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GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF CONTINUING STUDIES  
SUMMER 2017  
THURSDAYS, 5:15 PM TO 8:15 PM

**BLHV-201-40: LET THEM EAT CULTURE:  
THE HISTORY AND POLITICS OF FOOD**

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**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 21<sup>st</sup> 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.



**Note:** The class will involve discussions around food—literally sometimes eating in class and others where we will eat off campus at nearby restaurants (accounting for any student's food allergies or dietary needs).

## **Faculty**

Mark M. Gray, Ph.D.

Research Associate Professor

Georgetown University and the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA)

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## **Course Books** (required)

### **1) *An Edible History of Humanity***

Tom Standage

Publisher: Walker & Company; First Edition edition (May 12, 2009)

ISBN-10: 0802715885

### **2) *Food in History***

Reay Tannahill

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

ISBN-10: 0517884046

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

Michael Pollan

Publisher: Penguin (August 28, 2007)

ISBN-10: 0143038583

### **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 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> 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 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.<sup>1</sup> The paper is worth **40%** of your grade.

## **Disabilities**

If you are a student with a documented 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](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu).

## **Extreme weather, Emergencies, and Instructional Continuity**

During inclement weather or other emergencies on a day when we are scheduled to meet face-to-face, check the university's Web site or call (202) 687-7669 for information on whether the university is open. If the university is open, this class will meet. If the university is closed, this class will meet through distance means such as online videoconferencing; check your e-mail for a message from me on how we will proceed in that situation. Due dates for written assignments submitted through Blackboard will not be changed due to campus closings.

The university recently has acquired the capability to send text messages and recorded messages about emergencies to cell phones and other mobile devices. Sign up on MyAccess.

## **Georgetown Honor System**

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](http://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 all be submitted to turnitin.com for checking. 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.*

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<sup>1</sup> 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

## Plagiarism

The sources for all information and ideas in your assignments must be documented, following the style rules of the American Psychological Association. In addition, all quotations must be identified as quotations, using quotation marks and indicating the source of the quotation, as mandated by APA style. Anything less than these standards is plagiarism. A summary of APA style is available at: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

In accord with university policy, all incidents of suspected plagiarism or other Honor Code violations will be reported to the Honor Council without fail. If the Honor Council finds that a student has plagiarized or has violated the Honor Code in any other way, the student will receive a grade of F for the course.

## Policy Accommodating Students' Religious Observances

Georgetown University promotes respect for all religions. Any student who is unable to attend classes or to participate in any examination, presentation, or assignment on a given day because of the observance of a major religious holiday or related travel shall be excused and provided with the opportunity to make up, without unreasonable burden, any work that has been missed for this reason and shall not in any other way be penalized for the absence or rescheduled work. Students will remain responsible for all assigned work. Students should notify professors in writing at the beginning of the semester of religious observances that conflict with their classes.

## Course Schedule

<u>Class and topics</u>	<u>Primary readings and multi-media</u>
<b>May 25:</b> -Evolutionary food -The First Great Transition: Hunter-gatherers adopt agriculture... and civilization	<b>Tannahill Chs. 1-6</b> In the Beginning; Cooking in 10,000 BC; Changing the Face of the Earth; The First Civilization; Ancient Greece; Imperial Rome <b>JSTOR</b> "The Anthropology of Food and Eating" by Sidney W. Mintz, Christine M. Du Bois <i>Annual Review of Anthropology</i> , Vol. 31, (2002), pp. 99-119 <b>Multi-media:</b> <i>Origins of Us: Guts (BBC)</i>
<b>June 1:</b> -Food and Class in the Ancient World: Egypt, Rome, and Greece -The Birth of the Great Food Families	<b>Standage Chs. 1-4</b> The Invention of Farming; The Roots of Modernity; Food, Wealth and Power; Follow the Food <b>JSTOR</b> "Grasses in Ancient Egypt" by Loutfy Boulos, Ahmed Gamal-El-Din Fahmy <i>Kew Bulletin</i> , Vol. 62, No. 3 (2007), pp. 507-511 <b>Multi-media:</b> <i>Hidden History of Rome</i> <b>Assignment: Deconstructing A Meal</b>

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**June 8:**

- Eastern Food Cultures
- Plague: Fewer People, Bigger People

**Tannahill Chs. 7-13**

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

**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

**Multi-media:** *The Supersizers Eat* (BBC)

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**June 15:**

- Trade, Globalization, and Food Fusion in the Age of Exploration
- The origin and evolution of ancient and classical food culture that persists today

**Standage Chs. 5-6**

Splinters of Paradise; Seeds of Empire

**JSTOR**

“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:** *Bizarre Foods*

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**June 24, *Saturday*: Mount Vernon, VA**

- Origins of Thanksgiving and other early food “holidays”
- The American Plantation: Slavery and Food Production
- The “Cincinnatus Myth”: Colonialism, Taxes, Founders, and Farming
- The Whiskey Rebellion
- Bread and the French Revolution

**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*

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**June 29:****Midterm Exam**

No readings or multimedia outside of class

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**July 6:**

- 19<sup>th</sup> Century Food at the Cutting Edge: Your breakfast cereal used to be health food, your soda was medicine
- Famine and Migration

**Tannahill Chs. 17-20**

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

**JSTOR**

“Health and Diet in 19th-Century America: A Food Historian’s Point of View” by Alice Ross *Historical Archaeology*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (1993), pp. 42-56

**Multi-media:** *Babette’s Feast*

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<p><b>July 13:</b>          -The Pre-Modern Kitchen          -Leaving Agriculture: The demographic shift</p>	<p><b>Tannahill Chs. 21-Epilogue</b>          The Scientific Revolution; Confused New World; Epilogue  <b>Standage Chs. 9-10</b>          The Fuel of War; Food Fight  <b>JSTOR</b>          "Food in Films: A Star Is Born" by Steve Zimmerman <i>Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture</i>, Vol. 9, No. 2 (Spring 2009), pp. 25-34  <b>Multi-media:</b> <i>Filthy Cities New York</i>  <b>Assignment: project proposal and outline</b></p>
<p><b>July 20:</b>          -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)</p>	<p><b>Pollan Chs. 1-7</b>          The Plant; The Farm; The Elevator; The Feedlot; The Processing Plant; The Consumer; The Meal  <b>JSTOR</b>          "Making Famine History" Cormac Ó Gráda <i>Journal of Economic Literature</i>, Vol. 45, No. 1 (Mar., 2007), pp. 5-38  <b>Multi-media:</b> <i>Food, Inc.; Super Size Me; The Corporation</i></p>
<p><b>July 27:</b>          -Ethical Food Movements: Vegetarians, Vegans, and Animal Rights          -Health Matters: Food and Life Expectancy          -Foodies Fight Back: The Modern Food Movement</p>	<p><b>Standage Chs. 11-12</b>          Feeding the World; Paradoxes of Plenty          "Trash Eaters" by Scarlett Lindeman <i>Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture</i>, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Spring 2012), pp. 75-82  <b>Multi-media:</b> <i>The Meatrix; Food chain slaves; Forks Over Knives; Jamie Oliver 's Food Revolution;</i></p>
<p><b>August 3:</b>          -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          -The Multimodal Transport: A Global Grocery</p>	<p><b>Pollan Chs. 8-20</b>          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  <b>JSTOR</b>          "Food Porn" by Anne E. McBride <i>Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture</i>, Vol. 10, No. 1 (Winter 2010), pp. 38-46  <b>Multi-media:</b> <i>Food Network selections; DC Cupcakes</i>  <b>Assignment: Presentation</b></p>
<p><b>August 10:</b>          -The future of food          -Automation and machines growing food          -Space: Off Earth food?</p>	<p><b>Readings supplied by the instructor</b>  <b>Multimedia:</b> <i>Humans Need Not Apply; Space films excerpts</i>  <b>Assignment: Presentation</b></p>

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**August 17:**  
-Course Conclusions  
-Presentations

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**Reports due Aug. 24**  
(electronic submission)