The Social Production of Food
Spring 2018 | Tuesdays | 630 - 920pm

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Office hours: Tuesdays 5 – 6pm

Course Description

This course provides a study of food from a variety of perspectives: social, cultural, political, and economic. Using a sociological perspective, combined with an intersectional lens of class, race, gender, and sexuality, we will explore the following questions: How are social categories relevant to the production of food? What are the social and cultural narratives shaping our current understanding of farmers and agriculture? What is the relationship of these narratives to the recent upsurge of beginning farmers? How is food production and consumption influenced by, and influencing, social life? While much of the course reading is based in social science scholarship, material will include fiction, memoir, popular and visual media, podcasts, and documentary film.

Course Objectives

• Develop a sociological perspective and an understanding of intersectionality.
• Apply a sociological and intersectional analysis to the study of food production and consumption.
• Think critically about the relationship between social categories, social structure, and food.
• Analyze the current social production of food in a broader social and historical context.

Readings and Course Materials

Articles and book chapters are the primary readings to allow for a wide variety of perspectives. All readings are available as downloadable/printable PDF files on the course website, as are web links and videos. Please print and bring readings to class with you. Alternatively, you may bring very detailed notes in lieu of the readings. Discussions will build on and include references to specific passages in the readings and other assigned materials.

Class Schedule

January 16: Introduction to a Sociological Perspective and Intersectionality

“The Promise” from The Sociological Imagination by Mills

“Constructing Differences: Introduction” by Ore

Combahee River Collective Statement

“Black feminist thought in the matrix of domination” by Collins
January 23: American Indians, the “Founding Farmers”, and Roots of Contemporary Agriculture

“Chapter 4: Bounding the Land” from Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists and the Ecology of New England by Cronon


“First Farmers” from Farm: A History and Celebration of the American Farmer by Paulsen

“Introduction” from “Letters on Agriculture” by Franklin Knight and George Washington

“Work, Property, and Character: Agrarian Virtue and Commercial Virtue” from Notes on Virginia by Thomas Jefferson

“Under the Lion’s Paw” by Hamlin Garland c. 1891

January 30: Class and Race in Agriculture

“This Land Ain’t My Land: The Eviction of Sharecroppers by the Farm Security Administration” by Adams and Gorton

Introduction” and “Creating Whiteness through Gentleman Farming” from Making the San Fernando Valley by Barraclough

“Chapter 4: Race and Regulation: Asian Immigrants in California Agriculture” by Minkoff-Zern, Sowerwine, and Getz from Cultivating Food Justice

“A new era of civil rights? Latino immigrant farmers and exclusion at the United States Department of Agriculture” by Minkoff-Zern and Sloat

“Losing Ground” from the REVEAL podcast

February 6: Class, Race, and Food

“Chapter 4: Consumption and Taste” by Bob Ashley, Joanne Hollows, Steve Jones, and Ben Taylor from Food and Cultural Studies

“Race in the Study of Food” by Slocum

“More than Just the ‘Big Piece of Chicken’: The Power of Race, Class, and Food in American Consciousness” from Food and Culture: A Reader by Williams-Forson

February 13: Gender and Sexuality in Agriculture

In-class screening: Out Here created by Jonah Mossberg/The Queer Farmer Film Project

“The Family Farm” from The Invisible Farmers: Women in Agricultural Production by Sachs
“Consumption and the Isolated Nuclear Farm Family Ideal” from *Preserving the Farm Family: Women, Community, and the Foundations of Agribusiness in the Midwest, 1900-1940* by Neth

“Queer Farmers: Sexuality and the Transition to Sustainable Agriculture” by Leslie

**February 20: Midterm Recess**

**February 27: Gender, Sexuality, and Food**

“Caring About Food: Doing Gender in the Foodie Kitchen” by Cairns, Johnston and Baumann

“I Don’t Want to be Sexist But . . .” Denying and Re-Inscribing Gender Through Food” by McPhail, Beagan, and Chapman

“Men Nurturing Through Food: Challenging Gender Dichotomies around Domestic Cooking” by Szabo

“Domestic Divo: Televised Treatments of Masculinity, Femininity and Food” by Swenson

“‘La Grande Bouffe:’ Cooking Shows as Pornography” by Chan

**March 6: Food Systems and Globalization**

“Food and Globalization” by Phillips

“The Current State of Agriculture: Does It Have a Future?” by Kirschenmann from The Essential Agrarian Reader

“Globalization and the War Against Farmers and the Land” by Shiva from The Essential Agrarian Reader

“The Legal and Legislative Front: The Fight against Industrial Agriculture” by Graddy from The Essential Agrarian Reader

“Making More Off Of Less – The Plight of the American Farmer” (20 minute documentary)

“Farm!” (12 minute documentary)

**Assignment Due:** Social Geography and Food Deserts

**March 13: Food and Labor**

“Organizing U.S. Farm Workers: A Continuous Struggle" by Majka and Majka from Hungry for Profit: The Agribusiness Threat to Farmers, Food, and the Environment"


“Introduction” and “Salad Days” from Working in the Shadows: A Year of Doing the Jobs (Most) Americans Won’t Do by Thompson
“Introduction: ‘Worth Risking Your Life?’” and “Segregation on the Farm: Ethnic Hierarchies at Work” from Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farmworkers in the United States by Holmes

“Spectacles of Labor: Viewing Food Production Through a Television Screen” by Retzinger

**March 20: Food(ie) + Farmer Writing**

“Dishing it Out: Food Blogs and Post-Feminist Domesticity” by Salvio

Excerpts from:
- The Dirty Life: On Farming, Food, and Love by Kimball
- The Bucolic Plague: How Two Manhattanites Became Gentlemen Farmers by Kilmer-Purcell
- Deeply Rooted: Unconventional Farmers in the Age of Agribusiness by Hamilton
- The Town that Food Saved: How One Community Found Vitality in Local Food by Hewitt
  
  **Blood, Bones & Butter** by Hamilton

Brown.Girl.Farming: [http://browngirlfarming.com/](http://browngirlfarming.com/) (read a selection of Natasha’s posts, explore the site, check out her “Color of Food” articles)

**Assignment Due:** Writing about a farmer/farmers you want to share with the class for a collective reading.

**March 27: The Politics of “Good” Food**

“Toward a Queer Crip Feminist Politics of Food” by Hall

“‘If They Only Knew’: Color Blindness and Universalism in California Alternative Food Institutions” by Guthman

“Good Food, Good People: Understanding the Cultural Repertoire of Ethical Eating” by Johnston, Szabo, and Rodney

“Enchanting Ethical Consumerism: The Case of Community Supported Agriculture” by Thompson, Coskuner-Galli

“Fast food/organic food: reflexive tastes and the making of ‘yuppie chow’” by Guthman

“When Eating Organic Was Totally Uncool” by Pha Lo

“The Ethics of Eating” by Waters and “The Whole Horse: Preservation of the Agrarian Mind” by Berry from *The Fatal Harvest Reader: The Tragedy of Industrial Agriculture*

**April 3: Spring Recess**

**April 10: Taste | Consumption | Waste**

“Buying, Not Cooking: Read-to-eat Food in American Urban Working-Class Neighborhoods, 1880-1930” by Turner
"The Framing of Social Class Distinctions through Family Food and Eating Practices" by Wills, Backett-Milburn, Roberts, and Lawton

"Chapter 6: Acquired Tastes: Why Families Eat the Way They Do" by Beagan, Chapman, Johnston, McPhail, Power, and Vallianatos,

"Waving the banana at capitalism: Political theater and social movement strategy among New York’s ‘freegan’ dumpster divers" by Barnard

"Freegans“ Local News Web Clip

PRI: Science, Tech & Environment: "At this Paris restaurant, ‘freegans’ fight waste by cooking up food diverted from the dumpster" April 8, 2016.

"The Wastefullness of Modern Dining, As Performance Art" by Caplan-Bricker and viewing of these clips: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZF-dV-aysHQ and https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oeLAiNCECa4

April 17: Food Justice

“Chapter 5: Toward a Comprehensive Food Ethic” in Labor and the Locavore: The Making of a Comprehensive Food Ethic by Gray

“Foodie Politics: This Is One Delicious Revolution!” from Foodies: Democracy and Distinction in the Gourmet Foodscape by Johnston and Baumann

“Bringing good food to others: investigating the subjects of alternative food practice” by Guthman

“Chapter 1: Introduction: The Food Movement as Polyculture” from Cultivating Food Justice by Alkon and Agyeman **only read pages 1-13


April 24: Course Conclusion and Food Sharing

Assignment Due: Cultural artifact

Class Policies and Assignments

In order to receive a grade for this course you must attend class having completed the assigned readings, participate in discussion, and complete the assignments by the deadlines. More details about these requirements below:

Attendance: Attending class includes arriving in time for the start of class. If you are absent or late more than twice, your grade will be lowered one letter grade. More than three absences will result in a failing grade.
Participation: Class-time will be devoted to discussion of the material and ideas under consideration. Since we are meeting only once per week, I expect each of you to participate during every class. You should come having completed the assigned readings with questions, passages, and issues to be discussed. Since it is a small, seminar-style class with an emphasis on discussion and activities, laptop use will be on an as-needed basis.

Assignment Completion & Deadlines: Please submit assignments in class on the day assignments are due (due dates are listed in the course schedule and in the assignments list). Late work will be deducted a letter grade for each day it is late unless accompanied by a documented excuse, e.g. illness accompanied by a doctor’s note.

Assignments

• Co-facilitation: each student is required to help facilitate two discussions. You will do this in groups of two or three. Facilitation entails 1) providing context for the readings where needed 2) offering and soliciting questions 3) identifying specific themes and passages for consideration by the class and 4) guiding discussion (not summarizing the readings). You are welcome to be creative in your approach i.e. provide complementary media, use activities, incorporate interpretive dance routines, etc. Please feel free to consult with me as needed.

• Social Geography and Food Deserts: write a description of your hometown/neighborhood with an emphasis on specific details including landscape, community resources, types and quality of schools, sources of entertainment, demographics, and proximity to agricultural production. Specify and describe the type of farming that is closest to your hometown/neighborhood. After you’ve written your geography, use the “American FactFinder” from the U.S. Census Bureau (http://1.usa.gov/1gCgOox) to get detailed statistics about demographics. Then, use the Food Desert Locator (http://1.usa.gov/1dOJLcY) to relate your geographic area to the nearest food desert. This data is not the substance of your paper; rather, consider how it compares to your perception of your hometown/neighborhood. Incorporate three cited references from course material. (5-pages/creative options require a 3-page written analysis). Due in-class: March 6

• Writing about farmers: bring in a piece of writing about a farmer/farmers you want to share with the class for a collective reading. All genres welcome: (creative) non-fiction, fiction, written/published by you or someone else. Include a 3-page explanation/analysis of your choice and relate it to course content. Incorporate three cited references from course material. Due in-class: March 20

• Cultural Artifact: bring in an ad, narrative, description, photo(s), drawing/art, object, or some representation of a farmer(s) and/or food that relates to course content. Include a 3-page explanation/analysis of your choice and how it relates to course content. Incorporate three cited references from course material. Due in-class: April 24

Academic Conduct Code

Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. They will result in no credit for the assignment or examination and may lead to disciplinary actions. Please take the time to review the section titled “Maintenance of Academic Integrity” in the Rights and Responsibilities Student Code Handbook. The main points are as follows:

• Student submitted work must be the product of that student’s own thought or study with proper attribution and citation.
• Talking during an exam, or possession or use of unauthorized materials, as well as accepting or providing assistance during an examination constitutes academic dishonesty.
• Students may only collaborate on assignments with permission from the instructor.
• Students may not share, sell, or use materials from a previous class to satisfy an assignment in a present course (ex: Turning in a friend’s lab report from last semester).
• Students must obtain permission from both instructors if they wish to submit the same work in more than course.

Please Note: This should not discourage you from discussing the material or your ideas with other students in the class. On the contrary – you should share your thoughts and questions.

**Grading Criteria**

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