Call for Abstracts

Framing SNAP:
Perspectives on the Nation’s Largest, Least-loved, and Most Enduring Food Assistance Program

March 19-20, 2020
Northeastern University
Boston

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, is a means-tested entitlement authorized under the Food Stamp Act of 1964. However, the current system’s outlines go back to a 1939 USDA pilot program designed to use up surplus commodities. Today, SNAP is the nation’s largest food assistance program, serving nearly 40 million Americans. SNAP’s scale alone – over $60 billion in fiscal 2018 – makes it controversial. To some critics, the program creates perverse incentives against work. To others, it falls short in promoting good nutrition, and want to ban its use to purchase “bad” foods. To still others, SNAP is simply a back-door taxpayer subsidy to the dominant industrial food system. To its defenders, whatever its warts, SNAP provides critical food assistance for those whose incomes cannot provide fully for their families. Many of these debates are infused by culturally-tinged views on race, class, and gender, and by competing ideological narratives on personal responsibility and the good society.

This intimate workshop explores the myriad debates about SNAP, both as a nutrition program, its long-standing rationale, and as an anti-poverty program, which it has become. In doing so, we seek to engage diverse scholarly and policy communities. We invite abstracts of no more than 750 words from researchers working out of historical, political, cultural, economic, nutritional, and ethical perspectives. Topics might include, but are not limited to:

- Historical perspectives
- Current politics
- SNAP and food security
- State implementation and experimentation
- Comparisons to food security policies in other nations
- Impacts on families
- Economic impacts on families and communities
- As a nutrition program
- Alternatives approaches to the current system

Abstracts are due by December 15th, 2019. Please direct all submissions and any questions to Professor Christopher Bosso (c.bosso@northeastern.edu). Those accepted will be asked to submit papers one month prior to the workshop to make them available to all participants. Papers may be stand-alone works or parts of larger projects. The amount of time for presentation and discussion will depend on the number of papers accepted.

This workshop is sponsored by the School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs, with critical support by the NU Ethics Institute and NU Humanities Center, all part of the College of Social Sciences and Humanities.