

## Social Systems and Issues: FOOD & CULTURE

Honors Breadth Social Sciences, HNR 1340 (freshman), 3 Credit Hours

Dr. Sarah Gordon

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Honors Program

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**Course Description:** This interdisciplinary course explores the complex roles of food and consumption in western and non-western cultures from pre-history to the present day, using socio-historical, developmental, and comparative approaches. Food and foodways are universal aspects of the human experience, across time and geographical boundaries. Class investigates the relation of food to changing and static cultural values, beliefs, attitudes, rituals, and practices. We eat and consider how foods, such as chocolate, sugar, potatoes, and insects have had an impact on different societies and cultures. We discuss current world events and issues related to food and hunger, health and disease. Past enrollment 20-50.

### Texts:

*Book:* Tannahill, *Food in History*.

*E-mail:* Weekly News Alerts on Food Topics. Students must sign up at:

CNN <http://www.cnn.com/youralerts/>, and BBC <http://news.bbc.co.uk/>

*Other required readings, short excerpts from books, and journal articles are listed below and available on Library Electronic Reserve.*

### Syllabus

Date	Topic
10 Jan	Introduction to the Course , Discussion of food issues today  Book Intro. xv-38
12 Jan	What is culture?  Excerpt, Kuper <i>The Anthropologist's Cookbook</i>
17 Jan	Prehistory, "Raw vs. Cooked"  Excerpt Claude Lévi-Strauss, <i>The Raw and the Cooked: Mythologiques</i>
19 Jan	Meat, Beef, and the Expansion of the American West  Article Willard, "The American Story of Meat: Discursive Practices on Cultural Eating Practice," <i>Journal of Popular Culture</i>
24 Jan	Hunting, debates and critical discussion of readings  Article Cartmill "Hunting and Humanity in Western Thought," <i>Social Research</i> . Book 118-122, 45-86
26 Jan	The Salt of the Earth  Book 177-80, 174-181, Excerpt Kurlansky <i>Salt: A World History</i>

31 Jan	Chocolate and (Post) colonialism  Excerpt, Coe <i>True History of Chocolate</i>
2 Feb	Hunger and Social Issues, group discussion on readings, video on hunger  Two recent newspaper articles on hunger, copies distributed in class
6 Feb	Sacred Foods and Taboos, Cannibalism, Documentary Film clips: <i>Keep the River on Your Right: A Modern Cannibal Tale 1999</i>  Article, Petersen "Great Apes as Food," <i>Gastronomica</i>
9 Feb	Entomophagy: Insects, Survival and Spectacle. <b>Bug eating in class!</b>  Book 105-115, 211-214
16 Feb	Corn, Agricultural developments and problems  Excerpt Kneen, <i>Farmageddon: Food and the Culture of Biotechnology</i> , Book 124-140, 202-208, 281-303
21 Feb	<b>Food Industry Guest Speaker:</b> Rep. from Aggie Ice Cream / USU Dairies
23 Feb	Potatoes and famine, group problem solving exercise and discussion  Jonathan Swift, "A Modest Proposal," Excerpt Zuckerman <i>The Potato: The Humble Spud That Saved the World</i> , Book 214-218, 347-371
28 Feb	MIDTERM EXAM
2 Mar	"I'm Loving It" Food and advertising, marketing discussion
6 Mar	Food and Television, FoodTV clips and discussion  Article Adema, "Vicarious Consumption: Food, Television, and the Ambiguity of Modernity," <i>Journal of American Culture</i>
9 Mar	<b>Library Research Instruction</b> on Social Sciences and Food Resources
13-16 Mar	<b>Spring Break</b>
21 Mar	<b>Documentary Film: <i>Supersize Me 2004</i></b>  Excerpt, Schlosser <i>Fast Food Nation: Dark Side of the American Meal</i>
23 Mar	<b>Documentary Film: <i>Supersize Me Continued</i></b> , Discussion of film and Fast Food Nation  Article Boym "My McDonald's," <i>Gastronomica</i> , Book 141-146, 252-79
28 Feb	France Today: <i>la gastronomie vs. le fast food</i>  Book 218-223, 230-251
30 Mar	Breaking Bread  Book 51-3
4 April	Fish: exploration, trade, slavery, technology, tradition

	Book 147-151, 332-346, 224-228 Excerpt, Kurlansky <i>Cod: A Biography of the Fish that Changed the World</i>
6 April	Table Manners, Artifacts and Rituals Excerpt Visser <i>The Rituals of Dinner</i> . Article Banerji, "The Bengali Bonti," <i>Gastronomica</i>
11 April	<b>Library Special Collections: Rare Cookbooks Collection Visit</b>
13 April	Cultural Documents: Cookbooks, Recipes, Cooking Shows, Celebrity Chefs  Book 246-247
18 April	Sugar & Spice and Everything Nice  Excerpts, Turner <i>Spice: The History of a Temptation</i>
20 April	Food as Medicine and Menace: food-borne illness, disease, social issues  CDC website info, Excerpt Diamond, <i>Guns, Germs, and Steel</i>
25 April	<b>FINAL PAPER DUE.</b> In-class presentations and discussion of paper topics.
27 April	Conclusions. In-class discussion of paper topics. Review for Final Exam  Article Miner "Body Ritual Among the Nacirema," <i>American Anthropologist</i> 1956
2 May	<b>FINAL EXAM</b>

**Grading policies:**

10% Participation in in-class discussion, group work/field trip tasks, preparation

25% Paper and oral presentation on a food

30% Midterm Exam

35% Final Exam

Exams: Exams are short answers and choice of essays covering lectures, readings. Review sessions are offered by our Honors UTF fellow (TA) before each exam.

*Paper:* Required 1 research essay, length 7-8 full pages, plus bibliography, with minimum 6 scholarly sources on one specific food of your choice that is not listed on syllabus. Students should choose one perspective and theoretical framework based on the methods of sociology, political science, history, or anthropology that we have used in class. Meeting with professor to discuss topic required. Our visits to the library will highlight interdisciplinary resources helpful in the study of food in culture. Project will culminate in a short presentation of research topic in class and question-and-answer session with classmates. Further details on expectations for the paper, useful on-line resources, and an introduction to various Social Sciences research methods will be given in class.

*Participation:* This course encourages active learning. Voluntary active verbal participation is expected in class discussions and group discussions/group work.

*Social:* Evening social with ethnic food, music, and cultural activities (optional).

*Food in Class:* Foods discussed are served on occasion (chocolate, insects, etc.) Please let the instructor know if you have food allergies or dietary restrictions.

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