

Professor Amy Bentley
Department of Nutrition, Food Studies, and Public Health
New York University
Spring 2007
Classroom: 1078

(rev. 1.15.07)

Tuesdays, 4:55-6:35 p.m.

Office hours: Wednesdays, 11-2 p.m. (by appointment, call (212) 998-5580 to arrange)

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E33.2012.001: FOOD HISTORY (3 credits)

Course Description and Objectives:

Welcome to Food History. In this course we will examine food and diet from historical and transnational perspectives. We will, among other things, consider the origins of agriculture, the phenomenon of famine, the co-evolution of world cuisines and civilizations, the international exchange and spread of foods and food technologies following the Columbus, and the effects of the emergent global economy on food, production, diets and health. From this survey of food in history, students will gain a greater understanding of how food influences, and is influenced by, a myriad of factors, including politics, economics, climate, geography, technology, and culture.

Required Readings:

Books

Albala, Ken. *Eating Right in the Renaissance* (California, 2002).

Belasco, Warren. *Appetite for Change: How the Counterculture Took on the Food Industry* (Cornell, 2006).

Carney, Judith. *Black Rice: African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* (Harvard, 2001).

Crosby, Alfred, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492*, (Praeger, 2003, 1973).

Diamond, Jared, *Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (Norton, 1999).

Gray, Peter. *The Irish Famine* (Harry Abrams, 1995)

Mintz, Sidney. *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (Penguin, 1985).

Pilcher, Jeffrey. *!Que Vivan Los Tamales!: Food and the Making of Mexican Identity* (New Mexico, 1998).

Shapiro, Laura. *Something from the Oven: Reinventing Dinner in 1950s America* (Viking, 2004)

Recommended:

Tannahill, Reay. *Food in History* (Three Rivers Press, 1988 (1973))

All books are available at the NYU bookstore. Please let me know if for some reason you are unable to locate or purchase the books.

Additional Readings: Additional readings are not required but are for your information, and may be helpful for your research papers.

Articles

There will be articles that I will either hand out in class or make available in .pdf format through Blackboard (At NYU Home click on ACADEMICS, then click on FOOD HISTORY. Readings are under COURSE DOCUMENTS. The syllabus is available under COURSE INFORMATION).

Course Schedule:

We will stick to this schedule as closely as possible, but please be advised that this calendar is subject to change. If you miss a week, it is your responsibility to get in touch with me or another class member to find out the following week's material and activities.

January 16: Historical perspectives on the study of food
Introduction to class and overview of material

January 23: Food and Human Evolution: Food and Agriculture in Prehistoric Societies

Reading: Diamond, *Guns, Germ, and Steel*
Recommended: Tannahill, chapters 1-3; Mark Nathan Cohen, *Health and the Rise of Civilization* (Yale, 1989)

January 30: Food and Famine in Ancient Civilizations

Reading: articles TBA (posted on blackboard)
Recommended: Tannahill, chapters 4-6; 8-11

February 6: Food in Middle Ages and Early Modern Europe

Readings: Ken Albala, Eating Right in the Renaissance
Rachel Laudan, "Birth of the Modern Diet" *Scientific American* (August 2000): 76-81 (Required article).
Recommended: Matossian, *Poisons of the Past: Molds Epidemics, and History* (Yale, 1989)
Tannahill, chapters 7, 12-13

February 13: 1492: The Consequences of Contact

Reading: Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange*
Recommended: Tannahill, chs. 14-15; Coe and Coe, *The True History of Chocolate* (Thames and Hudson, 1996); John C. Super, *Food, Conquest, and Colonization in Sixteenth Century Spanish America*. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988)

February 20: Food in (Ancient to Early Modern) China and Japan

Readings: articles TBA

February 27: The Industrial Revolution, Colonialism, and Food (Europe and the Americas)

Reading: Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*
Recommended; Stuart Schwartz, editor, *Tropical Babels: Sugar and the Making of the Atlantic World, 1450-1680* (North Carolina, 2004); Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Tastes of Paradise: A Social History of Spices, Stimulants, and Intoxicants* (New York: Vintage, 1993).

Assignment due: Bring in a one-paragraph description of your research project

March 6: Colonialism and Slavery : The Consequences of Contact Part II (Africa and the Americas)

Reading: Judith Carney. *Black Rice*

March 13: SPRING BREAK (no class)

Relax but also work on your project

March 20: Famine in the Modern World: The Irish Potato Famine as Test Case

Reading: Gray, *The Irish Famine*

Recommended: Kissane, *The Irish Famine: A Documentary History* (National Library of Ireland, 1995); Percival, *The Great Famine 1845-51* (Viewer Books, 1995)

March 27: Food, Culture and History in Latin America

Reading: Jeffrey Pilcher, *!Que Vivan Los Tamales!*

Recommended: Bauer, Arnold J. *Goods, Power, History: Latin America's Material Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.; Cotter, Joseph. *Trouble Harvest: Agronomy and Revolution in Mexico, 1880-2002*. New York: Praeger, 2003; Warman, Arturo. *Corn and Capitalism: How a Botanical Bastard Grew to Global Dominance*. Translated by Nancy L. Westrate. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003; Weismantel, Mary J. *Food, gender, and poverty in the Ecuadorian Andes*. Philadelphia : University of Pennsylvania Press, c1988.

April 3: Industrialization and American Food: Women, Cooking, and Postwar "Package Cuisine"

Reading: Laura Shapiro, *Something from the Oven: Reinventing Dinner in 1950s America*

Recommended: Tannahill chapters 19-20; Laura Shapiro, *Perfection Salad: Women and Cooking at the Turn of the Century* (North Point Press, 1986); Harvey Levenstein, *Revolution at the Table* and *Paradox of Plenty*

April 10: The Package Cuisine Backlash: Rethinking Food in the Later Twentieth Century

Reading: Warren Belasco, *Appetite for Change: How the Counterculture Took on the Food Industry*

April 17: No class—last minute work on your projects

April 24: Student presentations

May 1: Reading Day (no class)

May 8: (finals period): Student presentations

Papers due on or before

Methods of Evaluation:

Students are required to write a research paper on a topic of their choice (see below).

Research paper, rough draft, and presentation:	60% of final grade
Class participation:	40% of final grade

Meaning of "participation": By participation I mean active engagement in the course: being consistently prepared for class (come having read—really read—that day's assignment); asking questions, responding to my questions; offering your own insights and opinions; attentive listening to others. And, of course, if you do not come to class you cannot participate. If for some reason you have great trouble speaking in class, please see me to discuss early on in the semester (otherwise, I will assume there is no problem).

Research Paper and Presentation:

For your culminating project for Food History you are to write an approximately 15 page research paper on a topic of your choice, accompanied by an oral presentation (approx. 5-7 minutes) on one of the last days of class.

Topic

You may choose to pursue further a topic that we are exploring in class, or examine an area of personal or academic interest. The following is a list of suggested topics, though you are by no means limited to these. Historical perspectives on:

- a plant or animal used as food (mushroom, corn, poultry)
- a prepared food or method of processing (bread, beer, polenta)
- an important person (Heinz, Cadbury)
- a food event (the medieval banquet, Italian sausage-making, the Green Revolution)
- food issues in historical context (historical perspectives on famine relief, gluttony, food and fascism in Italy)

Procedures and Requirements

1. Conduct a thorough search in the library (or elsewhere) for material on your topic. Check with the reference librarian, do a Bobcat/ONLINE search, explore the Internet, look through encyclopedias, magazines, newspapers, archives, interview people, do an ethnographic analysis, etc. Having "too much" information, if such a thing is possible, is much less of a problem than too little. See me for ideas, visit the reference desk at the library, talk to anyone who might be of help.

2. Your bibliography must contain at least twenty (20) sources. These can be drawn from a variety of sources (books, scholarly journals, popular magazines, newspapers, cookbooks, internet) but a substantial number (over half) must be books and articles of a scholarly nature (peer-reviewed, footnotes, relatively independent of advertising, usually plain-looking with few photographs). Beware of Internet sites—not all are created equal. Be skeptical, for example, that a corporate website will tell the whole story about its product(s).

3. Try to incorporate primary data of some kind. While I realize it is impossible to conduct a substantial amount of primary research in such a short time, it is important to include, to your best ability, some element of primary data, whether old newspaper/magazine/advertisements, old cookbooks or recipe cards, restaurant menus, diaries, statistical records, interviews, or ethnographic data generated by yourself. I assume you have discussed definitions of primary and secondary data, but we will go over these in class as well.
4. Your project must be original. I will not accept a topic that you have used/are using for another class. Please no joint projects with a concurrent class.

Mechanics

1. As with all college papers I expect your paper to be typed, double-spaced. Your paper should be stapled (no slick covers, etc), and pages numbered. It should also have a title.
2. **Make sure you have a clearly-stated thesis that provides an argument, encapsulates the scope and framework of analysis of the entire paper.** Provide examples and evidence to support any claims you make; be careful to provide citations to indicate the origin of your quotes and paraphrased references. Information, even if not directly quoted, needs to be cited with footnotes or parenthetical endnotes. I will expect at least 10 scholarly references (books, scholarly articles), as well as any other materials you use (newspapers, popular magazines, surveys, pamphlets, etc.), for a total of at least twenty sources.
3. **Check the rules of plagiarism.** NYU has a clearly stated policy on plagiarism—read and follow it please. Bottom line: changing a word or two of a sentence and then passing it off as your own (without quotation marks) is plagiarism. I will ask you to hand your paper in having signed a statement indicating its originality.
4. Papers need to be free of typographical errors and grammatical disasters. Consult a style manual if you have questions, and make use of the Writing Center.
5. And finally, please turn your paper in on time; late papers receive a drop in grade.

Presentation

The presentations should be of exceptional quality. You should be well-prepared, and should do your best to make the presentation interesting, informative, and worth the time of your classmates and myself. Practice beforehand so you know how much time it takes to get through, dress as if you are trying to make a good overall impression. You should include in your presentation anything that will help explain your project to the rest of the class: slides, photos, other objects, handouts, etc. Avoid the "um" syndrome. Use note cards to help you through the material. Try not to read material, but "talk" it to the audience. Look up and out to the audience, instead of down at your notes. Don't worry, your classmates will provide encouragement, support, will listen attentively, and will clap at the end of your presentation.

