English 1B **In-class essay #3 Fast Food, Personal Choice, and Politics**

**What to write:** Write a well-developed essay in which you refer to the ideas in both of the passages below and respond with your own views on the subject.

\* Write for a *NY Times* audience, as if you were responding to Warner’s essay. Your audience probably won’t have read the other piece, so remember to summarize that prompt clearly enough for them. Use a title that will attract the right audience, and put a hook in the introduction, as we discussed.

\*Draw on your own personal experience, observations, and/or reading, to support your thesis and advance the conversation. Try to avoid clichés, especially in your thesis. Use descriptive details, tell stories, use definitions, examples, compare/contrast, etc. Use whichever of the modes you think would be appropriate.

\* Your essay should include both summary and response, but focus on response—what you are adding to the conversation. You should have a point to make beyond just summary.

\*Aim for *AT LEAST* 3 pages, if your handwriting is of average size, double spaced (skipping lines).

**1)** from **“What You Eat is Your Own Business”** by Radley Balko, published May 2004 on the Cato.org website, sponsored by the Cato Institute, a foundation that aims to promote “limited government, individual liberty, free markets, and peace.”

This June, *Time* magazine and ABC News will host a 3-day summit on obesity. [. . . .] Judging by the scheduled program, the summit promises to . . . [agitate] for a panoply of government anti-obesity initiatives, including prohibiting junk food in school vending machines, federal funding for new bike trails and sidewalks, more demanding labels on foodstuffs, restrictive food marketing to children, and prodding the food industry into more “responsible” behavior. In other words, bringing government between you and your waistline.

Politicians have already climbed aboard. President Bush earmarked $200 million in his budget for anti-obesity measures. State legislatures and school boards across the country have begun banning snacks and soda from school campuses and vending machines. Senator Joe Lieberman and Oakland Mayor Jerry Brown, among others, have called for a “fat tax” on high-calorie foods. Congress is now considering menu-labeling legislation, which would force restaurants to send every menu item to the laboratory for nutritional testing.

This is the wrong way to fight obesity. Instead of manipulating or intervening in the array of food options available to American consumers, our government ought to be working to foster a sense of responsibility in and ownership of our own health and well-being. But we’re doing just the opposite. [. . . .] More and more, states are preventing private health insurers from charging overweight and obese clients higher premiums, which effectively removes any financial incentive for maintaining a healthy lifestyle. We’re becoming less responsible for our own health, and more responsible for everyone else’s.

2) from **“Junking Junk Food”** by Judith Warner originally published 11/25/2010 in the *NY Times Magazine*

Earlier this month, Sarah Palin showed up in Bucks County, PA, with “dozens and dozens” of cookies, suggesting that the state’s schoolchildren risked losing the right to the occasional classroom treat because of a high-minded anti-sugar edict from the board of education. [. . . .] [H]owever shaky its factual foundations, Palin’s highly [publicized] cookie showdown was a big rhetorical win. [. . .] [S]he had come up with new and vivid imagery to make the case that the Obama “nanny state” is, essentially, snatching cookies—i.e., the pursuit of happiness—from the mouths of babes. Suddenly, Pennsylvania’s suggestion that schools encourage alternatives to high-sugar sweets became an assault on the American way of life.[. . . .]

[T]he administration has essentially tackled [the obesity epidemic] as if it were a political no-brainer. Teaching Americans, and children in particular, healthier eating habits seemed so commonsensical a venture, so wholesome and safe, that Michelle Obama chose it for her apolitical personal project as first lady. She has succeeded in enlisting some bipartisan support. But now, with anti-government sentiment resurgent, the cookies are pushing back, like the return of the repressed [. . .] and their influence is irrational but real.

For in waging war on fat and sugar, what the administration is doing is taking on central aspects of the American lifestyle. Eating too much, indiscriminately, anywhere, at any time, in response to any and all stimuli, is as central to our freewheeling, mavericky way of being as car cupholders and drive-throughs. You can’t change specific eating behavior without addressing that way of life — without changing our culture of food. You need to present healthful eating as a new, desirable, freely chosen expression of the American way. [. . . .]

Can Michelle Obama make field greens and strawberries as comforting, satisfying, and heartwarmingly American as apple pie? She has her work cut out for her.