

## Contemporary Issues in Food Studies (E33.2017)

New York University

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This course introduces you to the major issues surrounding the current food system and culture. We will engage with a broad range of texts written by academics and serious journalists highlighting current concerns about food consumption, production and distribution. We will begin with the United States but then head outwards as it shapes the rest of the world while being fashioned by the challenges and opportunities associated with an increasingly globalized system.

By the end of the course, students will be able to: identify the key economic, social, demographic, environmental, and ethical issues that currently shape our food production, distribution, preparation, and consumption.

### **Readings:**

**Week 1:** Introduction + the rules

### **Theme I: The Problem of American Affluence?**

#### **Weeks 2-4: Fat and Fasting**

Week 2: Eric Schlosser, 2002, *Fast Food Nation*, New York, Perennial (pp. 1-131, 255-270).

Week 3: Joan Jacob Brumberg, 2000, *Fasting Girls: The History of Anorexia Nervosa*, New York, Vintage (pp. 1-138, 161-204).

#### **Alternatives?**

Week 4: Michael Pollan, 2006, *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. Penguin (pp. 1-184, 277-411).

Recommended critique: Special Issue of *Gastronomica* 7:3 (Summer 2007); especially "Can't Stomach It: How Michael Pollan *et al.* Made Me Want to Eat Cheetos," by Julie Guthman, pp. 75-79.

#### **Americanization of the World or Hybridization?**

Week 5: James Watson and Melissa Caldwell, 2005, *The Cultural Politics of Food and Eating. A Reader*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing (pp. 1-12, 21-41, 54-103, 121-162, 180-196).

Week 6: Joel Denker, 2003, *The World on a Plate. A Tour through the History of America's Ethnic Cuisine*, Westview Press (pp. 5-26; 65-88; 89-114; 135-162).

#### **AND**

Sasha Issenberg, 2007, *The Sushi Economy. Globalization and the Making of a Modern Delicacy*, New York: Penguin (Gotham Books), pp. ix – 129, 253 - 281.

### **Theme II: Managing Affluence: Ice Cream and Haute Cuisine**

Week 7: Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield, 1998, *Ben & Jerry's Double-Dip*, Simon & Schuster (pp. 1-195).

Week 8: Bill Buford, 2006, *Heat*, New York: Alfred K. Knopf.

**Theme III: Global Hunger. Political-Economy of Food**

**Week 9: The Problem of Hunger**

Gary Gardner and Brian Halweil, 2000, *Underfed and Overfed: The Global Epidemic of Malnutrition*, World Watch Paper 150; <http://www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines/>

**AND**

Jean Dreze, Amartya Sen and Arthar Hussain, 1995 edn., *The Political-Economy of Hunger: Selected Essays*, Oxford University Press (pp. 445-553).

**Recommended:**

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/GFA17/>

Gillespie, Stuart, Lawrence Haddad and Robin Jackson, 2001, *HIV/AIDS Food and Nutrition Security*, accessed

<http://www.ifpri.org/themes/HIV/accscn2001en.pdf>

Nullis, Clare, 2006, "Africa faces growing obesity problem" (November 29<sup>th</sup>)

[http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20061129/ap\\_on\\_he\\_me/diet\\_overweight\\_africans](http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20061129/ap_on_he_me/diet_overweight_africans)

**Week 10: A Political-Ecology of Famine: The Making of the Third World**

Mike Davis, 2001, *Late Victorian Holocausts*, Verso (pp. 1-16, 23-64, 117-121, 279-312).

**Week 11: The Local and the Global**

Kevin Watkins, 2004, *Rigged Rules and Double Standards: Trade, Globalisation, and the Fight against Poverty*, Oxfam Reports (pp. 5-63; 95-121; 149-174).

**Week 12: An Alternative?**

Frances Moore Lappé and Anna Lappé, 2003, *Hope's Edge. The Next Diet for a Small Planet*. NY: Putnam, pp. 1-33; 63-163; 279-310.

**AND**

Bruck, Connie, 2006, "Millions for Millions: A Reporter at Large," *The New Yorker* 82, 35 (October 30<sup>th</sup>), pp. 62-84.

**Theme IV: New Technologies Assuaging Hunger?**

**Week 13: Genetically modified foods: problems and prospect**

Michael Ruse and David Castle, Eds., 2002, *Genetically Modified Food*, Prometheus Books (pp. 1-107)

**AND**

Peter Pringle, 2005. *Food Inc.: Mendel to Monsanto*, New York: Hudson Street Press (Chapters 1, 2, 5, 6 & 10).

## **Grading**

20% - Participation will be based on

- (a) attendance
- (b) rate of participation in class – i.e. once every class = 100%
- (c) quality of participation – relevance, complexity, depth, comparative scope, all in the judgment of the faculty member

80% - 2-page response (summary and critique) to any 8 readings submitted the week it is discussed in class. Late papers will NOT be accepted.

*Note: You are expected to read about 200 pages of text of varying density per week*

### **Nature of the 2-page Response Paper**

The paper must do the following:

1. Summarize the main argument/s of the author
2. Concentrate on one or a few of the arguments in the response
3. Justify the selection of that particular argument
4. Critique:
  - a. Tell me what is good and compelling about it
  - b. Tell me why it is so - evidence, logic, language, voice, analysis, etc.
  - c. Tell me what is weak
  - d. Tell me why it is so
  - e. Tell me what else you would have liked to know about the subject, why?
  - f. You may do the above by comparing with another reading from the curriculum or outside of it.

To get full points for the response papers you have to do the above in the following manner:

1. No errors of language and grammar.
2. Original critical insight.
3. Eloquence.
4. Compelling argument.
5. Capacity to develop critical distance from own argument.

**Note:** Any student who needs an accommodation due to a chronic, psychological, visual, mobility and/or learning disability, or is Deaf or Hard of Hearing should register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212 998-4980, 240 Greene Street, [www.nyu.edu/csd](http://www.nyu.edu/csd).