

# Syllabus for FS1005

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## 1 Overview of FS1005

This module is about what food is, how we think about food and why humans have historically chosen to transform food. Society, as we know it, developed around the production, storage and trading of food. The scientific study of food enabled the development of technologies that have created an abundant, safe and diverse food supply. Specialised food products have been designed for everyone from infants to astronauts. Food scientists have played a key role in these technological developments and have altered how society interacts with and thinks about food. To engage with these topics, this module draws from concepts in science, technology, anthropology, psychology and philosophy.

The guiding focus of the module is on **Food Technology** (the application of scientific knowledge to design foods for a specific purpose), **Food**

**Culture** (the social behaviors and norms associated with food in societies) and **Food Ethics** (the analysis of right and wrong conduct in the production, distribution and consumption of food). We will encounter these topics in an integrated fashion throughout the module. A core tenet of mine is that our thinking is sharpened by considering arguments that might oppose our own. For this reason we will not only be reading advocates of the food and nutritional sciences but also their critics.

The other subjects you will be studying this year, like chemistry, biology and physics, are essential for a food science degree, but it's important also to be aware of the "big picture" and not just the molecules - that is the purpose of this module. Details relating to the module, particularly Semester 1, can be found in this document.

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## 2 Schedule for Semester 1

This module spans S1 (September-November) and S2 (Spring-Summer). An outline of the lecture sequence for S1 is below and the sequence for S2 will be provided at a later date. To soften some of the jargon I have grouped the S1 topics under four main themes.

- Knowing Food

*Ontology* (lectures 1-2) - what does it mean for a thing to be "food"?

*Epistemology* (lectures 3-4) - how do we know things about food?

- Talking Food

*Semiotics* (lectures 5-6) - why do foods carry cultural meaning?

*Rhetoric* (lectures 7-8) - how do we communicate about food?

- Analysing Food

*Molecules* (lectures 9-10) - knowing food through its parts.

*Structure* (lectures 10-11) - knowing food as a complex whole.

- Defending Food (Science)

*Nutritionism* (lectures 12) - is food just a collection of nutrients?

### Please Note

The planned sequence of lectures may change for a variety of reasons (interest levels, current events, time constraints, flashes of insight...).

## 3 Module Design

### 3.1 Lectures

Each week a video recording of a lecture will be published. The videos will vary in length depending on the topic. I will generally try to avoid putting two large lectures side-by-side where possible. In my view the "sweet spot" for a lecture is under 30 minutes and preferably 5-15 minutes.

I would advise you to keep on top of these releases. Binge watching is a huge cultural phenomenon at the moment. However, while it might be nice to binge watch a TV series it might be unpleasant to binge hours of academic content!

You should watch the videos actively. By this I mean take notes during the video and look up anything that you don't understand. I will definitely use words that you haven't heard of before, because my job has involved years of technical writing. If I don't explain something to your satisfaction then look it up - have you heard that the internet is amazing?

The slides will be made available to you in an interactive format on a webpage I put together. These slides are less "content dense" than the videos but might be useful for you to play around with and make notes on.

### 3.2 Reading

Reading material will be provided and recommended throughout the module. It comes as a surprise to some that reading and writing are important in a science program but I assure you that *yes, yes they are*. If you don't supplement the lectures with your own reading and writing you will learn very little. The notes and readings will typically go into more detail than is possible during a video, because few people can tolerate watching long videos with huge amounts of detail. I will expect you to pick up on some of these details in your assessments.

I have selected the readings because they are interesting and thought-provoking. Many of them will be written in a more conversational way than the scientific papers that you will need to read in other modules.

Some of the reading material might strike you as "hard" but most things worth reading have that quality (it's hard for me too) Hopefully you will all spend four good years at university. One of the main purposes of this time is to experiment with new ideas. If you leave university with the same set

of ideas and beliefs that you started with then it will have been a waste of time. Reading may seem old fashioned, but it's still the best way of learning about complex topics.

You will not understand *everything* in what you read and that is fine. What I need to see is you *trying* to understand, and developing new ways of understanding. This may involve finding a text from someone else who has described the idea in way that is more clear and accessible to you, or it might involve having a conversation with someone about the idea to check what both of your instincts are.

### 3.3 Assessment

There are multiple elements in the assessment for this module. It is difficult to take in all this information at the start of a module and the necessary details will be provided at the relevant times. Nonetheless, there are some important points to note. You might wonder, for example, what does it mean to "attend" a virtual class and when a good time might be to start thinking about your essays. If you have these and other questions then read on.

- *Lecture attendance and participation (10 marks)*: Students are expected to attend all lectures. Attendance means watching the videos, reading the notes and participating in discussions. To assess this I will be using Piazza, an online discussion forum that I have installed on Canvas. **To use Piazza you just need to click on the link, click 'join as student', and enter your student email address; you will then be sent a code that you can use to activate your account. Note: Piazza gives you the option to be included in their Careers service - I do not recommend you do this, so don't tick the box.** Periodically, I will post a question, prompt or poll on Piazza and open it up to the class for discussion. If you wish you can remain anonymous to your classmates but I will be able to identify you. This will allow me to evaluate how you are progressing through the material and to give you personalised feedback later on. If a student makes an excellent contribution it will be pinned to the top so other students can get an idea of what a good response looks like.
- *Class exams (2 X 20 marks)*: There will be two class exams. Students must complete both at the date and time set (to be confirmed with class rep). Exam questions will be a combination of multiple choice questions and short questions and will test your understanding of the lecture material up to that point. The exams will be run online through

Canvas. This will be my first opportunity to check if you are thinking critically about the material. Simply copying or repeating something that you have found online will not be considered sufficient to get a good mark.

- Presentation (20 marks): One group presentation will be organized (early in semester 2). Groups of 3-4 will be allocated randomly. Students in each group should work together to develop a presentation using any platform you prefer. Traditionally most people use Powerpoint but I am open to you using alternatives. Slots for streaming group presentations will be arranged, but if some students prefer they could record and edit together a video. Keep in mind, however, that videos will be reviewed as seriously as presentations, so it is not the "easy option".
- Critical essay (30 marks): One essay will be written as a part of this course. The topic will be drawn from material encountered in the lectures and readings. Students will write a thoughtful, fully-referenced and well-argued essay on one of the topics provided (if the student wishes to propose an alternative title they can discuss it with me). Essays will be evaluated for their originality, persuasiveness and logic. Students are expected to use references to support remarks that are not otherwise self-evident. Students are expected to write original material and plagiarism (copying the ideas of others without crediting the source) will not be tolerated. Lazy referencing (e.g., 'Google', 'Wikipedia') will lose you marks. The essay is an opportunity for you to differentiate yourself, get feedback on a piece of your work, and study some of the material covered in the lectures. It will be submitted before the final scheduled class through the Canvas page.

#### Please Note

Start thinking about your essays early. Look for a concept, technology or person during the lectures that you think is interesting, then try to find out a little but more yourself and think about possible angles for your essay.

## 4 FAQ

The pandemic has been a crazy time for everyone. As a lecturer I have had to basically rethink everything I knew about lecturing. This has led me to

make certain choices that people have sometimes asked me questions about. As you might find yourself asking similar questions I have included common ones and my brief responses below:

1. "Why do you post your videos on Youtube?". I think Youtube is great. I am familiar with it and you are familiar with it. It is probably the safest way of ensuring that everyone in the class can watch the videos, as youtube allows you to drop the quality of video if your wifi is poor. It's also really easy to watch these videos on your phone if you prefer and the auto-captioning is pretty good (but not perfect).
2. "Why don't you use Powerpoint?". When I realised I would be doing a lot of teaching online I started looking for ways of putting together slides in a more dynamic and accessible way. I wanted something that allowed me to make animations, something that students could interact with and something that could be viewed on a phone. So I use Reveal.js, which does all these things. Interestingly enough this way of making slides is a lot like making a website and it involves the same code and tricks, all of which I have had to learn.
3. "Why don't you provide pdfs of your slides?". I can if you want. You can also create them yourselves (instructions provided on the edibotopic website). The reason people usually provide pdfs is for printing. My guess though, and I might be wrong, is that printing all of your lecture slides might be more difficult this year due to the Covid restrictions. So, with my slides you can view them on any device, add notes and screenshot the notes. If you combine this with watching the videos and doing the reading then you will be fine.
4. "Why don't you livestream your lectures?". This was something I considered but I decided against. I think streaming is risky with a large group of people. My experience over Summer 2020 was that there can be connection issues and problems with audio and sound quality. Pre-recording the videos gives me more control over the final content so you don't have to listen to me say "Can you hear me... can you see that?" during every lecture. Also, to be honest. despite the best efforts and intentions of students they can not always attend every lecture and some attend very few. For me personally I am more confident that pre-recorded lectures yield a more polished product and this is preferable to live-streaming to a fraction of the class and recording it for the others.
5. "Can we arrange class discussions?". Yes, the class can arrange class discussions through the class rep and I would be happy to facilitate

that. This is on the condition though that at least two questions are submitted in advance of the discussion. This is to ensure that there is some minimal threshold that we pass without wasting everybody's time. Remember also that Piazza is intended to serve this function. Many people are too shy to speak up in meetings and online forums can be a "safer space" for some.

6. "Can I arrange an individual meeting?". Yes, contact me by email and I would be happy to set up a call or (socially-distanced) meeting if you'd like
7. "Shane, I have a condition that makes it difficult for me to read your notes/slides - can you help in some way?". I can try. For the slides, you can change the theme (color, font) by opening the menu and selecting 'themes' (I can provide more options if you'd like). For the notes, I can provide alternative notes with different font (e.g., sans-serif) on request.
8. "Shane, I am interested in how you make your videos - could you talk to me/us about how you make them?". Sure, I would love to. All of the videos are made using free software. If you're interested just make sure to say so.
9. "What is 'edibotopic' and that weird logo I keep seeing?". Ask me at the end of the year and I might tell you 🍌.

## 5 Useful Links

Links to the Github website containing lecture slides and the Piazza page for class discussions should be visible on the Canvas page but are included also below:

- Link to website with lecture slides:  
<https://edibotopic.github.io/lecture-slides/>
- Link to github repo showing code used to make the slides:  
<https://github.com/edibotopic/lecture-slides>
- Link to Piazza page for class discussions:  
<https://piazza.com/ucc.ie/fall2020/fs1005>
- Example reading 1 (click menu icon (☰) in first Lecture to find):  
<https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2014/01/02/256605441/punishing-inmates-with-the-loaf-persists-in-the-u-s?t=1600104661662&t=1600778428580>

- Example reading 2 (click menu icon (≡) in first Lecture to find):  
<https://www.wired.co.uk/article/huel-soylent-meal-replacement-drinks>

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