

CULTURAL POLITICS OF FOOD AND EATING (4CP3)

Fall Term 2019

Instructor: Kee Howe Yong
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Lecture: Thurs. 2:30 a.m. – 5:20 p.m.
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Office: CNH 535
Office Hours: Wed. 1:00 – 2:00 p.m. or
by appointment

Course Description and Objectives

The study of food parallels the birth of many disciplines in the social sciences and humanities. Food is not just about eating, it is a medium that illuminates a wide range of practices – of marriages, exchange theory, religion, conquest, and so on. For example, the impact of colonialism and migration - often forced-migration - has brought about exchange of food: the import of staple products and other food stuffs from the colonized to the colonizing countries and vice versa. Rather than focusing on the topic of food as a general subject, we will concentrate on the relationship of food onto a complex field of relationships, expectations, and choices that are contested, negotiated, and often unequal. In our study of the transformations in food production and consumption, we will examine the passage of “new world” foods into Europe and Asia, the rise of commercial agriculture, the advent of fast food culture, and alternative food movements.

Course Policy

All readings must be completed before the week in which the given topic(s) is being discussed. Class attendance and active participation is part of the grade. Students who are absent more than two times will have a point taken off their final grade. Latecomers may, at the discretion of the instructor, incur an official absence. Students must accept the responsibility to respect the ethical standards in meeting their academic assignments and are encouraged to be active co-producers of knowledge. Students will hand in four one-page summary, a midterm and final essay. Essay questions will be distributed in advance.

Weekly discussions

Students should be prepared to participate in class discussion every class period. In addition, each student will be responsible for presenting on selected chapters from the assigned ethnography, book chapters, or articles and leading subsequent class discussion during the semester. Presentations must outline the main arguments in the text, provide some supporting examples for these arguments from the text, and evaluate those arguments in terms of supporting or opposed scholarship.

Course Evaluation – Overview

Attendance, participation, discussions	20%
Four one-page summary	10%
Midterm essay	30%
Final essay	40%

Four one-page summary, Midterm, and Final essays

Students are also expected to hand four one-page summary, a mid-term and final essay. The one-page summary is a brief description of an article/chapter. Essay questions for the midterm and final essays (and their respective due dates) will be distributed in advance. Written essays must be handed in on the assigned due date. Late essays will only be accepted in extenuating circumstances.

Instructor responsibilities

To present class material in clearly understandable language, to assist students in thinking critically about concepts and ideas, to respect student opinion and value each student's contributions equally, and to give feedback on student progress early and often; to be accessible during office hours, and to return all course materials, graded, in a timely fashion.

Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

Week 1 - Sept. 5: Introduction to the course

Historical-anthropological study of food.

In this section we will concentrate on one of the first cash crops in modern history, sugar. How did sugar transform not only the British societies and Europe, but also the world?

Week 2 - Sept. 12:

Text: Mintz, Sidney. 1985. Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History. New York: Elisabeth Sifton Books (book placed on reserved at Mills Library).

- Sweetness and Power, chapter 1 & 2

Week 3 - Sept. 19:

- Sweetness and Power, chapter 3 & 4

Week 4 - Sept. 26: Social History of Eating.

Do all societies feel the same way about food: what it means to eat; how eating is being human; and what is eating properly? This section touches on food history, and by extension, about social history.

Text: Mintz, Sidney. 1996. Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom: Excursions into Eating, Culture, and the Past. Boston: Beacon Press (book placed on reserved at Mills Library)

- Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom, chapter 2 & 3

Week 5 - Oct. 3: Economics and Politics of Food.

Food is not just about eating; it is also about economics and politics.

Text: Roberts, Ian. 2010. The Energy Glut: The Politics of Fatness in an Overheating World. London: Zed Books (book placed on reserved at Mills Library).

- Chapter Two and Four

Week 6 - Oct. 11:

Text: James Watson and Melissa Caldwell (eds.). 2005. The Cultural Politics of Food and Eating: A Reader. Ma: Blackwell Publishing (book placed on reserved at Mills Library).

- Chapter 5: "China's Big Mac Attack" by James L. Watson. The Cultural Politics of Food and Eating: A Reader. MA: Blackwell Publishing, pp 70-79.
- Chapter 8: The Rise of Yuppie Coffees and the Reimagination of Class in the United States by William Roseberry. The Cultural Politics of Food and Eating: A Reader. MA: Blackwell Publishing, pp 122-143.

Week 7 – Oct. 17: Mid-term Recess

Week 8 - Oct. 24:

➤ **MIDTERM ESSAY due in class on October 24 (30% of total grade)**

- Chapter 12: "India Shopping: Indian Grocery Stores and Transnational Configurations of Belonging" by Purnima Mankekar. The Cultural Politics of Food and Eating: A Reader. MA: Blackwell Publishing, pp 197-214.
- Robbins, Richard. 2013. Chapter 6: "Hunger, Poverty, and Economic Development" The Global Problems and the Culture of Capitalism (6th Edition). Allyn and Bacon Publishing Inc. 2013.

Week 9 - Oct. 31: Food, Space, and Identity

What are the social and cultural meanings of eating together, or to word it slightly differently, of gathering around the table?

Text: Visser, Margaret. 1991. *The Ritual of Dinner*. New York: Grove Weidenfield (book placed on reserved at Mills Library)

- Chapter Three: The Pleasure of Your Company
- Chapter Four: Dinner is Served

Week 10 - Nov. 7: Food Violence

Was the genocide in Rwanda a politicized ethnic issue or was the political economy of coffee part of the reasons?

- Kamola, Isaac. 2007. The Global Coffee Economy and the Production of Genocide in Rwanda. *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 28(3): 571-592.
- Movie: **Babette's Feast**

Week 11 - Nov. 14: Food and Culture

- Allison, Anne. 2013. Japanese Mothers and Obentos: The Lunch-Box as Ideological State Apparatus. In *Food and Culture: A Reader (Third Edition)*, Counihan, Carole and Penny Van Esterik (eds.), 154-172. New York, Routledge.
- Heldke, Lisa. 2013. Let's Cook Thai: Recipes for Colonialism. In *Food and Culture: A Reader (Third Edition)*, Counihan, Carole and Penny Van Esterik (eds.), 394-408. New York, Routledge.

Week 12 - Nov. 21: Local Food and Current Trend

What are some of the issues surrounding local food movements.

- DeLind, Laura. 2011. Are local food and the local food movement taking us where we want to go? *Agric Hum Values* 28: 273-283 (DOI 10.1007/s10460-010-9263-0)
- Specter, Michael. 2014. Seeds of Doubt: An Activist's Controversial Crusade Against Genetically Modified Crops. *The New Yorker* (August 25): 46-57.

Week 13 - Nov. 28:

- Poppendieck, Janet. 2013. Want Amid Plenty: From Hunger to Inequality. In *Food and Culture: A Reader (Third Edition)*, Counihan, Carole and Penny Van Esterik (eds.), 563-571. New York, Routledge.

- Goodman, Michael et. al. 2010. Ethical foodscapes?: premises, promises, and possibilities. *Environment and Planning A*. 42: 1782-96.

✚ Wrapping up!

Week 14: Dec. 5:

➤ **FINAL ESSAY DUE (40% of final grade)**

Final essays are to be handed in at my office (CNH 535) between 12:00 to 16:00. No electronic versions allowed.

Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-90	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

Avenue to Learn

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Turnitin.com

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal plagiarism. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically to Turnitin.com and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to

submit their work to Turnitin.com must still submit a copy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, etc.). To see the Turnitin.com Policy, please to go [Academic Integrity](#).

University Policies

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behavior in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behavior can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at [Academic Integrity](#).

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. Academic accommodations must be arranged for each term of study. Student Accessibility Services can be contacted by phone 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or e-mail sas@mcmaster.ca. For further information, consult McMaster University's Policy for [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#).

Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances (RISO)

The University recognizes that, on occasion, the timing of a student's religious, Indigenous, or spiritual observances and that of their academic obligations may conflict. In such cases, the University will provide reasonable academic accommodation for students that is consistent with the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Please review the [RISO information for students in the Faculty of Social Sciences](#) about how to request accommodation.

Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

Privacy Protection

In accordance with regulations set out by the Freedom of Information and Privacy Protection Act, the University will not allow return of graded materials by placing them in boxes in departmental offices or classrooms so that students may retrieve their papers themselves; tests and assignments must be returned directly to the student. Similarly, grades for assignments for courses may only be posted using the last 5 digits of the student number as the identifying data. The following possibilities exist for return of graded materials:

1. Direct return of materials to students in class;
2. Return of materials to students during office hours;
3. Students attach a stamped, self-addressed envelope with assignments for return by mail;
4. Submit/grade/return papers electronically.

Arrangements for the return of assignments from the options above will be finalized during the first class.

Course Modification

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

[latest update August 9, 2019]