

## **HISTORY 405: FOOD IN WORLD HISTORY**

Mondays at 4:15 ICC 112

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Office hrs. Wednesdays, 3:00-5:00 and by appt.

### **Preliminary Thoughts:**

This course is a seminar exploring themes related to food in the shaping of modern societies. The history of food is potentially the history of practically everything. In selecting readings, I have therefore tried to impose certain limits intended to give greater thematic coherence. I have limited the scope to works centrally rather than incidentally related to the production, trade and consumption of foodstuffs (and to a lesser extent beverages). We will discuss tea, for example, but not the Boston Tea Party, an incident whose history can be told without reference to tea-drinking as such. I have also chosen to focus primarily on literate societies, where food production and consumption have evolved in interaction with complex social institutions and the written word. In addition, as a corrective to the Eurocentrism of most food writing, I have sought to include as much material on Asia as possible.

I have looked for readings that help answer the most basic question of any modern history: how we got where we are today. Although technology has brought unprecedented abundance globally, access to food sharply divides the wealthy from the poor among nations and individuals. Despite general affluence and mass production, food habits in societies like ours clearly mark individual class and ethnic status. Most of us in first-world cities live far removed from the sources of the food we eat. In restaurants and supermarkets, we enjoy an unprecedented smorgasbord of exotic national cuisines and ingredients. At the same time, multinational corporations threaten local production and foodways with what critics call "McDonaldization." The roots of this contradictory modern condition should be traceable through the history of food in past centuries.

### **Course Structure and Assignments:**

The course is a seminar, built around weekly reading assignments and class discussion. Its success will depend heavily upon your preparation and participation. Holidays fall on Mondays in our first and fifth weeks, but I have included assignments for these "fallow" weeks

as well. These weeks, I expect you to discuss the readings in the Discussion Board section of our Blackboard website (details on the site). If you find web links or bibliography that you think would be of value to the class, please post the information to the site as well. On ordinary class days, I also encourage you to bring to class relevant materials (or comestibles) that might enhance discussion.

Writing for the course consists of a weekly reading diary, three short papers (4-5 pages each; select three from the four assignment topics) and one final paper (about 15 pages). Your diary should contain thoughts and responses on each week's reading. I will ask you to submit it three times in the semester, just to be sure you are keeping up, and I may use it to help me assess your preparation if you are not among the more aggressive participants in class-time discussion. Exercises are described briefly below and will be discussed in class. The topic for the final paper is open, although it must be historical. I encourage you to develop one of your short papers further for the final paper. I will distribute guidelines later. Toward the end of the semester, you will be required to submit a precis for this paper together with an annotated bibliography.

The grading breakdown is as follows:

|                            |     |
|----------------------------|-----|
| Reading and participation: | 35% |
| Short papers:              | 35% |
| Final paper:               | 30% |

### **Where are the books?**

Xeroxes of articles and book chapters, as well as some of the books, are available from Lauinger reserves. I want you to bring either thorough notes or marked copies of the reading to class. In the few cases where we are reading all or most of a book that is only available on the reserve shelf, this means you may wish to xerox the entire reading at the library well in advance of the assignment (I am telling you this because I know how much Georgetown students loathe reading things in the library).

I have ordered copies of the books that we are reading cover to cover at Bridge Street Books (near the M Street bridge in Georgetown). I did this to encourage you to patronize a genuine bookstore managed by people who care about the books they stock. Linger and browse: they have an excellent, carefully chosen selection. Naturally, you are

also free to read the library copies or buy your books from another source.

Bridge Street Books  
2814 Pennsylvania Ave. NW  
Phone: (202) 965-5200

The following books have been ordered at Bridge Street Books.

Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Nino Famines and the Making of the Third World*

Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*

Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present*

Jeffrey M. Pilcher, *Que Vivan Los Tamales: Food and the Making of Mexican Identity*

Hasia R. Diner, *Hungering for America: Italian, Irish, and Jewish Foodways in the Age of Migration*

Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*

### **Food-related Activities**

A number of people have asked about restaurant outings or cooking demonstrations. I am open to suggestions if we can work it out logistically. You are encouraged to bring in samples of food related to your paper presentations.

## WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS

### SECTION I: PRODUCTION

#### **Week One (September 12<sup>st</sup>): Hunters, Foragers, and Farmers** **\*labor day: discussion on line (go to Blackboard site)**

- Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel*, 13-32, 85-175
- Marshall Sahlins, "The Original Affluent Society"

#### **Week Two (September 19<sup>th</sup>): Rice as Civilization**

- Francesca Bray, *The Rice Economies*, 1-61, 113-139, 199-227
- Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, *Rice as Self*, 3-98

#### **Week Three (September 26<sup>th</sup>): Understanding Famines**

- Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts*
- Brett Walker, "Commercial Growth and Environmental Change in Early Modern Japan: Hachinohe's Wild Boar Famine of 1749"

#### **Week Four (October 3<sup>rd</sup>): Wheat and the Politics of Feeding the World**

- John Perkins, *Geopolitics and the Green Revolution* (Lauinger reserves)
- Shirley Lindenbaum, "Loaves and Fishes in Bangladesh"

**Assignment One (due October 3<sup>rd</sup>):** Oral histories. How many degrees of separation are there between you and a primary producer? What do or did they produce and how? Find someone and ask them about how they grew, caught, slaughtered, gathered or otherwise obtained and processed a food source. Ask about changes in this process. Ask about recipes too. Bring something in if you can.

**Week Five (October 10<sup>th</sup>): Sugar, Colonialism, and Changing European Consumption Habits**

**\*\*Columbus Day: Discussion On Line**

- Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*

**Submit reading diary for weeks 1-4 to my office in the History Department before Friday, October 14<sup>th</sup>**

**SECTION II: TRADE**

**Week Six (October 17<sup>th</sup>): Spices and the Rise of Global Trade**

- Andrew Dalby, *Dangerous Tastes: The Story of Spices*
- Nicolás Monardes, *Joyfull Newes out of the Newe Founde Worlde*, vol.1 3-11, 34-37, 47-48; vol.2, 3-7, 31-32

**Week Seven (October 24<sup>th</sup>) : Preserving Proteins and the Industrialization of Food**

- William Shurtleff and Akiko Aoyagi, *The Book of Miso*, ix-xii, 3-22, 43-45, 487-530
- Katarzyna Cweirtka
- Mark Kurlansky, *Cod*, 15-77
- Jack Goody, "Industrial Food: Towards the Development of a World Cuisine," in *Cooking, Cuisine, and Class*, 154-172; also in Carole Counihan and Penny van Esterik, eds., *Food and Culture: A Reader*
- William Cronon, "Annihilating Space: Meat," in *Nature's Metropolis*, 207-259.

### **SECTION III: CONSUMPTION**

#### **Week Eight (October 31<sup>st</sup>): Urban Markets and Haute Cuisine**

- Naomichi Ishige, *The History and Culture of Japanese Food*, 105-139
- Michael Freeman, "Sung," in K.C. Chang, ed., *Food in Chinese Culture*
- Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present*, 1-165
- George Perec, "Attempt at an Inventory of the Liquid and the Solid Foodstuffs Ingurgitated by Me in the Course of the Year Nineteen Hundred and Seventy-Four"

**Assignment Two (due October 31<sup>st</sup>):** Where did it come from? Research and write a short history of the origins of some food product or dish. Bring the product in for us.

#### **Week Nine (November 7<sup>th</sup>): Cuisine, Table Manners and Class**

- Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, 1-13, 169-200, 382-3
- Murai, "Development of Chanoyu"
- Louise Cort, "Japanese Ceramics and Cuisine"
- Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *The Physiology of Taste*, 3-4, 52-57, 68-72, 106-113, 131-140
- Frederick W. Mote, "Yuan and Ming" in *Food in Chinese Culture*
- Anon., Three Customs and Ten Sins: A Fragment on Fashions in Cuisine, in Victor Mair, ed., *Columbia Anthology of Traditional Chinese Literature*, 649-658

### **Week Ten (November 14<sup>th</sup>): Modernization of the Kitchen and the Gendering of Food Preparation**

- Ruth Cowan Schwarz, *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave*, 40-73
- Laura Shapiro, "Do Women Like to Cook?"
- Jordan Sand, "The Housewife's Laboratory"
- Ann Allison, "Japanese Mothers and Obentos: the Lunchbox as Ideological State Apparatus" in *Food and Culture* (book on reserve)
- NHK television, "Project X: the Dining Kitchen" (video in class)

**Assignment Three (due November 14<sup>th</sup>):** What did they eat? Investigate the contents of someone's meals in the past.

### **Week Eleven (November 21<sup>st</sup>): Food and Health**

- Francis Zimmerman, *The Jungle and the Aroma of Meats*, 1-9, 159-223 \*\*before reading, first look up "Ayurveda" in a reference source.
- James Whorton, *Crusaders for Fitness*, 201-238 ("Muscular Vegetarianism")
- John Money, *The Destroying Angel*, 17-27 ("The Diet that Cured Sex")
- E.N. Anderson, "Traditional Medical Values of Food," in *Food and Culture* (book on reserve)
- Mark R. Finlay, "Early Marketing of the Theory of Nutrition: The Science and Culture of Liebig's Extract of Meat," in Kamminga and Cunningham eds., *The Science and Culture of Nutrition, 1840-1940*, 48-74
- Milles, "Working Capacity and Caloric Consumption," in *The Science and Culture of Nutrition*
- David Arnold, "The Discovery of Malnutrition and Diet in Colonial India"

**Submit reading diary for weeks 5-10 by class, November 21<sup>st</sup>**

### **Week Twelve (November 28<sup>th</sup>): Food in the Formation of National Identities**

- Jeffrey Pilcher, *Que Vivan los Tamales*
- Arjun Appadurai, "How to Make a National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India"
- Mark Swislocki, dissertation chapter on Shanghai restaurants
- Majima Ayu

**Assignment Four (due November 28<sup>th</sup>):** How were foodstuffs, food preparations, or consumption practices classified and systematized? Analyze a single cookbook or text about dietary principles. Provide historical context.

**Week Thirteen (December 5<sup>th</sup>): Food in the Formation of Immigrant Identities**

- Hasia Diner, *Hungering for America: Italian, Irish, and Jewish Foodways in the Age of Migration*

**Deadline** for submission of final paper precis and annotated bibliography

**Week Fourteen (December 9<sup>th</sup>): Fast Food, Slow Food, and Globalization**

- Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*
- Jordan Sand, "Good Science, Bad Science, and Taste Cultures: A Short History of MSG"
- Mira Wilkins, "When and Why Brand Names in Food and Drink?" in *Adding Value*.
- Theodore Bestor, "How Sushi Went Global"  
[http://www.foreignpolicy.com/issue\\_novdec\\_2000/essay-bestor.html](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/issue_novdec_2000/essay-bestor.html)
- Bak, "McDonalds in Seoul" in James Watson, ed., *Golden Arches East: McDonalds in East Asia*
- Rachel Laudan, "A Plea for Culinary Modernism: Why We Should Love New, Fast, Processed Food"
- <http://www.slowfood.com/>

**Friday, December 12<sup>th</sup>: Final paper and reading diary for weeks 11-14 due**