The Social and Cultural History of Food in Europe

This course will examine changing patterns of production and consumption of food in Europe from prehistoric to modern times. Our study begins and ends with an examination of food in a global perspective; for most of the semester, we will focus on the cultural context of Europe as a site of modernizing technologies, bodies of knowledge, and patterns of consumption. Students will consider the development of settled agriculture in the history of food; the use of grains, fish, and dairy in diets across Europe; the significance of geographical location, exploration and colonialism; the impact of social stratification and ideologies of taste on food consumption; changing knowledge about health and hygiene; the involvement of the state in food security; changing modes of production of basic food commodities; the place of drink in diet and social life; the development of the science of nutrition; changes in transport and technology in the fostering the rise of consumer culture and commodification; the regulation of food safety; food and social welfare in the twentieth century; mass production of food; and finally, the globalization of food production, dietary norms, and access to markets.

Required books available at Book Culture (W. 112th St.) for purchase:

Rachel Laudan, *Cuisine and Empire: Cooking in World History*. (Also available as an e-book through CLIO.)

David Gentilcore, *Food and Health in Early Modern Europe*. (Also available as an e-book through CLIO.)

Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Tastes of Paradise*.

Course requirements:
-- mandatory and alert attendance, participation in class discussions and in-class activities, responsible handling of assignments, 1-page paper proposal (10%).
-- a midterm exam on March 6th (30%)
-- one eight-page paper on either the history of a single commodity or the impact of technology on food consumption due on April 10th (30%)
-- a take-home final exam due on May 10th (30%)

Learning objectives, or what you can expect to learn from taking this course:
-- an appreciation for the diversity and complexity of human experience
-- a critical understanding of the relationship between past events and modern life
-- an ability to conduct close readings of key texts, primary and secondary
-- an ability to analyze and interpret historical material
-- the skill of responding constructively and critically to the views of others
-- the skill of presenting arguments cogently and logically in writing and speaking

Students will not be allowed to use laptops or cellphones during class. Past experience has shown that these devices significantly diminish your ability to listen and participate in class. Handwritten note-taking has proven to be a more effective way of assimilating what is being said in class.

Please note: throughout the semester, we will be using blocks of time during class for discussion. Questions and comments are also welcome at every class, so please speak up if you need a point elaborated or wish to contribute to what is being discussed.

The dates of following units and reading assignments may change slightly as we progress through the semester. Please make an effort to complete each unit of reading by the day of the last lecture on the topic. Lecture content will overlap with assignments, but it will not duplicate the reading; we will spend time in class synthesizing both bodies of information. Texts marked with *’s will be posted on Canvas.

I. First Foods: From Mother’s Milk to Crop Harvesting (January 23, 28)

Required reading:

A useful timeline for reference (and sometimes assigned reading) throughout the semester http://foodtimeline.org/
II. Food in Ancient Times (January 30)

Required reading:

III. The Emergence of a European Food Culture (February 4, 6, 11)

Required reading:
David Gentilcore, *Food and Health in Early Modern Europe*, Chap. 1, pp. 10-26; Chaps. 4-7, pp. 71-155.

IV. Country Food and City Food in Early Modern Times (February 13, 18)

Required reading:
Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Tastes of Paradise*, Chaps. 1-3 (pp. 3-95).
David Gentilcore, *Food and Health in Early Modern Europe*, Chap. 3, pp. 49-73.
SKIM so that you can state the argument: *E. P. Thompson, “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd,” *Past and Present*, No. 50 (1971), 76-136. You will be asked to bring a two-sentence summary to class for discussion.
V. Food and the Human Body: Hygiene, Morality, and the Vegetarian Option in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries (February 20, 25)

Required reading:

VI. Recipe for Revolution: Bread and Potatoes (February 27, March 4)

Required reading:
   Read the Food Timeline on the French Revolution: [http://www.foodtimeline.org/foodcolonial.html#frenchrevolution](http://www.foodtimeline.org/foodcolonial.html#frenchrevolution)
   *Harmke Kamminga, “Nutrition for the People, or the Fate of Jacob Moleschott’s Contest for a Humanist Science,”* in *The Science and Culture of Nutrition*, pp. 15-47.
   *J. Drummond and Anne Wilbraham, The Englishman’s Food*, pp. 327-40.

Midterm exam: March 6
(review class: TBA)
VII. Gender, Food, and Households in the Victorian Age (March 11, 13)

Required reading:
Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Tastes of Paradise*, Chaps. 5-7 (on beer, liquor, and rituals)
*Mrs. Isabella Beeton, Mrs. Beeton’s Book of Household Management*, digital link through CLIO:
https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015093176843;view=2up;seq=6
Please read the Preface, then Chaps. 1, 4, 40-41.

*“A Middle Class Dinner,”* from *The Woman’s Signal* (Dec. 19, 1895).

Film: “Babette’s Feast”

VIII. The Urban Environment and the State: Food and Survival in a Modern Era (March 25, 27, and April 1)

Required reading:


**One-page paper proposal with primary source citations due March 27**
IX. Food, Health, and Public Safety  (April 3)

Required reading:
*Martin Bruegel, “How the French Learned to Eat Canned Food” and

X. Food as a Social and Political Right: The Example of Britain  (April 8, 10; discussion for part of April 10 or 15)

Required reading:
*Maud Pember Reeves, *Round About a Pound a Week* (1913), Chaps. 7-10. **Please skim** the following articles for argument:

**Paper due on April 10th**

XI. Modernity and Nutrition: The Impact of Geopolitics  (April 15)

Required reading:
XII. War and Food: The Global Science of Provisioning  (April 17, 22)

Required reading:
* Daphne Roe, A Plague of Corn: The Social History of Pellagra, selected chapters.
* Deborah Dwork, Chap. VI, “School Meals and Medical Inspection” and Chap. VII, “Conclusion” in War is Good for Babies and Other Young Children, pp. 167-220.

XIII. The Nutritional Transition: The Emergence of Modern Food Consumption  (April 24)

Required reading:
* Daphne A. Roe, A Plague of Corn: The Social History of Pellagra, selected chapter.

XIV. From Post-War to Food Wars: Food after 1950 (April 29, May 1, 6)

* Mike Berners-Lee, How Bad Are Bananas? The Carbon Footprint of Everything (excerpts in Canvas folder)


Final Take-home Exam: Distributed on May 6th and due Friday, May 10th, by 5 p.m