

**Fast Food Problems, Fast Food Solutions:**

Weighing Lifestyle Change, Voluntary Market Incentives, and Mandatory Government Regulations

Almost all of us eat fast food. Some deny that Americans' heavy consumption of fast food is a bad thing at all, instead viewing it as a shining example of the free market meeting American consumers' insatiable appetites for meat and potatoes at an affordable price. Others argue that the low prices mask incredibly high costs to the health of humans and the natural environment (and hence the economy too). As is the case for with so many environmental issues, the critics of the fast food industry and industrial agriculture disagree about whether the solutions ought to come in the form of *individual lifestyle change*, *voluntary market-based incentives*, and/or *mandatory government regulations*.

For example, the Bush administration is being pressured by the Humane Society and its allies to ban slaughterhouses from processing "downer" cows. Instead of such a mandatory government regulation, others argue that it's up to consumers and their lifestyles to choose whether to demand low-grade, low-price beef (which will include meat from downer cows) or whether to instead buy certified organic meat (the organic certification standards prohibit the use of downer cows). Still others argue that companies should be given incentives to voluntarily stop processing downer cows. And of course other groups defend the processing of downer cows for keeping prices down, disputing that they pose a health risk at all.

Your paper should provide your vision of the best way for Americans to protect the health of agricultural land/crops, farm animals, and the humans (e.g. farmworkers, meatpackers, fast food employees, and consumers) impacted by farming. In doing so, you should specify what, if any, role mandatory government regulations (as opposed to individual lifestyle change and/or voluntary economic incentives) play in your vision.

Your report should demonstrate your command of the course material, drawing extensively from Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation* book in addition to the other readings from Week 7 through Week 10 on the syllabus. The best papers will demonstrate in-depth knowledge of the course material and will anticipate and respond to the strongest critiques of your own argument.

The *recommended* length of your paper is between 4 and 6 pages (double-spaced, 1 inch margins, 12 point font). Please *number the pages* and *staple the document*. Your paper will be due by Friday, March 07 (Week 10), at 10am. You may turn in a paper copy in class or you may email the paper as an attachment to me at [dlipson@kzoo.edu](mailto:dlipson@kzoo.edu). If you email the paper, please save the document in Word format and name the file LastnameFirstnamePaper3.doc.