



SYLLABUS

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

Description of Course

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

All the source materials (e.g., government policy documents and media stories) referenced in the course are available online without charge. Prior to the start of the course, all the reference documents will be identified and a link will be provided. For each class, one of the reference documents will be assigned for reading prior to the class in order that the discussion can be more informed and substantive.

Course Format and Location

Hybrid -- in person and online in the Rubel Room at the Poetry Center (1508 E Helen Street, Tucson, AZ 85719)

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 labeling and terminology (e.g., misbranding, adulteration, economic adulteration, intentional adulteration).
- **Week 2 (Thursday, 2PM – 4PM, March 21, 2024) –**
 - US government responsibilities at the Federal, State, and local level for setting standards of identify and structure/function claims.
 - Ingredients and their uses.
- **Week 3 (Thursday, 2PM – 4PM, March 28, 2024) –**
 - Identification and management of consumer expectations (e.g., limitations of religion and the need for public health protection versus preference).
 - Menu and vending machine labeling awareness.
- **Week 4 (Thursday, 2PM – 4PM, April 4, 2024) –**
 - Addressing truthfulness and misleading labeling features.
 - Litigation involving economic adulteration and fraud.
- **Week 5 (Thursday, 2PM – 4PM, April 11, 2024) –**
 - Current challenges regarding labeling both domestically and internationally.
 - Show and tell regarding labeling concerns and how to get resolution (e.g., submit a picture of your labeling concern, discuss why you have a concern, and group discussion on how to resolve the concern)
- **Week 6 (Thursday, 2PM – 4PM, April 18, 2024) –**
 - Substantive discussion on assigned reading associated with a labeling rulemaking, including the cost-benefit analysis.
 - Identify steps you can take to influence labeling policy.
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