

**History BC 2380**  
Spring 2024  
M W 1:10-2:25

**Professor Deborah Valenze**  
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Office hours: M 3-4 p.m., W 11-12 noon  
& by appointment

## The Social and Cultural History of Food in Europe



Clara Peeters, *Still Life with Cheeses, Almonds and Pretzels* (1615)

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 gender, social stratification, and ideologies of taste on food consumption; changing knowledge about the body, health, and hygiene; the involvement of the state in food security; 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; war, 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.

### **Books available at Book Culture (W. 112<sup>th</sup> St.), recommended 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.)

Raj Patel, *Stuffed and Starved: The Hidden Battle for the World Food System* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2012). NOT an e-book, please purchase this book or use the reserved copy in the Barnard Library.

**Course requirements:**

- mandatory and alert attendance, participation in class discussions and in-class activities, responsible handling of assignments, 1-page paper proposal, due no later than March 20th (10%).
- two take-home exams on February 21 and May 3 (30% each)
- one eight-page paper on *either* the history of a single commodity *or* the impact of technology on food consumption due on April 3 (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 assertions about food
- the skill of responding constructively and critically to the views of others
- the skill of presenting arguments cogently and logically in writing and speaking

**Use of an AI text generator when an assignment does not explicitly ask or allow for it is plagiarism.** In this class, students will not be allowed to use AI in order to complete writing assignments. Using such tools will prevent you from developing your own capabilities of reasoning, research, and analysis. AI cannot generate the kind of reflection on historical data that this course is trying to teach you how to do. Moreover, AI tools raise serious questions of integrity and ethics: as regulatory laws in Europe have argued, ChatGBT scrapes information from sources without giving attribution, a form of plagiarism that is equivalent to stealing. In some instances, AI will generate fictional footnotes and sources, which you as an inexperienced historian won't realize are false. AI often leads students down irrelevant and even incorrect pathways of thinking, thus defeating the purpose of an assignment. In your own best interests, you should aim to be engaged in a college-level learning process and AI will interfere with your gaining a college education. Please don't be fooled; instructors have detected the use of ChatGBT and other AI tools fairly easily. For all these reasons, students who use AI in this class will be penalized.

**Information regarding the Barnard Center for Accessibility Resources and Disability Services (CARDS):**

*If you believe you may encounter barriers to the academic environment due to a documented disability or emerging health challenges, please feel free to contact me and/or the **Center for Accessibility Resources & Disability Services (CARDS)**. Any student with approved academic accommodations is encouraged to contact me during office hours or via email. If you have questions regarding registering a disability or receiving accommodations for the semester, please contact CARDS at (212) 854-4634, [cards@barnard.edu](mailto:cards@barnard.edu), or learn more at [barnard.edu/disabilityservices](http://barnard.edu/disabilityservices). CARDS is located in 101 Altschul Hall.*

**Columbia disability services information can be found here:**

<https://www.health.columbia.edu/services/register-disability-services>

**Barnard College Wellness Statement:**

It is important for undergraduates to recognize and identify the different pressures, burdens, and stressors you may be facing, whether personal, emotional, physical, financial, mental, or academic. We as a community urge you to make yourself--your own health, sanity, and wellness--your priority throughout this term and your career here. Sleep, exercise, and eating well can all be a part of a healthy regimen to cope with stress. Resources exist to support you in several sectors of your life, and we encourage you to make use of them. Should you have any questions about navigating these resources, please visit these sites:

- <http://barnard.edu/primarycare>
- <https://barnard.edu/furman-counseling/about-counseling>
- <https://barnard.edu/TheWellnessSpot/about>
- <https://www.health.columbia.edu/content/patient-resources>
- <https://www.health.columbia.edu/services/individual-counseling>

**All students are expected to adhere to the Barnard College Honor Code:**

**Approved by the student body in 1912 and updated in 2016, the Code states:**

*We, the students of Barnard College, resolve to uphold the honor of the College by engaging with integrity in all of our academic pursuits. We affirm that academic integrity is the honorable creation and presentation of our own work. We acknowledge that it is our responsibility to seek clarification of proper forms of collaboration and use of academic resources in all assignments or exams. We consider academic integrity to include the proper use and care for all print, electronic, or other academic resources. We will respect the rights of others to engage in pursuit of learning in order to uphold our commitment to honor. We pledge to do all that is in our power to create a spirit of honesty and honor for its own sake.*

**There will be zero tolerance for plagiarism of any kind. Assignments that reflect any form of direct copying without quotation marks and attribution will receive no credit.** It is not advisable to copy and paste passages from published materials into your laptop notes and then into your written work. Even if you think you will remember to footnote such pasted passages, you may easily forget to add a citation. This is the most common way students “accidentally” plagiarize, a mistake your instructors will not accept as an accident. You can steer clear of problems with just a little effort. If you want to take notes with your computer, find a way of doing that will not lead to oversights. Please ask me if you are uncertain about any aspect of how to use and cite secondary sources.

**Absolutely no cellphone use of any kind during class. The use of laptops is provisional and depends on how things go:** if members of the class use their laptops for activities other than notetaking, they will distract others. Please be considerate and respectful of the purpose of class time and do not check your email or message friends. If it appears that laptops are proving to be a distraction, we will have to invoke a no-laptops policy. (Don't worry if we do: handwritten notetaking has been proven to be a more effective way of assimilating what is being said in class.)

**Please note that throughout the semester, we will be using blocks of time during class for discussion.** Questions and comments are welcome at every class, so please feel free to 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 don't be alarmed if they do! The best approach is to aim 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 may be posted on Canvas. **When in doubt, please check CLIO** before emailing your professor about where to find an assignment. Many texts have just become available as e-books and it is assumed that you will be responsible for looking up assignments and downloading them for your own use.

## **I. First Foods: From Mother's Milk to Crop Harvesting (January 17, 22)**

Required reading:

\*Sidney Mintz, "Food and Eating: Some Persisting Questions," in Warren Belasco and Philip Scranton, eds., *Food Nations*, pp. 24-32.

\*Richard Wrangham, *Catching Fire: How Cooking Made Us Human* (e-book available through CLIO; these chapters are also available in a Canvas folder): Chap. 4, "When Cooking Began;" Chap. 5, "Brain Foods," pp. 83-127.

**A useful timeline for reference (and sometimes assigned reading) throughout the semester** <http://foodtimeline.org/>

## II. Food in Ancient Times (January 24)

Required reading:

Rachel Laudan, *Cuisine and Empire*, Chap. 1, “Mastering Grain Cookery, 20,000-300 B.C.E.,” pp. 9-55.

\*B.D. Shaw, “‘Eaters of Flesh, Drinkers of Milk’: The Ancient Mediterranean Ideology of the Pastoral Nomad,” *Ancient Society*, 13/14 [1982-3]: 5-31.

\*Jean-Louis Flandrin and Massimo Montanari, eds., *Food: A Culinary History*, Chaps. 7, 8, and 17: “Greek Meals: A Civic Ritual,” “The Culture of the Symposium,” and “Arab Cuisine and Its Contribution to European Culture,” pp. 90-105 and 207-223.

## III. The Emergence of a European Food Culture (January 29, 31)

Required reading:

\*Flandrin and Montanari, eds., *Food: A Culinary History*, Part Five, Introduction and Chap. 19, pp. 247-67.

Rachel Laudan, *Cuisine and Empire*, Chap 5, “Christianity Transforms the Cuisines of Europe and the Americas, 100-1650 C.E.,” pp. 166-206.

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

\*Alfred W. Crosby, Jr., “New World Foods and Old World Demography,” *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492*, 165-207.

## IV. Country Food and City Food in Early Modern Times (February 5, 7)

Required reading:

David Gentilcore, *Food and Health in Early Modern Europe*, Chap. 3, pp. 49-73.

\*Richard Steckel, “Nutritional Status in the Colonial American Economy,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 56, no. 1 (1999), 31-52.

\*Jeanette Neeson, “‘Making Freeman of the Slave’,” *Commoners: Common Right, Enclosure and Social Change in England, 1700-1820*, pp. 297-330.

\*Emma Spary, “The Place of Coffee,” *Eating the Enlightenment: Food and the Sciences in Paris, 1670-1760*, 96-145.

## **V. Food and the Human Body: Hygiene, Morality, and the Vegetarian Option in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries (February 12, 14)**

Required reading:

David Gentilcore, *Food and Health in Early Modern Europe*, Chap. 2, “Healthy Food: The Rise and Fall of Dietetics,” pp. 27-48; Chap. 6, “Vegetable Food: The Vegetarian Option,” pp. 115-31.

Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *The Physiology of Taste*, beginning at “Meditation Two: Taste,” to “Meditation Six,” as far as “On Fish”:

<http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/5434/pg5434.txt>

\*Timothy Morton, ed. *Radical Food: The Culture and Politics of Eating and Drinking, 1790-1820*: Vol. I, Chap. 4: Joseph Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food, as a Moral Duty*, pp. 188-214 only; Chap. 5: Percy Bysshe Shelley, “A Vindication of a Natural Diet,” pp. 274-84; Vol. III, Chap. 11, Thomas Trotter, “A View of the Nervous Temperament,” pp. 576-592 only.

### **Discussion and Review: February 19 First Assignment due February 21**

## **VI. Recipe for Revolution: Bread and Potatoes (February 21, 26)**

Required reading:

\*Stephen L. Kaplan, *The Bakers of Paris and the Bread Question 1700-1775*: Chap. 1, “Breadways,” pp. 23-60.

Read the Food Timeline on the French Revolution:

<http://www.foodtimeline.org/foodcolonial.html#frenchrevolution>

\*Sébastien Rioux, Chap. 1 “From National to World Food Production” in *The Social Cost of Cheap Food: Labour and the Political Economy of Food Distribution in Britain, 1830 – 1914* (2019). [e-book available through CLIO]

\*Redcliffe Salaman, “The Potato Famine: Its Causes and Consequences,” *The History and Social Influence of the Potato*, Chap. XVI, pp. 289-317.

\*Rebecca Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant*, Chap. 4, “Morality, Equality, Hospitality!” pp. 88-118.

## **VII. Gender, Food, and Households in the Victorian Age (February 28, March 4)**

Required reading:

\*Mark Finlay, “Quackery and Cookery: Justus von Liebig’s Extract of Meat and the Theory of Nutrition in the Victorian Age,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, Vol. 66, no. 3 (1992), pp. 404-18. (continued on next page)

\*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" (watch by March 4)**

**½ of class on March 6: Discussion: "Babette's Feast" and gendered food norms of the late nineteenth century**

**Don't forget: your paper proposal (submitted by e-mail to Professor Valenze) will be due after the break, no later than March 20th.** You will need to read the following unit in order to complete the assignment:

### **VIII. Industrial Food as a Concept (March 18, 20)**

Required reading:

\*Jack Goody, *Cooking, Cuisine and Class*, Chap. 5, "Industrial Food" and Chap. 6, "Impact of a World System," pp. 154-74; 175-90 and the document posted on Canvas entitled "Commodity."

\*Martin Bruegel, "How the French Learned to Eat Canned Food" in Belasco and Scranton, eds., *Food Nations*, 113-30.

\*sample paper in Canvas folder

**Paper Proposal due no later than March 20<sup>th</sup>  
(Submit by e-mail to Prof. Valenze)**

### **IX. How the Modern Grid of Food Emerges: Science, Industry, and the State (March 25, 27)**

Required reading:

Rachel Laudan, *Cuisine and Empire*, Chapter 7, "Modern Cuisines: The Expansion of Middling Cuisines, 1810-1920," pp. 248-307. (cont'd on next page)

\*Chris Otter, “Civilizing Slaughter: The Development of the British Public Abattoir, 1850-1910,” in *Meat, Modernity, and the Rise of the Slaughterhouse*, ed. Paula Young Lee (2008), pp. 89-106.

\*John K. Walton, Chap. 2, “Origins, Growth and Spread,” *Fish & Chips and the British Working Class, 1870-1940* (1992), 23-40.

\*Rebecca Woods, “Nature and the Refrigerating Machine: The Politics and Production of Cold in the Nineteenth Century” in *Cryopolitics: Frozen Life in a Melting World* (2017), pp. 89-116 only.

\*Sébastien Rioux, Chap. 3 “Street Sellers” in *The Social Cost of Cheap Food: Labour and the Political Economy of Food Distribution in Britain, 1830 – 1914* (2019). [e-book available through CLIO]

## **X. The Involvement of the State and the Politics of Food (April 1, 3)**

Required reading:

\*Nadja Durbach, “Famine, Cooked Food, and the Starving Child: Rethinking Political Economy in Colonial India,” *Many Mouths* (2020), 81-113.

\*Frank Trentmann, “Bread, Milk, and Democracy: Consumption and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century Britain,” in *The Politics of Consumption*, eds. M. Daunton and M. Hilton, pp. 129-63.

\*Maud Pember Reeves, *Round About a Pound a Week* (1913), Chaps. 7-10.

**Discussion, April 3: What do we mean by “the politics of food”?**

**Commodity paper due by midnight on April 3<sup>rd</sup>**

**Submit your paper in Canvas Assignments**

## **XI. Nutrition and European Empires: Food in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries (April 8, 10, 15)**

Required reading:

\*Corinna Treitel, Chap.2, “Being Natural,” *Eating Nature: Food, Agriculture and Environment in Germany, c. 1870-2000*, pp. 53-93.

\*Corinna Treitel, “Nutritional Modernity: The German Case.”

\*Harry G. Day, “E. V. McCollum and Public Understanding of Foods and Nutrition,” *Nutrition Today* (1987), 31-9.

\*M. Worboys, “The Discovery of Colonial Malnutrition Between the Wars,” in D. Arnold, ed., *Imperial Medicine and Indigenous Societies*, 208-225.

\*Nick Cullather, “The Foreign Policy of the Calorie,” *American Historical Review* (April, 2007), pp. 337-64.

\*James Vernon, “The Humanitarian Discovery of Hunger,” *Hunger: A Modern History* (2007), 17-40.



## **XII. The Nutritional Transition: The Emergence of Modern Food Consumption (April 17, 22)**

Required reading:

\*David Grigg, "The Nutritional Transition in Western Europe," *Journal of Historical Geography*, 21, no. 3 (1995), 247-61.

\*Harmke Kamminga, "Axes to Grind: Popularizing the Science of Vitamins in the 1920s and 1930s," in *Food, Science, Policy and Regulation in the Twentieth Century*, ed. David Smith and Jim Phillips, 83-100.

Rachel Laudan, *Cuisine and Empire*, Chapter 8, "Modern Cuisines: The Globalization of Middling Cuisines, 1920-2000," pp. 308-359.

**Film: "Our Daily Bread" (2005) by Nikolaus Geyrhalter.  
(if we have time, we will watch excerpts in class)**

## **XIII. From Post-War to Food Wars: Slow Food and Beyond (April 24, 29)**

\*Carlo Petrini, *Slow Food: The Case for Taste*, Chap. 1, "Appetite and Thought" and Chap. 3, "Educating and Learning," pp. 1-34; 65-83.

Raj Patel, *Stuffed and Starved: The Hidden Battle for the World's Food System*, Chap. 1, "Introduction," Chap. 7, "Glycine Rex," Chap. 8, "Checking Out of Supermarkets," Chap. 9, "Chosen by Bunnies," and "Chap. 10, "Conclusion."

\*Josef Nussbaumer and Andreas Exenberger, "Century of Hunger, Century of Plenty: How Abundance Arrived in Alpine Valleys," *The Rise of Obesity in Europe*, ed. Derek J Oddy and Peter Atkins.

If you have time: \*Mike Berners-Lee, *How Bad Are Bananas? The Carbon Footprint of Everything* (excerpts in Canvas folder)

**Take-home essay exam:  
Distributed on Wednesday, April 24;  
due no later than Friday, May 3, by midnight  
(Submit your exam in Canvas Assignments)**