

Sociology 169F: Cultural Perspectives of Food

Spring 2024

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:30-4:00pm on Zoom;
Thursdays 10:30am-12:00pm in person

Sign-up: <https://calendly.com/bakehorn>

CLASS MEETING Tuesdays and Thursdays 8:00-9:29am
150 Goldman School of Public Policy

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 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 change. 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. We will begin the course by examining some foundational writings on the cultural implications and explanations of food: How and why do we consume what we do? How is food used to create distinctions?

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 as well as social inequities. How do we define "good" and "bad" food? How do we assign meaning, including stereotypes, to food? How do "concerns" about food, eating, and bodies lead to the policing of certain folks and cultural practices? Can food be a vehicle for agency and liberation?

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?

What role do globalization and capitalism have on our food cultures and ways of life?

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.

Keep in mind this is a sociology course. **Sociology is the study of human social activity, organization, and interaction. Sociology is about the search for patterned behavior and social, rather than individual, explanations for this behavior.** Sociology is built upon empirical data, not opinions. Sociologists look beyond the taken-for-granted notions of our social environment to examine the many layers of social meaning in the human experience. (If this doesn't sound familiar to you, or if you are unclear about the *sociological perspective*, please refer to an introductory sociology text for a refresher.)

This course challenges many taken-for-granted assumptions about the social world. Keep in mind that your personal experiences may not match the general sociological insights discussed in the course. This does not negate the insights. Ask yourself why this might be the case. You may not agree with everything we read and discuss, but have an open mind, be ready to have your understanding deepened, and demonstrate an understanding of the sociological perspective.

Course Goals

- ❖ Examine food as a form of distinction and how this is connected to social inequities
- ❖ Analyze how food is infused with ideologies of class, gender, race, ethnicity, colonialism, and sexuality
- ❖ Explore how food can be a vehicle for belonging, identity, resistance, and liberation
- ❖ Deconstruct notions of “good” and “bad” foods, food practices, eating, and bodies; in particular examining how food is implicated in anti-Black racism
- ❖ Use the history of white bread to highlight and contextualize the themes of the course particularly the politics of food

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the semester you should be able to:

- ❖ Articulate the various cultural dimensions of food
- ❖ Explain how food is infused with ideological meaning
- ❖ Critically discuss how food is socially, culturally, and politically situated
- ❖ Use an intersectional approach
- ❖ Write succinct papers that effectively synthesize course materials and apply theory

Required Texts

Williams-Forsson, Psyche A. 2022. *Eating While Black: Food Shaming and Race in America*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

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

The books are available as a PDF on bCourses

Course Reader: Individual files are available digitally on bCourses and a bound reader is available from [Copy Central](#).

Assignments

Food Journal: You will keep a food journal throughout the semester where you reflect on food and culture in light of the themes of the course. I will assign 3 specific journal entries/themes. Worth 25% of your final grade.

Essay Exams: Midterm and final exam. You will be responsible for course readings, lectures, and any media presented in the class. These exams will focus on your ability to apply theories and to synthesize and make connections between various readings.

All work must be original (you cannot recycle work from other courses).

Weekly Memos: These assignments are designed to keep you motivated and engaged with the course and to provide opportunities for you to check your comprehension in preparation for the graded assignments. Assignments will be due on Mondays at 11:59pm (exceptions made for Monday holidays-the due date will be Tuesday).

These assignments give you a space to practice the skills you will later be graded on.

Complete 10 of the 12 assignments in order to get full credit (the lowest two scores will be dropped). **Please note that these submissions are graded for completion, not proficiency.** **In other words, we are not grading the accuracy of your submissions.**

Grade Breakdown

Food Journal (30%)
Midterm (25%)
Final Exam (30%)
Weekly Memos (15%)

Be sure to carefully consider assignment feedback; it is provided to help you improve on future assignments. For in-text feedback, **click on the link "View Feedback."**

Course Format and Policies

Readings

Complete readings prior to class to better prepare you to participate in class discussions and complete assignments. You will get a lot more out of lecture if you come prepared and I am happy to answer any questions you have.

Email

Please put the class number/name in the subject of the email. I endeavor to respond to emails within 24 hours, but this is not always possible; please be patient. Please note that **I will respond to emails during normal business hours.**

Names and Pronouns

You have the right to be referred to by the name you prefer and with the correct gender pronouns. Because the name listed in University records may not correspond to your preferred name, please inform me of your name (and pronunciation) and your pronouns so that I can ensure you are properly recognized and respected.

You can refer to me as Prof. Bakehorn, Dr. Bakehorn, or Jill. My pronouns are she/they.

GRADE SCALE

Grade Range		Grade
100%	97%	A+
96%	93%	A
92%	90%	A-
89%	87%	B+
86%	83%	B
82%	80%	B-
79%	77%	C+
76%	73%	C
72%	70%	C-
69%	67%	D+
66%	63%	D
62%	60%	D-
59%	50%	F

Grading Policies

Extensions

Extensions are provided for those with this accommodation from DSP. Please contact me prior to the due date for each assignment to discuss extensions.

Late Work

My priority for this class, and the focus of my assessment of your work, is **learning**. Due dates are a practical necessity for many reasons, but life sometimes prevents us from meeting all of our obligations on time.

I will accept late work, but you will receive a **3% penalty off of your score for each day the paper is late** (up to 7 days past due date). Please note that bCourses rounds up to the next whole number. For example, if you submit an assignment 1.3 days late, the late penalty will round up to 2 days. **You do not need to contact me to turn in a paper late.**

Assignments will not be accepted without prior approval past the 7 day late period.

TurnItIn

Assignments will be checked by TurnItIn for plagiarism. Keep in mind, this program keeps a database of previously turned in papers as well as searching the internet.

Re-Grades

To **request a re-grade** of an assignment: 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. Be sure to make specific reference to your work, don't simply say that you responded to the questions asked. Demonstrate how you did so. **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.

****Note that re-grades are likely not possible on final exams due to the tight grading timeline and university grade reporting deadlines.**

Academic Dishonesty

The University defines academic misconduct as “any action or attempted action that may result in creating an unfair academic advantage for oneself or an unfair academic advantage or disadvantage for any other member or members of the academic community” (UC Berkeley Code of Student Conduct).

Academic dishonesty includes cheating and plagiarism. Cheating is collaboration with other students on papers and 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.

Plagiarism is most likely to occur because students are unaware of how to cite 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. I am happy to help.

Use of AI

The use of generative AI software or Large Language Models (LLMs), such as ChatGPT falls under the umbrella of academic misconduct as it involves an “action or attempted action that may result in creating an unfair academic advantage” and is not a representation of your own thoughts, critical thinking, and work. Academic integrity is a critical component of being a member of the university community and our ability to evaluate your work. We are evaluating your ability to synthesize and apply sociological concepts, not how well AI does this.

You may not use AI to write, in full or in part, any of the written assignments for this course. You should also not use AI tools to plagiarize. Using AI to generate or modify content to evade plagiarism detection violates academic integrity.

Do not assume the information or analysis you receive via AI is accurate, unbiased, sufficient for the assignment, or meets the standards of the course, even if you only incorporate it partially and after substantial paraphrasing, modification and/or editing. AI-generated content may *not* provide appropriate or clear attribution to the author(s) of the original sources.

Office Hours

Please see Page 1 or [this link](#) for information about my office hours. These office hours are specifically for you. We can discuss readings, assignments, post-college plans, existential dread, how to access resources, letters of recommendation, any issues you are having, what is bringing you joy, whatever.

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, please take advantage of office hours—I am here to help!

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. You do not need to be struggling or have course-specific questions to go to office hours.

Student Support Services

Course Accessibility

This course is intended for all UC Berkeley students, including those with mental, emotional, physical, or cognitive disabilities, illnesses, injuries, impairments, or any other condition that can negatively impact equal access to education. If, at any point in the semester, you find yourself not able to fully access the space, content, and experience of this course, you are welcome (but not required) to contact me by email or during office hours to discuss your specific needs.

I also encourage you to contact the [Disabled Students' Program](#). If you have a diagnosis, DSP can help you document your needs and create an accommodation plan. By making a plan through DSP, you can ensure appropriate accommodations without disclosing your condition or diagnosis to course instructors.

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.”

Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Services

To learn more about these issues, how to support survivors, or how to file a report and receive support services, start here: [Survivor Support](#). **Please note that I am not a confidential advocate; I am a mandated reporter.** You can speak to a [Confidential Care Advocate](#) at the Path to Care Center.

Economic, Food, and Housing Support

If you are in need of economic, food, or housing support, you can find help at [the Basic Needs Center](#). You may be eligible for money to buy groceries via [Calfresh](#) or the [Food Assistance Program](#). If you are in need of food immediately, please contact the UC Berkeley [Food Pantry](#). More information on resources can be found [here](#).

Mental Health Resources

All students — regardless of background or identity — may experience a range of issues that can become barriers to learning like strained relationships, anxiety, depression, alcohol and other drug problems, difficulties with concentration, sleep, and eating, and/or lack of motivation. UC Berkeley offers many services like [Recalibrate](#) and [Student Mental Health](#) that could help.

Course Outline

Complete readings by the day listed below. Course schedule is subject to change.

Week One: Introductions

Tuesday, 1/16 **Welcome + Introductions**

Thursday, 1/18 **Food and Culture**

Johnston, Josée and Sarah Cappeliez. 2012. "You Are What You Eat: Enjoying (and Transforming) Food Culture." Pp 49-64 in *Critical Perspectives in Food Studies* edited by Mustafa Koç, Jennifer Sumner, and Anthony Winson. New York: Oxford University Press.

Plagiarism Primer

Weeks Two-Three: Foundational Cultural Themes

Tuesday, 1/23 **Theories of Food Consumption**

Mead, Margaret. 2013. "Why Do We Overeat?" Pp 19-22 in *Food and Culture: A Reader*. 3rd ed., edited by Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik. New York: Routledge.

Barthes, Roland. 2013. "Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption." Pp 23-30 in *Food and Culture: A Reader*. 3rd ed., edited by Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik. New York: Routledge.

Thursday, 1/25 **Food as Distinction**

Bourdieu, Pierre. 2013. "Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste." Pp 31-39 in *Food and Culture: A Reader*. 3rd ed., edited by Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik. New York: Routledge.

Naccarato, Peter and Kathleen LeBesco. 2012. "Defining Culinary Capital." Pp 1-15 in *Culinary Capital*. New York: Berg.

Tuesday, 1/30 **Distinguishing Tastes**

Finn, S. Margot. 2017. "Chapter 1: Incompatible Standards: The Four Ideals of the Food Revolution." Pp 18-49 in *Discriminating Taste: How Class Anxiety Created the American Food Revolution*. Newark, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Thursday, 2/1 **Food, Status Anxiety, and Class**

Finn, S. Margot. 2017. "Chapter 2: Aspirational Eating: Food and Status Anxiety in the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era." Pp 49-79 in *Discriminating Taste: How Class Anxiety Created the American Food Revolution*. Newark, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Weeks Four-Five: Food, Ideology, and Identity

Tuesday, 2/6 **Food Preparation and Reproducing Gender Ideologies**

Inness, Sherrie A. 2001. "Of Casseroles and Canned Foods: Building the Happy Housewife in the Fifties." Pp 141-163 in *Dinner Roles: American Women and Culinary Culture*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press.

Allison, Anne. 1991. "Japanese Mothers and *Obentōs*: The Lunch-Box as Ideological State Apparatus." *Anthropological Quarterly* 64(4):195-208.

Thursday, 2/8 **Resisting Gender/Colonial Ideologies in the Kitchen**

Peña, Devon G., Luz Calvo, Pancho McFarland, and Gabriel R. Valle. 2017. "Introduction: Mexican Deep Food: Bodies, the Land, Food, and Social Movements." Pp xv-xxi in *Mexican-Origin Foods, Foodways, and Social Movements: Decolonial Perspectives*, edited by Devon G. Peña, Luz Calvo, Pancho McFarland, and Gabriel R. Valle. Fayetteville, AR: The University of Arkansas Press.

Calvo, Luz and Catriona Rueda Esquibel. 2017. "Tortilleras, testimonios, y recetas: Decolonial Foodways from the México-US Borderlands." Pp 125-149 in *Mexican-Origin Foods, Foodways, and Social Movements: Decolonial Perspectives*, edited by Pancho McFarland, and Gabriel R. Valle. Fayetteville, AR: The University of Arkansas Press.

JOURNAL ENTRY 1 DUE FRIDAY, 2/9 AT 11:59PM

Tuesday, 2/13 **Food and Belonging**

Hien, Nina. 2011. "Do You Know How to Eat...?" Edible Expertise in Ho Chi Minh City." Pp 97-109 in *Food: Ethnographic Encounters*, edited by Leo Coleman. New York: Bloomsbury.

Yano, Christine R. with Wanda Adams. 2013. "Tasting America: The Politics and Pleasure of School Lunch in Hawai'i." Pp 30-52 in *Eating Asian America: A Food Studies Reader* edited by Robert Ji-Song Ku, Martin F. Manalansan IV, and Anita Mannur. New York: New York University Press.

Thursday, 2/15 **Food and Authenticity**

Johnston, Josée and Shyon Baumann. 2015. "Eating Authenticity." Pp 61-85 in *Foodies: Democracy and Distinction in the Gourmet Foodscape*. New York: Routledge.

Manalansan IV, Martin F. 2013. "Beyond Authenticity: Rerouting the Filipino Culinary Diaspora." Pp 288-300 in *Eating Asian America: A Food Studies Reader* edited by Robert Ji-Song Ku, Martin F. Manalansan IV, and Anita Mannur. New York: New York University Press.

Week Six: Moralizing Bodies

Tuesday, 2/20 **Hegemonic Masculinity and Diets**

Jensen, Warren. 2023. "The Strength to Diet: If it Fits Your Macros Dieting as Masculine Body Work." *Men and Masculinities* 26(3):398-414.

Oliver, Catherine. 2023. "Mock Meat, Masculinity, and Redemption Narratives: Vegan Men's Negotiations and Performances of Gender and Eating." *Social Movement Studies* 22(1):62-79.

Thursday, 2/22 **Body Size and Morality**

Biltekoff, Charlotte. 2013. "Chapter Five: Thinness as Health, Self-Control, and Citizenship." Pp 109-149 in *Eating Right in America: The Cultural Politics of Food & Health*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Weeks Seven-Ten: Eating While Black

Tuesday, 2/27 **Introducing *Eating While Black***

Psyche A. Williams-Forson: Introduction in *Eating While Black: Food Shaming and Race in America*

Thursday, 2/29 **Food and Anti-Black Racism**

Psyche A. Williams-Forson: Chapter 1: It's a Low-Down, Dirty Shame: Food and Anti-Black Racism in *Eating While Black*

JOURNAL ENTRY 2 DUE FRIDAY, 3/1 AT 11:59PM

Tuesday, 3/5 **Food Choice and Dislocation**

Psyche A. Williams-Forson: Chapter 2: In Her Mouth Was an Olive Leaf Pluck'd Off: Food Choice in Times of Dislocation in *Eating While Black*

Thursday, 3/7 + **Food Shaming**

Tuesday, 3/12

Psyche A. Williams-Forson: Chapter 3: What's This in My Salad? Food Shaming, the Real Unhealthy Ingredient in *Eating While Black*

Thursday, 3/14 **Surviving and Thriving + Conclusions**

Psyche A. Williams-Forson: Chapter 4: Eating in the Meantime: Expanding African American Studies in a Changing Food World in *Eating While Black*

Psyche A. Williams-Forson: Epilogue: When Racism Rests on Your Plate, Indeed, Worry about Yourself in *Eating While Black*

Tuesday, 3/19 **Catch Up/Review**

Thursday, 3/21 **Work on Midterm—NO CLASS**

TAKE-HOME MIDTERM DUE FRIDAY, 3/22 AT 11:59PM

Week Eleven: Spring Break

Tuesday, 3/26 **Spring Break**

Thursday, 3/28 **Spring Break**

Weeks Twelve-Fifteen: White Bread: A Sociopolitical Food

Tuesday, 4/2 + **Bread and Power + Gender and “Dirty Immigrants”**

Thursday, 4/4

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

Aaron Bobrow-Strain: Chapter 1: Untouched by Human Hands: Dreams of Purity and Contagion in *White Bread*

Tuesday, 4/9 **“Spectacle of Modern Progress”**

Aaron Bobrow-Strain: Chapter 2: The Invention of Sliced Bread: Dreams of Control and Abundance in *White Bread*

Thursday, 4/11 **Avoiding White Bread**

Aaron Bobrow-Strain: Chapter 3: The Staff of Death: Dreams of Health and Discipline in *White Bread*

Tuesday, 4/16 **Enriching White Bread**

Aaron Bobrow-Strain: Chapter 4: Vitamin Bread Boot Camp: Dreams of Strength and Defense in *White Bread*

Thursday, 4/18 **White Bread Imperialism**

Aaron Bobrow-Strain: Chapter 5: White Bread Imperialism: Dreams of Peace and Security in *White Bread*

JOURNAL ENTRY 3 DUE FRIDAY, 4/19 AT 11:59PM

Tuesday, 4/23

White Bread and White Trash

Aaron Bobrow-Strain: Chapter 6: How White Bread Became White Trash: Dreams of Resistance and Status in *White Bread*

Thursday, 4/25

Dreams of Good Food

Aaron Bobrow-Strain: Chapter 7: Conclusion: Beyond Good Bread in *White Bread*

Week Sixteen: Reading, Review, and Recitation

Monday, April 29-Friday, May 3

FINAL EXAM: DUE THURSDAY, 5/9 AT 10PM

UC Berkeley sits on the territory of xučyun (Huichin), the ancestral and unceded land of the Chochenyo speaking Ohlone people, the successors of the sovereign Verona Band of Alameda County. This land was and continues to be of great importance to the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe and other familial descendants of the Verona Band. We recognize that every member of the Berkeley community has benefitted, and continues to benefit, from the use and occupation of this land since the institution's founding in 1868. Consistent with our values of community, inclusion and diversity, we have a responsibility to acknowledge and make visible the university's relationship to Native peoples. As members of the Berkeley community, it is vitally important that we not only recognize the history of the land on which we stand, but also, we recognize that the Muwekma Ohlone people are alive and flourishing members of the Berkeley and broader Bay Area communities today.

**This acknowledgement was co-created with the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe and Native American Student Development*