
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF CONTINUING STUDIES
SUMMER 2014
TIME: SELECTED SATURDAYS, TIMES TBA
LOCATION: CARA AT GEORGETOWN, 2300 WISCONSIN AVE., NW

**LET THEM EAT CULTURE:
THE HISTORY AND POLITICS OF FOOD**

Overview

Oddly this class is not really about food *directly* (i.e., no recipes, no cooking, it won't help you develop a nutrition plan or prepare you for a career in food services!). Yet, it is about how human culture, politics, and well-being have been dramatically affected by our food—how we grow it, sell it, distribute it, and eat it. Homo sapiens have existed for 250,000 years, yet civilization (and written history) emerges only 10,000 years ago. Why? For 240,000 years human beings existed as hunter gatherers chasing their food. It wasn't until they made a transition to agriculture and domestication of animals for food that they created permanent settlements leading to a division of labor and written language. Throughout history what we eat and how we produce and distribute it has been central to trade, warfare, and the development of social class. Food has spurred political revolutions and has transformed our biological existence—in some cases for the worst and in others for the better. In the 21st century it is easy to take food for granted. Yet we spend 10 percent of each day, on average, consuming food and drink (...even more time earning enough to buy it). We've become disconnected from food production in this is the age of the Happy Meal, reheating rather than cooking, and celebrity chefs on multiple TV networks. We've forgotten how much time and energy it once took to produce and prepare food. We've lost our knowledge of even what is in our food. In this class you will learn about the food we consume now and what we ate in the past and the very real and important consequences of these choices.

Faculty

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Important Note on Meetings

The class will meet on seven Saturdays during the summer. Lunch will be provided at each meeting either in class or at a local Georgetown restaurant (always meeting first in the classroom). The selection of food will represent global and historical cultures discussed in class (i.e., accounting for any student's food allergies or preferences).

Course Books (required)

1) An Edible History of Humanity

Tom Standage
Publisher: Walker & Company; First Edition edition (May 12, 2009)
ISBN-10: 0802715885
ISBN-13: 978-0802715883

2) Food in History

Reay Tannahill

Publisher: Broadway; Revised edition (May 10, 1995)

ISBN-10: 0517884046

ISBN-13: 978-0517884041

3) The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals

Michael Pollan

Publisher: Penguin (August 28, 2007)

ISBN-10: 0143038583

ISBN-13: 978-0143038580

4) Selected journal readings via JSTOR (see course schedule below)

Learning Objectives

After completing this course a student should be able to:

1. Explain the importance of food in different cultures and periods of history
2. Propose a theory of the human transition from hunter-gathering to agriculture
3. Recognize the connections between food prices and political instability
4. Compare food production, sale, and distribution in different cultures
5. Evaluate food policies of a selected nation (effectiveness providing safe, affordable food)
6. Identify effects of food culture on human well-being (positive and negative)
7. Explain the cause and effect role of food in globalization (trade and war)
8. Describe the impact of the mode of food production on society
9. Recognize the impact of technology on food production and preparation
10. Describe the demographic changes that come with transitioning from an agricultural to an industrial economy
11. Recognize the impact in changes in food production that lead to migration
12. Discuss the relationship between food and class and related health and policy effects
13. Describe the origin and evolution of a contemporary meal
14. Discuss the role of food in popular culture (from fast food to celebrity chefs)
15. Describe the human response to famine in the 20th and 21st centuries
16. Critique a current aspect of American food culture
17. Conduct a final research project using both a literature review and social data analysis (quantitative or qualitative)

Grading

The final grade will be determined as follows:

- 93% to 100% = A, 90% to 92% = A-
- 87% to 89% = B+, 83% to 86% = B, 80% to 82% = B-
- 77% to 79% = C+, 73% to 76% = C, 70% to 72% = C-
- 67% to 69% = D+, 60% to 66% = D, Below 60% = F

Class assignments represent **20%** of your overall grade. One exam will be given during the semester gauging your grasp of the material. This is **25%** of your grade. The examination is take-home. The centerpiece of the course is a research project on a specific issue related to the politics and history of food of interest to you (e.g., the importance of food in an important historical event, explaining the development and persistence of a particular food culture, explaining the linkage between a food culture

and public health outcome). The specific topic will be determined by you in consultation with your professor. Throughout the semester we will be discussing and developing these projects together as a class. Results will be presented at the end of the semester in an informal presentation session. This and in-class participation will account for **15%** of your grade. The final paper detailing your research on your chosen topic should consist of a minimum of 2,400 words.¹ The paper is worth **40%** of your grade.

Plagiarism & the Georgetown Honor System

The sources for all information and ideas in your papers must be documented using the style followed by the American Psychological Association (APA). In addition, all quotations must be identified as quotations, using quotation marks and documentation of the source of the quotation. Anything less than these standards is plagiarism and will be treated as such. Plagiarized work will be reported to Georgetown's Honor Council (see below). If the council finds that the work has been plagiarized, the work will receive an F for a first offense; a second plagiarism will earn an F for the course.

All students are expected to follow Georgetown's honor code unconditionally. We assume you have read the honor code material located at www.georgetown.edu/honor, and in particular have read the following documents: Honor Council Pamphlet, "What is Plagiarism?", "Sanctioning Guidelines", and "Expedited Sanctioning Process." Papers in this course will be electronically checked for plagiarism. Submitting material in fulfillment of the requirements of this course means that you have abided by the Georgetown honor pledge:

In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and to conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.

Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability who requires accommodations or if you think you may have a disability and want to inquire about accommodations, please contact the Academic Resource Center at 202-687-8354 or arc@georgetown.edu.

Attendance, snow and other emergencies

During inclement weather or other emergencies, check <http://preparedness.georgetown.edu> or call (202) 687-7669 for information on whether the university is open.

We have only 12 meetings together. Attendance is very important. If you are going to be missing a class please let the instructor know ahead of time. You are responsible for obtaining course material missed during any absence. Consistent with the policies of the Liberal Studies program, having two absences or more may negatively affect your grade.

¹ The paper should use a 12-point Times New Roman font and be double spaced with standard margins (1" top and bottom and 1.25" left and right). With these parameters a 2,400 word paper will be approximately 8 pages in length

Course Schedule

Class and topics

May 24:

- The First Great Transition: Hunter-gatherers adopt agriculture... and civilization
- Food and Class in the Ancient World: Egypt, Rome, and Greece
- The Birth of the Great Food Families

Neyla (Middle Eastern)

June 7:

- Eastern Food Culture
- Plague: Fewer People, Bigger People
- Trade, Globalization, and Food Fusion in the Age of Exploration
- The origin and evolution of ancient and classical food culture that persists today

Heritage India (Indian)

Primary readings and multi-media

Tannahill Chs. 1-6

In the Beginning; Cooking in 10,000 BC; Changing the Face of the Earth; The First Civilization; Ancient Greece; Imperial Rome

Standage Chs. 1-4

The Invention of Farming; The Roots of Modernity; Food, Wealth and Power; Follow the Food

JSTOR

"The Anthropology of Food and Eating" by Sidney W. Mintz, Christine M. Du Bois *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 31, (2002), pp. 99-119

"Grasses in Ancient Egypt" by Loutfy Boulos, Ahmed Gamal-El-Din Fahmy *Kew Bulletin*, Vol. 62, No. 3 (2007), pp. 507-511

Multi-media:

Incredible Human Journey (BBC); Hidden History of Rome

Tannahill Chs. 7-13

The Silent Centuries; India; Central Asia; China; Supplying the Towns; The Late Medieval Table

Standage Chs. 5-6

Splinters of Paradise; Seeds of Empire

JSTOR

"Baking for the Common Good: A Reassessment of the Assize of Bread in Medieval England" by James Davis *The Economic History Review*, New Series, Vol. 57, No. 3 (Aug., 2004), pp. 465-502

"The Problem of Bread and the French Revolution at Bordeaux" by Richard Munthe Brace *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 51, No. 4 (Jul., 1946), pp. 649-667

Multi-media:

The Supersizers Eat (BBC), Bizarre Foods

June 14: Offsite at Mount Vernon, VA

(Note: Entrance Fee of \$15)

- Origins of Thanksgiving
- The American Plantation: Slavery and Food Production
- The "Cincinnatus Myth": Colonialism, Taxes, Founders, and Farming
- The Whiskey Rebellion
- Bread and the French Revolution
- Take Home Exam

The Mount Vernon Inn Restaurant

Tannahill Chs. 14-16

New World; The Americas; Food for the Traveller

Standage Chs. 7-8

New World, New Foods; The Steam Engine and the Potato

JSTOR

"Slavery and American Agricultural History" by Gavin Wright *Agricultural History*, Vol. 77, No. 4 (Autumn, 2003), pp. 527-552

Multi-media:

Slavery and the Making of America

June 28

- 19th Century Food at the Cutting Edge: Your breakfast cereal used to be health food, your soda was medicine
- Famine and Migration
- The Pre-Modern Kitchen
- Leaving Agriculture: The demographic shift

Filomena Ristorante (Italian)

Tannahill Chs. 17-20

A Gastronomic Grand Tour I & II; The Industrial Revolution; The Food-supply Revolution

Standage Chs. 9-10

The Fuel of War; Food Fight

JSTOR

"Food in Films: A Star Is Born" by Steve Zimmerman *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Spring 2009), pp. 25-34

Multi-media:

Babette's Feast; Filthy Cities New York

July 14:

- Fast Food Conquers Quickly and Transforms All Food
- Industry, Technology, Capitalism: Food Modernity from Cooking Local to Reheating Global Food (i.e., The revolution will be microwaved... and it will be in nugget form)
- Vegetarians, Vegans, and Animal Rights
- Food and Life Expectancy

Mai Thai (Thai)

Tannahill Chs. 21-Epilogue

The Scientific Revolution; Confused New World; Epilogue

Standage Chs. 11-12

Feeding the World; Paradoxes of Plenty

Pollan Chs. 1-7

The Plant; The Farm; The Elevator; The Feedlot; The Processing Plant; The Consumer; The Meal

JSTOR

"Making Famine History" Cormac Ó Gráda *Journal of Economic Literature*, Vol. 45, No. 1 (Mar., 2007), pp. 5-38

Multi-media:

Food, Inc.; Super Size Me; The Corporation; The Matrix; Food chain slaves

July 26:

- The Geo-politics of Famine in the Modern World
- Luxury Food and the Celebrity Chef
- The Politics and Policy of Poverty and Hunger in the “Developed” World
- Foodies Fight Back: The Modern Food Movement
- The Multimodal Transport: A Global Grocery

Bodega (Spanish)... DC Cupcakes?

Pollan Chs. 8-20

All Flesh is Grass; Big Organic; Grass; The Animals; Slaughter; The Market; The Meal; The Forager; The Omnivore’s Dilemma; The Ethics of Eating Animals; Hunting; Gathering; The Perfect Meal

JSTOR

“Trash Eaters” by Scarlett Lindeman

Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Spring 2012), pp. 75-82

“Food Porn” by Anne E. McBride

Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Winter 2010), pp. 38-46

Multi-media:

Forks Over Knives; Jamie Oliver 's Food Revolution; Food Network selections; DC Cupcakes

Aug. 2:

- Course Conclusions
- Presentations

Lunch (surprise)

Reports due Aug. 13

(electronic submissions suggested)