

Sociology 169F: Cultural Perspectives of Food Spring 2014

INSTRUCTOR

Jill Bakehorn, PhD
E-mail: jabakehorn@berkeley.edu
Office: 492 Barrows Hall
Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 11:30-1:30
Sign-up: <http://wejoinin.com/sheets/fbpwu>

CLASS MEETING

Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 10-11am
10 Evans

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will provide a broad overview of food as culture. Food has more meaning than mere sustenance and we will explore how food can also nourish us culturally and socially. Food itself is a social construction; how and what is defined as suitable to eat is socially determined and subject to changes. What is acceptable as food in one culture can be taboo in another. Food reflects a culture's values and is a way one culture asserts its superiority over another. How food is prepared and consumed is imbued with cultural, gender, religious, ethnic, and class meanings among many others.

We will begin the course by examining some foundational writings on the cultural implications and explanations of food:

- How and why we consume what we do
- How food is used to create distinctions
- The implications of a global food world

We will use these foundations to explore how food is imbued with gender, race, class, and even moral meanings and can form the basis for the constitution of identities and social relationships. Food is also connected to political ideologies that inform social movements including the slow food movement, organic food, and even punk culture.

What role does food preparation and cooking play in turning food from raw materials into culture? We eat food to nourish our bodies, which can be a source of a great deal of pleasure, but it can also be a source of anxiety. How does our body image impact our relationship to food? What about disease caused, at least partly, by what we consume?

We will also examine how industrially-produced white bread in the U.S. demonstrates the complex social and political meanings and uses of food, like the construction of purity and germs; the reproduction of gender norms; the marginalization of immigrants; imperial ambitions and dominance; and the class-based meanings and ideologies of food.

Finally, food is intimately connected to place, so what happens when ethnographers encounter new food customs and cultures? How is authenticity constructed?

REQUIRED TEXTS

Counihan, Carole and Penney Van Esterick, eds. 2012. *Food and Culture: A Reader*, 3rd ed. New York: Routledge.

Pollan, Michael. 2013. *Cooked: A Natural History of Transformation*. New York: Penguin Press.

Bobrow-Stain, Aaron. 2013. *White Bread: A Social History of the Store-Bought Loaf*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Coleman, Leo, ed. 2012. *Food: Ethnographic Encounters*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

ASSIGNMENTS

Exams: You will complete three take-home exams. Exams will cover all materials in the course: lectures, readings, and any media presented in class. Each is worth 30% of your final grade. Due dates are listed under “Course Outline.”

Discussion Questions: Part of your participation grade will consist of discussion questions written by you and uploaded to bSpace prior to the designated discussion classes. You must do this two times during the semester.

GRADE BREAKDOWN

Exams: 90%

Attendance and Participation: 10%

COURSE FORMAT AND POLICIES

Readings: Readings should be completed prior to class. You must keep up with the readings to participate in class discussions and complete assignments. Bring your reading materials to every class; you will likely need to refer to them in class discussions.

Participation: This class will incorporate the use of lecture, films, music, visuals, and group discussions. I expect you to be an active participant in the course. Bring your questions and comments to class and don't be shy about bringing them up.

I like to start class with a short discussion of topical cultural issues that you have come across. If you see a movie, listen to a song, overhear a conversation, or witness an interaction that ties into issues we have been discussing, please share this with the class!

You can also participate by posting links to news stories or videos, as well as any relevant thoughts on issues related to culture in the chat room on bSpace. Be sure to contextualize any posts by connecting them to issues in the class.

If you have a question about the readings, lecture, etc., please post your question to the chat room on bSpace where both your questions and my answers will be visible to other students, rather than e-mailing me. Feel free to answer each other's questions as well.

If you miss a class, do not ask me if you missed anything. Of course you did!--but don't expect me to fill you in. I suggest sharing contact information with a classmate early on in the semester and getting the notes you missed.

Do not read, listen to music, browse the web, text, or sleep during class. If you want to do these things, don't bother coming to class.

Email: Please clearly indicate to which class you are referring in your emails to me. I endeavor to respond to emails within 24 hours, but this is not always possible; please be patient.

GRADING POLICIES

For assignments turned in via bSpace, your feedback can be found in a file there. Be sure to download this file and carefully consider the feedback. This feedback is provided to help you improve on future assignments.

Re-grades: If you would like to request a re-grade or re-evaluation of an assignment, you must first, wait 24 hours after the assignment was returned and second, write up a statement detailing why you believe you deserve a higher grade. This statement should be about the substance of your work, **not** about effort. **You must request a re-grade within 7 days of the assignment being returned.** My assessment and grade of your work will be used, even if that means you get a lower score than originally given for that work.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Academic dishonesty includes cheating and plagiarism. Cheating is collaboration with other students on response papers or on exams or using notes during exams. Plagiarism includes turning in any work that is not your own as well as improper or missing citations of others' works. As a student of the University of California, you are bound by the Code of Academic Conduct. Any cases of cheating or plagiarism will result in a referral to The Center for Student Conduct and a zero for that assignment.

Plagiarism is most likely to occur because students are unaware of how to cite their sources or because they feel desperate. If you get to this point in your writing, contact me ASAP rather than doing something you'll very likely regret.

OFFICE HOURS

If you are having any difficulties with the material or assignments for the course or if you are having any personal problems that are affecting your ability to complete assignments on time, you should take advantage of office hours early in the semester. I will be much more amenable to granting extensions when I have been made aware of problems early on rather than at the last minute. Remember that office hours are an important resource if for no other reason than getting to know your instructors could help you in the future when you may need letters of recommendation.

SPECIAL NEEDS

Disability Accommodations

Please let me know early in the semester if you qualify for any disability accommodations.

Student Learning Center

“The primary academic support service for students at Berkeley, the SLC helps students transition to Cal; navigate the academic terrain; create networks of resources; and achieve academic, personal and professional goals.” Located in The Cesar Chavez Student Center on Lower Sproul Plaza. Front desk phone: 510 642 7332

Course Outline Readings to be **completed** on day listed. Schedule subject to change.

WEEKS ONE AND TWO: FOUNDATIONAL CULTURAL THEMES

Wednesday, 1/22 **Introductions**

Friday, 1/24 **Food and Culture**

Counihan and Esterik: “Why Food? Why Culture? Why Now?” in *Food and Culture: A Reader*

Monday, 1/27 **Theories of Food Consumption**

Mead: “Why Do We OverEat?” in *Food and Culture: A Reader*

Barthes: “Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption” in *Food and Culture: A Reader*

Wednesday, 1/29 **Food as Distinction**

Bourdieu: “Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste” in *Food and Culture: A Reader*

Douglas: “The Abominations of Leviticus” in *Food and Culture: A Reader*

Friday, 1/31 **Global Foods**

Goody: “Industrial Food: Towards the Development of a World Cuisine” in *Food and Culture: A Reader*

Mintz: “Time, Sugar, and Sweetness” in *Food and Culture: A Reader*

WEEK THREE: FOOD AND IDENTITY

Monday, 2/3 **Popular Culture and Identity**

Holden: “The Overcooked and the Underdone: Masculinities in Japanese Food Programming” in *Food and Culture: A Reader*

Swenson: “Domestic Divo? Televised Treatments of Masculinity, Femininity, and Food” in *Food and Culture: A Reader*

Wednesday, 2/5 Food as Ideology

Williams-Forsen: “More than Just the “Big Piece of Chicken”: The Power of Race, Class, and Food in American Consciousness” in *Food and Culture: A Reader*

Clark: “The Raw and the Rotten: Punk Cuisine” in *Food and Culture: A Reader*

Friday, 2/7 Discussion Session

WEEKS FOUR-FIVE: COOKING: TURNING FOOD INTO CULTURE

Monday, 2/10 From Animal to “Meat”

Pollan: *Cooked: A Natural History of Transformation*: “Part I: Creatures of the Flame”
“Introduction: Why Cook?”
“I: Ayden, North Carolina”
“II: Cambridge, Massachusetts”
“III: Intermission: A Pig’s Perspective”

Wednesday, 2/12 Barbecue as Place, Community, and Authenticity

Pollan: *Cooked: A Natural History of Transformation*: “Part I: Creatures of the Flame”
“IV: Raleigh, North Carolina”
“V: Wilson, North Carolina”
“VI: Manhattan, NYC”
“VII: Berkeley, California”
“VIII: Coda: Axpe, Spain”

**Friday, 2/14 Continue Barbecue as Place, Community, Authenticity
MIDTERM I DUE**

Monday, 2/17 HOLIDAY

Wednesday, 2/19 Food Preparation as Work and Leisure

Pollan: *Cooked*: Part II: Water: A Recipe in Seven Steps
“I: Step One: Finely Dice Some Onions”
“II: Step Two: Saute Onions...”
“III: Step Three: Salt the Meat...”
“IV: Step Four: Place All the Ingredients...”

Friday, 2/21 Flavor and Time

Pollan: *Cooked*: Part II: Water: A Recipe in Seven Steps
“V: Step Five: Pour the Braising Liquid...”
“VI: Step Six: Simmer...”
“VII: Step Seven: Remove Pot From Oven...”

WEEKS SIX: GLOBALIZATION

Monday, 2/24 Authenticity and Nation

Srinivas: “As Mother Made It’: The Cosmopolitan Indian Family. ‘Authentic’ Food, and the Construction of Cultural Utopia” in *Food and Culture: A Reader*

Wilk: “‘Real Belizean Food’: Building Local Identity in the Transnational Caribbean” in *Food and Culture: A Reader*

Wednesday, 2/26 The Slow Food Movement

Leitch: “Slow Food and the Politics of ‘Virtuous Globalization’” in *Food and Culture: A Reader*

Pilcher: “Taco Bell, Maseca, and Slow Food: A Postmodern Apocalypse for Mexico’s Peasant Cuisine?” in *Food and Culture: A Reader*

Friday, 2/28 Discussion Session

WEEKS SEVEN-NINE: ETHNOGRAPHIC ENCOUNTERS

Monday, 3/3 Food and Social Relations

Meneley: “Food and Morality in Yemen” in *Food: Ethnographic Encounters*

Berman: “It All Started with the *Bhajias*” in *Food: Ethnographic Encounters*

Wednesday, 3/5 Food Security

Van Esterik: “Revisiting Lao Food: Pain and Commensality” in *Food: Ethnographic Encounters*

Friday, 3/7 The Familiar and the Exotic

Hien: “‘Do You Know How to Eat...?’ Edible Expertise in Ho Chi Minh City” in *Food and Culture: A Reader*

Monday, 3/10 Exchange, Reciprocity and Cultural Learning

Nicholas: “Keeping Out of the Kitchen: Cooking and Power in a Moroccan Household” in *Food: Ethnographic Encounters*

Wednesday, 3/12 Rituals of Food

Riley: "Learning to Exchange Words for Food in the Marquesas" in *Food: Ethnographic Encounters*

Robert: "Eating Vegetarian in Vietnam" in *Food: Ethnographic Encounters*

Friday, 3/14 Understanding Food Markets

Jordan: "In Search of the Elusive Heirloom Tomato: Farms and Farmers' Markets, Fields and Fieldwork" in *Food: Ethnographic Encounters*

Monday, 3/17 Food as Magic

Harris: "The Enchantments of Food in the Lower Amazon, Brazil"

Wednesday, 3/19 Discussion Session

Friday, 3/21 NO CLASS
****MIDTERM II DUE****

WEEK TEN: SPRING BREAK!

Monday, 3/24 - Friday, 3/28

WEEK ELEVEN: THE BODY AND CONSUMPTION

Monday, 3/31 Body Image: Women

Bordo: "Not Just "a White Girl Thing": The Changing Face of Food and Body Image Problems" in *Food and Culture: A Reader*

O'Connor: "De-medicalizing Anorexia: Opening a New Dialogue" in *Food and Culture: A Reader*

Wednesday, 4/2 Body Image: Men

Parasecoli: "Feeding Hard Bodies: Food and Masculinities in Men's Fitness Magazines" in *Food and Culture: A Reader*

Friday, 4/4 Food and Disease

Nabhan: “Rooting Out the Causes of Disease: Why Diabetes is So Common Among Desert Dwellers” in *Food and Culture: A Reader*

Albritton: “Between Obesity and Hunger: The Capitalist Food Industry” in *Food and Culture: A Reader*

WEEKS TWELVE-FOURTEEN: WHITE BREAD: A SOCIOPOLITICAL FOOD

Monday, 4/7 “Bread and Power”

Bobrow-Strain: *White Bread: A Social History of the Store-Bought Loaf*
“Preface”
“Introduction: Bread and Power”

Wednesday, 4/9 “Germs, Gender Roles, and ‘Dirty Immigrants’”

Bobrow-Strain: *White Bread: A Social History of the Store-Bought Loaf*
“Chapter 1: Untouched by Human Hands: Dreams of Purity and Contagion”

Friday, 4/11 A “Spectacle of Modern Progress”

Bobrow-Strain: *White Bread: A Social History of the Store-Bought Loaf*
“Chapter 2: The Invention of Sliced Bread: Dreams of Control and Abundance”

Monday, 4/14 Avoiding White Bread

Bobrow-Strain: *White Bread: A Social History of the Store-Bought Loaf*
“Chapter 3: The Staff of Death: Dreams of Health and Discipline”

Wednesday, 4/16 Enriching White Bread

Bobrow-Strain: *White Bread: A Social History of the Store-Bought Loaf*
“Chapter 4: Vitamin Bread Boot Camp: Dreams of Strength and Defense”

Friday, 4/18 Discussion Session

Monday, 4/21 Imperialism and Domination

Bobrow-Strain: *White Bread: A Social History of the Store-Bought Loaf*
“Chapter 5: White Bread Imperialism: Dreams of Peace and Security”

Wednesday, 4/23 White Bread and White Trash

Bobrow-Strain: *White Bread: A Social History of the Store-Bought Loaf*
“Chapter 6: How White Bread Became White Trash”

Friday, 4/25 White Bread: Conclusions

Bobrow-Strain: *White Bread: A Social History of the Store-Bought Loaf*
“Chapter 7: Conclusion: Beyond Good Bread”

WEEK FIFTEEN: FOOD AS SOCIAL MOVEMENT

Monday, 4/28 The Privileges of Counter-Cultural Movements

Guthman: “Fast Food/Organic Food: Reflexive Tastes and the Making of ‘Yuppie Chow’”
in *Food and Culture: A Reader*

Wednesday, 4/30 Community Food Movements

Levkoe: “Learning Democracy Through Food Justice Movements” in *Food and Culture: A Reader*

Friday, 5/2 Catch-Up/Review/Discussion Session

WEEK SIXTEEN: READING, REVIEW, AND RECITATION

Monday, 5/5- Friday, 5/9

FINAL EXAM DUE: TUESDAY, MAY 13 by 6:00 pm