

# Cultural Politics of Food and Eating (4CP3)

Term 1, 2013

**Dr. Kee H Yong**

**Classroom and Hours: KTH 105, Tuesday 8:30-11:20**

**Office Hours: Wednesday 14:00-15:00 or by appointment (CNH535)**

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## **Course Descriptions 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 specifically 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 reading is required and must be completed before the week in which given topics are being discussed. Attendance at all lectures is expected. Class participation requires your bodily presence in class and intellectual engagement with the material. My evaluation of your participation will take into account how well you complete formal tasks such as turning in discussion questions, leading discussion or presenting a reading as assigned, and your willingness to participate in class discussion in general. There will be four one-page synopsis assignments that constitute part of your grade.

## **Grading:**

Attendance, participations, discussions	20%
Four one-page synopsis essays	10%
Midterm paper	30%
Final paper	40%

**Daily 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.

**Mid-term and Final Essays:** Students are also expected to hand in a mid-term and a final essay. Topics of these essays and their due dates will be distributed in advance. I do not accept assignments by e-mail. Written assignments must be handed in HARD COPY

at the BEGINNING OF CLASS, on the assigned due date. Late assignments 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.

**ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:** Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and 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 kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, Appendix 3, <http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicIntegrity.pdf>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g., the submission of work that is not one's own for which other credit has been obtained. (*Insert specific course information, e.g., style guide*)
2. Improper collaboration in group work. (*Insert specific course information*)
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

(*If applicable*) In this course we will be using a software package designed to reveal plagiarism. Students will be required to submit their work electronically and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

#### **FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES E-MAIL COMMUNICATION POLICY**

Please ask detailed questions about course material and assignments in person. I only use e-mail to answer administrative/organizational questions that can be answered in one or two sentences.

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.

Email Forwarding in MUGSI:

<http://www.mcmaster.ca/uts/support/email/emailforward.html>

\*Forwarding will take effect 24-hours after students complete the process at the above link

**Required Books:** Books assigned for this course are placed under reserve at the Mills Library. Other materials include articles accessible through Mac Library. We will discuss how to access these materials in class

**Reading Schedule:**

**Part one: Historical-anthropological study of food**

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

**Sept. 10:** Introduction to the course

**Sept. 17:** *Sweetness and Power*, chapter 1 & 2

**Sept. 24:** *Sweetness and Power*, chapter 3 & 4

**Part two: 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.

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

**Oct. 1:** *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom*, chapter 2 & 3

**Oct. 8:** *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom*, chapter 6 & 7

**Part three: Economics and Politics of Food** - Food is not just about eating; it is also about economics and politics

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

**Oct. 15:** *The Cultural Politics of Food and Eating*, chapter 5 & 8

**Oct. 22:** *The Cultural Politics of Food and Eating*, chapter 12

“Hunger, Poverty, and Economic Development” - Richard Robbins

**Part four: Food Violence, and Alternative Agrifood?**

**Oct. 29:**

“The Global Coffee Economy and the Production of Genocide in Rwanda” - Isaac Kamola

The Food Movement: Its Power and Possibilities – Common Dreams

**Nov. 5: Fair Trade and its myth**

Jaffee, Daniel. 2007. *Brewing Justice: Fair Trade Coffee, Sustainability, and Survival*. Berkeley: University of California Press (**book placed under reserved at Mills Library**).

Chapter 1 & 2

**Nov. 12:**

*Brewing Justice*, Chapter 7 & 8

**Nov. 19: Food and Global Warming**

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

Chapter 2 & 3

**Nov. 26: Local Food**

“Growing local food: scale, and local food systems governance” – Phil Mount

“Are local food and the local food movement taking us where we want to go?” -  
Laura DeLind

**Dec. 3:**

“The trouble with authenticity” - John Smithers and Alun Joseph

Wrapping Up

***Final essay due on Dec. 10, 2013***

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 15, 2013