

Introduction to Food Studies:
Food Matters!

Environmental Studies 225
Fall 2017
Syllabus and Course Policy Statement

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Course Description:

Food is central to human life. As biological nourishment it is, of course, vital for our survival as a species. It has also played a major role in our long and winding history as human beings, and it continues to be a fundamental element in the fabric of social, cultural and economic life both near and far. Yet, it is uncommon for us to see food as a topic of academic concern, worthy of close, analytical study. This course provides an introduction to the emerging interdisciplinary "field" of food studies and an introduction to the place of food in society. Using a comparative global perspective, we will explore the complex ways in which our foodways have emerged and explore the roles food plays at present. We will examine large-scale patterns and as well as the more intimate ways we engage or experience food in our daily lives. We will address key questions such as: Why use food as lens on society? How did the food system we have today develop? With what effects on the environment and our health? How does food help create meaning and identity for people in different cultural contexts? Why do some people (continue to) struggle to get enough food, while others eat so much that it makes them sick? What does the future hold for our engagement with food? What roles can or should we play in the food realm going forward?

As a Social Science Group-Satisfying Course (>2) this class provides you with an opportunity integrate knowledge and skills relating to food's important place in the human experience. Drawing on scholarship in key disciplines including anthropology, history, and sociology, it provides a substantive and theoretical introduction to key food issues, perspectives and modes of analysis in the social sciences. It is designed to provide a foundation that will enable you to pursue further studies on related topics. Upon completion of the course you will appreciate how food is embedded within society and will be better prepared to understand your own connections to it.

As a Multicultural-Satisfying International Cultures (IC) offering this course frames and examines food issues and concerns in an explicitly comparative fashion that highlights global dynamics and experiences. It explores how societies across the world have conceptualized and negotiated their relationships with food over time, from the era of the Spice Trade uniting Europe to Asia to current trends in national and transnational cuisines and food issues in Latin America and Africa. By providing knowledge and insights into the variety of ways food was/is experienced in international settings, the course provides you with a critical perspective on contemporary dynamics in the U.S.

Learning Outcomes:

Upon completion of this course you will be able to:

- a) Articulate the key features of the "food studies" approach.
- b) Discuss and evaluate the important roles food has played in over time.
- c) Discuss and evaluate the most important ways in which food shapes contemporary life.
- d) Identify and appreciate the challenges and opportunities in our ongoing engagements with food.

In addition you will also have an increased the ability to:

- a) Critically analyze social scientific information, data and problems
- b) Interpret academic writing
- c) Synthesize diverse information sources
- d) Communicate effectively through written and oral communication

Course Format:

This class integrates independent work with collective analysis. Key readings are assigned for each class period and should be completed prior to each meeting. Class sessions will involve a lot of discussion. Guided by substantive outline slides, we will engage in intensive conversation about the material presented in each set of readings. You should be prepared to answer framing questions and offer comments on the themes and examples you encounter in the readings. On occasion we will view films or video clips to aid our explorations. In discussion sections you will analyze concepts and issues that relate to the lectures through an engagement timely "food studies" multimedia resources (blogs, videos, etc.). In terms of effort required: 1) you will be in class 4 hours a week for 10 weeks (40 hours); 2) you will read and synthesize course materials independently for approximately 4 hours a week for 10 weeks (40 hours); 3) you will work on "out of class" assignments for 2 hours each week (20 hours); and 4) you will review course materials for each exam and complete a final integrative and reflexive essay (20 hours).

Readings/Texts:

Food & Society: Principles and Paradoxes, Second Edition by Amy Guptill, Denise Copelton and Betsy Lucal (2017)

This text introduces the "food studies" perspective and demonstrates how food-centered analysis contributes to our understanding social and cultural identity in wide range of global contexts. It also provides a substantive treatment of the development of the modern food system, revealing how developments and concerns in one world context are linked to patterns in other geographic and cultural settings.

The New Food Activism: Opposition, Cooperation, and Collective Action, Edited by Alison Hope Alkon and Julie Guthman (2017)

A rich and up-to-date portrait of the ways in which people in diverse geographic and social settings are working to envision and create new food systems. Through a variety of detailed case studies the authors explore key concepts such as food sovereignty and food justice and show how they are playing out in contemporary settings.

The assigned reading materials are not of the typical, introductory textbook nature. Rather, due to the topical and interdisciplinary nature of the course, the readings demand more from you in terms of engagement with content, concepts and theories. The first text is a conceptually driven sociological work. The second text is a rigorous exploration of the power and potential of social activism. Your engagement with these materials will require more effort than with standard, introductory textbooks pitched at the freshmen level.

These texts are available at the Duckstore. We will supplement these sources with additional readings drawn from decades of food related scholarship across a broad range of disciplines.

Requirements:

Your performance in this course will be evaluated on the following components:

Mid-Term Exam: You will complete an essay style exam based on lectures, readings, films and discussions from the first part of the course. (45% of your grade)

Final Exam: You will complete an essay style exam based on lectures, readings, films and discussions from the final part of the course. (45% of your grade)

Out of class assignments: Each week, in preparation for your discussion section, you will complete an independent activity and produce a short reaction paper. For example, you will view a selected video or do a supplementary online reading. For each assignment you will write a brief (~200 word) response that you will turn in at the start of your section. No late assignments will be accepted. We will drop the lowest score, which might be a 0 in the case of a missed assignment. (10% of your grade)

Extra Credit: You may complete two extra credit assignments during the term. You may do one of the suggested “further exploration” activities included in the Food & Society text. And/or you may attend or participate in an approved food related event (a talk, a film, a tasting, etc.) and turn in a 200 word reflection on your experience. You can earn up to 5 points for each assignment, which will be added to lowest score on Exam 1 or 2. See your GE for more information. All extra credit assignments must be completed and submitted to you GE by 5 pm on Friday in Week 10.

Grades will be assigned using the percentages indicated above and a straight scale: 100-90 = A, 80-89 = B, etc. Plus and minus distinctions will be made.

Policies and Principles:

Missed Assignments

No make ups will be offered for scheduled exams or assignments EXCEPT in the case of a significant illness, injury, or family emergency. If you should run into one of these exceptional situations, you are required to notify me by email BEFORE the scheduled exam or assignment. We will discuss your situation and any possible accommodations that might be warranted.

Attendance and Participation

In order to engage the assigned material thoroughly you must be present in class. Also, I expect you to contribute to our discussions on a regular basis. Your comments need not be extensive – but they need to be relevant and informed.

Classroom Culture

In order to create and maintain a focused and productive learning environment we need to agree on some basic elements of classroom etiquette. Ideas for things to include or address?

_____ ; _____ ; _____ ; _____

Cheating and Academic Dishonesty

All assignments in this class are designed to assess your individual knowledge and understanding of the material covered/presented in the course. Thus, cheating or plagiarism -- in any form -- will not be tolerated. The work you present must be entirely your own. All individuals involved in an act of academic dishonesty will fail the course and will be reported to the proper University contacts as required. I do not expect to encounter any problems in this area, but feel you should be forewarned.

Diversity and Equity

The University is a place where people from different cultures and experiences learn together; understanding and respecting these differences are critical for the University to be a place of open-minded inquiry where, in challenging the boundaries of knowledge, we include and value all members of our community. If you should ever feel that we are falling short on this goal, please let me know or contact the Office of the Vice President for Equity & Inclusion (346-3175, 1 Johnson Hall).

Accessible Education

If you have a condition that inhibits learning or evaluation under customary circumstances, please let me know. In addition, please request a letter from the Accessible Education Center (346-1155, 164 Oregon Hall) that verifies your situation and states the accommodations that I can make. I will make any reasonable adjustments necessary to improve your learning environment.

Basic Needs

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the Dean of Students Office (346-3216, 164 Oregon Hall) for support. Furthermore, if you are comfortable doing so, please let me know about your situation so I can help point you in the right direction for assistance.

Class Outline and Schedule

(Subject to Change Based on Our Progress - Stay Abreast of Shifts)

Week One

Tuesday, 9/26: Syllabus and Introductions
Thursday, 9/27: Why Study Food?
(Read F & S Chapter 1)

Week Two

Tuesday, 10/3: Food and Identity
(Read F & S Chapter 2)
Thursday, 10/5: Food as Spectacle
(Read F & S Chapter 3)

Week Three

Tuesday, 10/10: Health/Nutrition
(Read F & S Chapter 4)
Thursday, 10/12: Mass Consumption
(Read F & S Chapter 5)

Week Four

Tuesday, 10/17: Cheap Food
(Read F & S Chapter 6)
Thursday, 10/19: Food on the Global Scale
(Read F & S Chapter 7)

Week Five

Tuesday, 10/24 Food Justice and Ways Forward
(Read F & S Chapters 8 and 9)
Thursday, 10/26: * **Mid Term Exam** *

Week Six

Tuesday, 10/31: Food Activism
(Read NFA Preface, Introduction)
Thursday, 11/2: Rules and Regulations 1
(Read NFA Chapters 2 and 3)

Week Seven

Tuesday, 11/7: Rules and Regulations 2
(Read NFA Chapter 4)
Thursday, 11/9: Food Work 1
(Read NFA Chapters 5 and 6)

Week Eight

Tuesday, 11/14: Food Work 2
(Read NFA Chapter 7)
Thursday, 11/16: Collective Action 1
(Read NFA Chapters 8 and 9)

Week Nine

Tuesday, 11/21: Collective Action 2
(Read NFA Chapters 10 and 11)
Thursday, 11/23: Thanksgiving Break – No Class
(Read NFA Chapter 12)

Week Ten

Tuesday, 11/28: A New Food Politics
(Read NFA Chapter 13)
Thursday, 11/30: Why Study Food – Reprise, What Does Food Tell Us About Our World
(Review your class notes from Week One)

Final Exam:

Take Home Essay due on Canvas by the scheduled final exam on Thursday, 12/7 at 12:30 pm.