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 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:
- David Gentilcore, *Food and Health in Early Modern Europe*.
- Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Tastes of Paradise*.

Recommended for purchase:
- Warren Belasco and Philip Scranton, eds., *Food Nations*.

Course requirements:
- mandatory, alert attendance, participation in class discussions, in-class activities, responsible handling of assignments (10%).
-- a midterm exam on February 28th (30%)
-- one eight-page paper on either the history of a single commodity or the impact of technology on food consumption due on April 11th (30%)
-- a take-home final exam due on May 4th (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 welcome at every class, so please speak up if you need a point elaborated or wish to contribute to what is being discussed.

Assigned readings marked with *’s will be posted on Canvas.

I. First Foods: From Mother’s Milk to Crop Harvesting (January 17, 19)

Required reading:
Reay Tannahill, *Food in History*, pp. 1-59; 103-52.

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

II. Food in Ancient Times (January 24)

Required reading:
Reay Tannahill, *Food in History*, pp. 60-91.
III. The Emergence of a European Food Culture (January 26, 31, February 2)

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 7, 9)

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 People in an Age of Revolution: Bread and Potatoes (February 14, 16)

Required reading:
  Read the Food Timeline on the French Revolution: 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.
VI. Food and the Body: Hygiene, Morality, and Taste in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries (February 21, 23)

Required reading:
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

Midterm exam: February 28
(review class: TBA)

VII. Food for the People: Beer, Milk, and Beef Tea (March 2, 7, 9)

Required reading:
*Peter Clark, “From Alehouse to Public House,” from *The English Alehouse*.

VIII. Gender, Food, and Households in the Victorian Age (March 21, 23)

Required reading:
**“A Middle Class Dinner,” from *The Woman’s Signal* (Dec. 19, 1895).
Film: “Babette’s Feast”

IX. Food as a Social and Political Right: The Example of Britain  (March 28, 30)

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


Required reading:

Paper due on April 11th
(Review session on paper-writing skills: TBA)

XI. War and Food: Politics, Science, and Provisions  (April 11, 13)

Required reading:
*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.
XII. The Industrialization of Food (April 18)

Required reading:

Martin Bruegel, “How the French Learned to Eat Canned Food” and
Donna R. Gabaccia, “As American as Budweiser and Pickles? Nation-Building in American Food Industries,” and

Jeffrey Pilcher, “Industrial *Tortillas* and Folkloric *Pepsi*: The Nutritional Consequences of Hybrid Cuisines in Mexico” in Belasco and Scranton, eds., *Food Nations*, pp. 113-30; 175-93; 222-239.


XIII. From Post-War to Food Wars: Food after 1950 (April 20, 25, 27)

Required reading:


**Final Take-home Exam:** Distributed on April 27th and due Thursday, May 4th, by 1 p.m