pm (Millennity Tower 1, Room 2)

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays, 10:00 am-1:00pm, or by appointment (CYT5011)

**Instructor:** Dr Nicolo LUDOVICE ([nludovice@ust.hk](mailto:nludovice@ust.hk))

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This course examines the multifaceted challenge of *food security and agricultural development* through an integrated policy lens. Food security—defined as the state in which “all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (1996 World Food Summit)—remains one of the most pressing global challenges of our era, demanding sophisticated analysis and coordinated policy responses.

The course adopts a *food systems approach*, tracing the complex web of actors, institutions, and processes that connect agricultural production to human nutrition and well-being. Students will explore the historical trajectories of agricultural transformation, from the gradual evolution of European farming to the dramatic technological breakthroughs of Asia’s Green Revolution, examining how different pathways have shaped contemporary policy landscapes. Core policy domains, including land tenure reform, agricultural research and extension, market regulation, international trade, and social protection, are analysed through comparative case studies drawn from diverse national contexts. The course further examines how rapid urbanisation is fundamentally reshaping food demand and supply chains, while environmental pressures such as soil degradation, water scarcity, biodiversity loss, and climate change threaten the sustainability of the resource base upon which all food production depends.

Using global cases, students will engage with the architecture of global food governance, analysing the roles of international institutions, the emergence of multi-stakeholder platforms, and competing paradigms such as food sovereignty. By synthesising these diverse themes, the course equips students to design context-specific, integrated policy responses capable of building more resilient, equitable, and sustainable food systems for future generations.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

Having taken this course, students will be able to:

1. Describe and discuss the multi-dimensional nature of food security by applying a systems approach to analyse its pillars and interconnections within global food systems;
2. Evaluate historical and contemporary agricultural development pathways by assessing the impact of policy levers such as land reform, technology, and market interventions;
3. Analyse the socio-economic and gendered dimensions of food insecurity through understanding how power dynamics and inequalities shape access to food and nutrition;
4. Appraise the landscape of global food governance, identifying key actors, institutions, and policy debates influencing international food security; and,
5. Develop integrated policy solutions for emerging food system challenges, including urbanisation, malnutrition, and food waste.

## COURSE STRUCTURE

This course achieves these learning outcomes by employing a combination of lectures, seminar discussions, and assessment geared towards the understanding and application of food systems analysis in policy. The first half of the class is dedicated to lectures while the rest of the session is designed for seminar discussion of cases. This structure will also allow students to actively participate in class by leading the discussion, raising questions, and facilitating the process of inquiry. This course is open to all students.

## COURSEWORK/ASSESSMENT

Grading is based on 100% of the coursework.

### **Reflection Paper (15%)**

**Due: 6 March 2026**

Students will complete a reflection paper based on the assigned class activity. This exercise requires thoughtful engagement with both the process and the outcomes of the task, encouraging critical self-assessment and deeper understanding of the material. The paper should be 3 to 4 pages in length, demonstrating clear organisation, coherence, and analytical reflection rather than mere description. Detailed guidelines and expectations will be discussed further in class.

### **Food Security Council (35%)**

**Due: 6 May 2026**

In this collaborative exercise, students will transition from learners to policymakers. Working in groups, you will serve as a Local Food Council tasked with resolving a complex, real-life case study. Your objective is to design and propose a policy intervention that addresses the specific needs of the community while navigating competing interests and external contingencies. This exercise challenges students to view food systems through a multi-dimensional lens. More instructions will be given later in class.

### **Oral Examination (30%)**

**Due: 11-13 May 2026**

The culminating assessment for this course is a formal oral examination. Students are required to argue and defend a thesis statement addressing critical challenges within food security and agricultural development. This defence tests the student's ability to synthesize course material, engage in scholarly debate, and articulate complex policy or technical solutions.

### **Class Participation (20%)**

**Throughout the semester**

To monitor student progress, daily worksheets will be distributed and collected at the end of each class. These worksheets count towards both participation and attendance. Students are responsible for ensuring their worksheet is submitted to the teaching assistant before leaving; unsubmitted worksheets—*regardless*

*of attendance*—will be treated as a missed exercise and recorded as an absence. No make-up worksheets will be provided under any circumstances.

The majority of worksheets correspond to case studies on food security that will be examined throughout the term. Evaluation will reflect not only completion of the worksheets but also preparedness and participation in seminar discussions. Active engagement with the material and with fellow students is expected. As most seminar discussions presuppose familiarity with the assigned readings, students are expected to complete them in advance. Persistent neglect of the weekly readings will result in removal from the course and a failing grade.

## COURSE SCHEDULE AND TOPICS

Date	Week	Topic and Activity
04 February	1	<b>Foundations of Food Security</b>
11 February	2	<b>The Agricultural Development Pathway: A Historical Perspective</b>
18 February		<i>No Classes: Lunar New Year</i>
25 February	3	<b>Core Policy Levers I: Land, Labour, and Livelihoods</b>
4 March	4	<b>Core Policy Levers II: Technology, Research, and Extension</b>
11 March	5	<b>Markets, Prices and International Trade</b>
18 March	6	<b>The Human Dimension: Nutrition, Health, and Gender</b>
25 March	7	<b>The Urban Transition and Food Systems</b>
01 April	8	<b>Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resource Management</b>
08 April	9	<b>Hunger, Famine, and Emergency Response</b>
15 April	10	<b>Risk, Vulnerability, and Social Protection</b>
22 April	11	<b>The Role of the State and Public Policy Models</b>
29 April	12	<b>Global Food Governance</b>
6 May	13	<b>Synthesizing Policy for Future Food Security Challenges</b>

All readings and materials will be posted on Canvas. At the very least, students are expected to have read the posted materials. It will be very difficult to follow in the lectures and discussions if students do not at least prepare for the class.

There is no single textbook for this course. However, students may benefit from the following works as guide for this course:

- Ana Moragues-Faus et al., *Routledge Handbook of Urban Food Governance* (Taylor & Francis, 2022)
- Bill Pritchard et al., *Routledge Handbook of Food and Nutrition Security* (Routledge, 2016)
- Bryan L. McDonald, *Food Security* (Polity, 2010)
- Christopher B. Barrett, *Food Security and Sociopolitical Stability* (OUP Oxford, 2013)
- C. Peter Timmer et al., *Food Policy Analysis* (World Bank, 1983)
- D. Shaw, *World Food Security: A History since 1945* (Springer, 2007)
- Dwight H. Perkins, *Agricultural Development in China, 1368-1968* (AldineTransaction, 2013)
- Geoffrey Lawrence et al., *Food Security, Nutrition and Sustainability* (Routledge, 2013)
- George W. Norton et al., *Economics of Agricultural Development: World Food Systems and Resource Use* (Routledge, 2021)
- Ha-Joon Chang, *Public Policy and Agricultural Development* (Routledge, 2012)
- Jessica Duncan, *Global Food Security Governance: Civil Society Engagement in the Reformed Committee on World Food Security* (Routledge, 2015)
- Jonathan Crush et al., *Handbook on Urban Food Security in the Global South* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2020)
- Kym Anderson, *Agricultural Trade, Policy Reforms, and Global Food Security* (Springer, 2016)

- Liam Riley and Jonathan Crush, *Transforming Urban Food Systems in Secondary Cities in Africa* (Springer Nature, 2022)
- Mark Gibson, *The Feeding of Nations: Redefining Food Security for the 21st Century* (CRC Press, 2016)
- Martin Caraher et al., *Handbook of Food Security and Society* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2023)
- Mohamed Behnassi et al., *Sustainable Food Security in the Era of Local and Global Environmental Change* (Springer Science & Business Media, 2013)
- Nora McKeon, *Food Security Governance: Empowering Communities, Regulating Corporations* (Routledge, 2014)
- Per Pinstrup-Andersen and Derrill D. Watson, *Food Policy for Developing Countries: The Role of Government in Global, National, and Local Food Systems* (Cornell University Press, 2011)
- Rosamond L. Naylor, *The Evolving Sphere of Food Security* (Oxford University Press, 2014)
- Sheryl L. Hendriks and Suresh C. Babu, *Handbook on Public Policy and Food Security* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2024)
- Sheryl L. Hendriks, *Food Security Policy, Evaluation and Impact Assessment* (Routledge, 2019)
- Suresh Babu et al., *Food Security, Poverty and Nutrition Policy Analysis: Statistical Methods and Applications* (Academic Press, 2014)
- Uwe Kracht and Manfred Schulz, *Food Security and Nutrition: The Global Challenge* (LIT Verlag Münster, 1999)
- Zhang-Yue Zhou, *Global Food Security: What Matters?* (Routledge, 2019)

## GRADING

The Division of Public Policy rigorously upholds the University's high academic standards and commitment to intellectual integrity. For each assignment, we will provide detailed outlines and marking rubrics. As you prepare your work, it is advisable to consult Bloom's Taxonomy as a guiding framework (see the guide below).

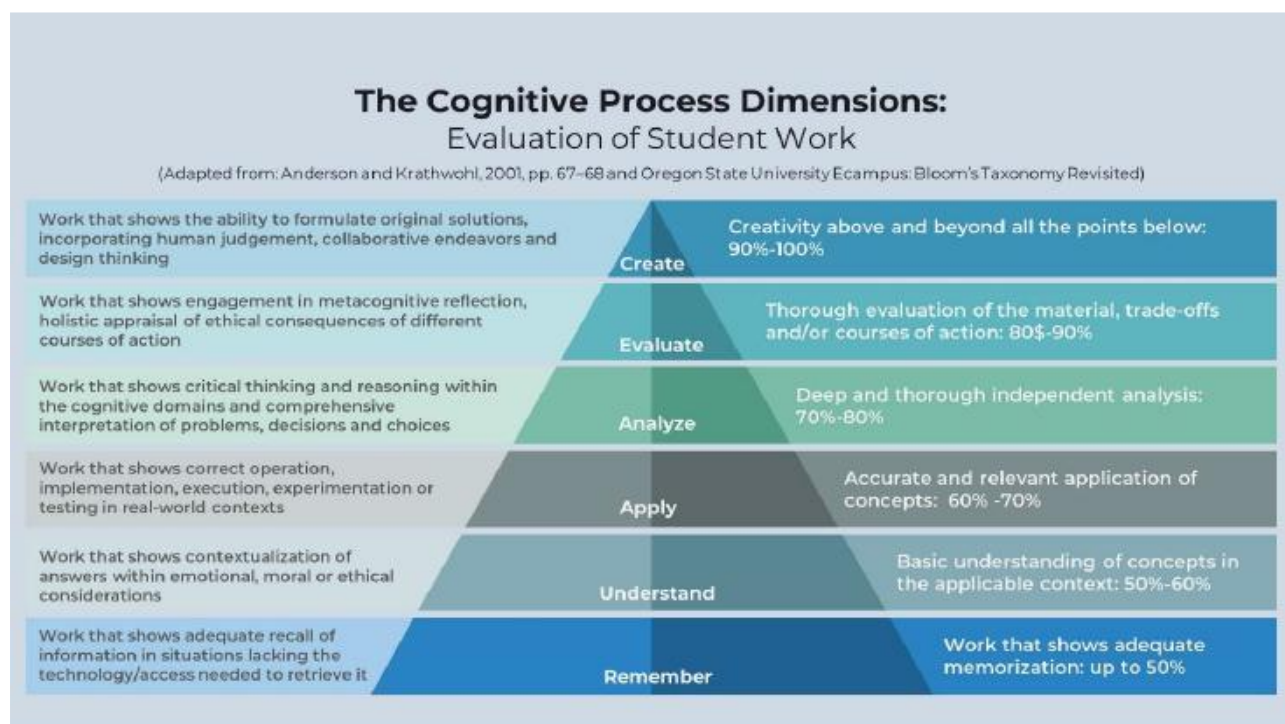
**VERY IMPORTANT:** Please note that meeting basic requirements does not guarantee an 'A' grade. Even a 'very good' piece of work, aligning with the 'evaluate' level of Bloom's Taxonomy, may receive a 'B' or 'B+' at best. An 'A' paper represents the highest calibre of scholarship: it demonstrates adept use of sources, original thought, nuanced arguments, accurate citations, and a logical, coherent flow. In essence, an 'A' paper is of publishable quality, suitable for submission to international journals and other scholarly platforms.

**ALSO IMPORTANT:** Late submissions will automatically receive a one-letter grade deduction unless an extension has been granted by the instructor (a late submission after one week will automatically receive an 'F' grade). If you anticipate difficulties completing the task within the given timeframe, it is strongly recommended that you contact the instructor or teaching assistant as early as possible. Extensions are granted only with a compelling justification and supporting evidence, so it is in your best interest to address any issues promptly.

**ALSO VERY IMPORTANT:** Grade review requests must be submitted within one week of receiving your assessment. No requests will be considered after this deadline. Valid grounds for review include computational errors in grading, misapplication of rubric criteria, overlooked portions of your work, and clear discrepancies between feedback and assigned grade. Invalid grounds for review: 1) General statements like "I deserve a higher grade", "I was stressed doing this", or "I worked really hard", 2) Disagreement with course standards or expectations; and 3) Comparison to other students' grades.

Grade reviews examine *your entire submission*. **Your grade may be raised, remain the same, or be lowered based on this comprehensive re-evaluation.** Submit requests only when you have specific, documented concerns about the original grading.

To request a review, please provide a written explanation citing specific rubric criteria or pointing to concrete grading errors. Vague appeals will not be processed.



**ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:** I have little tolerance for academic dishonesty. Such behaviour is detrimental to both educators and students, undermining the integrity of the academic experience. The University defines academic dishonesty to include the following:

- Obtaining examination or test questions without the instructor's permission, or sharing these questions with others without authorisation
- Giving or receiving unauthorised assistance during examinations or tests
- Having someone else take an examination or test on your behalf, or taking one for someone else
- Submitting assignments that have received unapproved assistance from others, or providing such assistance to others
- Fabricating facts or references in tasks and assignments, most especially with the use of Gen-AI
- Using another person's work in an assignment and presenting it as your own
- Assisting another student in cheating

All submissions will undergo a Turnitin check, and thus, must be submitted through our academic platform, Canvas.

**PLAGIARISM:** HKUST defines plagiarism as "presenting work which is not your own and originates from other sources as if it is your own, without appropriate attribution to the sources." *This includes the use of generative AI for content creation.* This also covers all forms of work submitted for assessment as part of a University examination (e.g., theses, dissertations, take-home examinations, assignments, and projects). Plagiarism is considered a very serious academic and disciplinary offence which could result in expulsion from the University. The Division of Public Policy adheres and implements these rules strictly. If in doubt, please ask or seek for further advice.

## PRACTICAL MATTERS

### Citation

Whether using the author-date system or footnotes, all citations in written assignments will follow the **18th ed. Chicago Manual of Style**. Please refer to this: [https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)

### Lectures

Everyone is expected to attend lectures. Powerpoint slides of the lectures will not be uploaded. Everyone is also expected to take notes (whether via notebooks or laptops) in class. There is no make-up work for participation activities unless you email the teaching assistant before class if you are going to be absent. If you are absent for the lecture, kindly inform the teaching assistant.

### Readings

There is no standard textbook for the course. The readings for the course will be taken from a variety of sources including journals, book chapters, etc. and will be made available via Canvas. Students are expected to be responsible for their readings to facilitate learning and interaction during the seminars.

### Use of Electronics

While we are all accustomed to using our gadgets for research and communication, laptop use within the classroom must only be used insofar as it helps in the learning process. Mobile phones must be switched off or put on silent at all times. Disruptions caused by these gadgets will entail deductions on your participation grade. Likewise, playing games or browsing through social media apps in class will have the same consequences.

### Use of AI

This class acknowledges the convenience brought by AI-assisted technologies (e.g., Grammarly, ChatGPT, Quillbot, ProWritingAid, Whitesmoke, Jenni.ai, Poe, etc.) in student research and writing. While HKUST maintains a tolerant policy regarding the use of AI, it also recognises that these tools have significantly altered how students gather and process information. As a result, there has been an increase in errors, such as unverified information and false citations. Moreover, these technologies have also impacted the way we approach writing in history and policy.

To address these changes, students are permitted to use AI technologies **only in certain tasks**, such as improving grammar and readability, **but not for content creation**. *If AI tools are used, students must include a declaration at the end of their essay, detailing how these technologies were employed in the context of their work.* **Works of students that do not have AI declarations, presence of false citations, and generated content will receive an automatic ZERO for that particular submission.**

**NOTE:** All submitted essays will be subjected to the Turnitin AI detector. Essays found to be generated in whole or in significant part by AI will be considered plagiarised. Additionally, any essay that uses AI without an accompanying declaration will also be treated as plagiarised. Essays identified as plagiarised will be handled according to HKUST's policies on plagiarism and academic dishonesty.

### Accommodation

**Our classroom is, above all, a safe space for your thoughts, feelings, and identity.** This class embraces the diversity of every individual, acknowledging the unique contexts from which each of you come from. It is essential that we extend the same respect to others that we ourselves wish to receive.

If you have any special needs or encounter challenges in your learning, please reach out to the instructor without hesitation. We are committed to doing everything within our power to ensure that your learning experience is safe, enjoyable, and meaningful.