

Truth in Food Labeling: It's Anyone's Guess

Final Syllabus

3-1-24

AZ Humanities Seminar

Course Professor:

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Course Title:

Truth in Food Labeling: It's Anyone's Guess

Course Length:

6 Weeks — 2:00 to 4:00 PM; 3/14, 3/21, 3/28, 4/4, 4/11, 4/18

Course Format:

Hybrid (in person in Rubel Room at Poetry Center, and online audience simultaneously)

Pedagogical Method:

Discussion Based

Course Description:

- Food is essential for living. What and how much food is consumed impacts both quality and longevity of life. For some people, knowing where and how the source of their food was raised and harvested impacts that person's ethical and moral beliefs. On the other hand, food manufacturers are economically motivated to entice consumers to select their product over that of a competitor. How one food manufacturer labels their product becomes a primary deciding factor, often more so than cost, of what gets purchased and consumed.
- Regulations and policies associated with the labeling of food are complex and heavily litigated. Generally, consumers are unaware of the subtleties associated with the numerous required features on a product's label. Food labeling is neither part of most school's curriculum nor taught in adult education classes. This course will address the genesis of the statutory and regulatory oversight of food labeling, along with some of the present day challenges associated with consumer expectations (e.g., fanciful product names, "gluten-free," and "non-GMO"). Actual product labels will be reviewed and discussed. Participants will gain an understanding of labeling terms (e.g., misbranding and economic adulteration) and be able to identify labeling features that push the boundaries of what is truthful and not misleading.

Course Reading List:

- Class Notes – To be provided on the class portal at least one week in advance of each week's discussion –
 - The class notes contain the PowerPoint slides and the background materials considered in crafting each slide.
- Food Labeling: Gluten-Free Labeling of Fermented or Hydrolyzed Foods –
 - Final rule from 8-13-2020 – <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2020-08-13/pdf/2020-17088.pdf>.
 - Final regulatory impact analysis -- <https://www.fda.gov/media/140768/download?attachment>.

Faculty Bio:

Daniel Engeljohn, PhD, retired from 40 years at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in Washington, DC as the senior official responsible for regulatory and policy development for meat, poultry, and processed egg products. While at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, he traveled the world, meeting with foreign government officials to ensure that foreign foods exported to the U.S. met the U. S. Department of Agriculture requirements for food labeling and food safety. After retirement from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, he taught food

safety, food law, and animal production courses for 3 years in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at the University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ.

Syllabus

- Course Topics
 - Week 1 (Thursday, 2PM – 4PM, March 14, 2024) –
 - Genesis of the need for labeling and regulatory oversight in the United States (US) and internationally.
 - Defining food, labeling, and pertinent terminology (e.g., misbranding, adulteration, economic adulteration, intentional adulteration).
 - Week 2 (Thursday, 2PM – 4PM, March 21, 2024) –
 - US government labeling authorities at the Federal, State, and local level.
 - International food labeling issues.
 - Labeling specifics, including standardized foods, the Nutrition Facts panel features, and menu labeling.
 - Week 3 (Thursday, 2PM – 4PM, March 28, 2024) –
 - Use of labeling by consumers
 - Identification and management of consumer expectations (e.g., limitations of religion and the need for public health protection versus preference, and use of surveys).
 - Overview of ingredients and uses.
 - Week 4 (Thursday, 2PM – 4PM, April 4, 2024) –
 - Common misunderstandings or lack of understanding about labeling terms (e.g., sugars, “healthy,” GMO, “natural,” and animal raising practices).
 - Challenges in verifying label claims.
 - Trusting food labels (e.g., impact of frequent food recalls).
 - Week 5 (Thursday, 2PM – 4PM, April 11, 2024) –
 - Deception for fraud and financial gain.
 - Using actual labels to demonstrate misleading information and to focus on fine print.
 - Getting help on labeling issues.
 - Week 6 (Thursday, 2PM – 4PM, April 18, 2024) –
 - Discussion on cultured animal cells, petitions, and other ways to find out what current food labeling issues are being considered nationally.
 - Discussion on assigned reading associated with the ins-and-outs of how a recent labeling rulemaking was designed, including a look at the cost-benefit analysis and the substantive issues that had to be considered in creating the policy --
 - Gluten-free labeling of Fermented or Hydrolyzed Foods -- (FDA Docket No. FDA-2014-N-1021).
 - Wrap-up.