

American Food, American Identity
AMS 370 (31235)
M/W 11:30 am – 1:00 pm
Burdine (BUR) 436B

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Food is more than sustenance; the foods we eat can reveal much about our lives and the lives of those around us. The study of food and foodways can deepen our understanding of interpersonal and regional connections as well as the ways our food choices both reflect and influence developments in the food industry and American popular culture. Throughout this course I will ask you to investigate American culture and history through food production and consumption. A primary focus of the course will be the idea of “American food” and the ways various groups both today and throughout American history have attempted to grapple with that idea. We will consider specific food traditions and practices and the ways they are used to perform or signify identities, as well as the ways food can denote political, religious, and regional backgrounds or affiliations. We will cover wide-ranging topics including food and mobility, gender roles, immigration, food safety, labor, barbecue and race, food spaces, food ethics, technology, and industrialization among many other topics. The primary goal of the course is to illustrate the significant ways that the simple act of eating influences and is influenced by our local cultures and histories. Along with scholarship in the field of food studies, we will use cookbooks, novels, poetry, photographs, songs, documentaries, and oral histories to investigate the past and present of American food communities.

COURSE GOALS

By the end of the semester, students should be able to understand or to have accomplished the following:

1. Discuss historical and contemporary connections between food and cultures in the United States.
2. Understand the connections between food production, distribution, and consumption.
3. Develop creative and academically rigorous methods to analyze representations of food in the stories we tell about ourselves and others.

4. Conduct in-depth research about the individual, societal, and material details of a recipe, ingredient, food process, or food ritual.
5. Analyze, through critical reading and writing, a particular aspect of food history or culture in the United States.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Elizabeth Engelhardt. *Republic of Barbecue: Stories Beyond the Brisket* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009).

James McWilliams. *Just Food: Where Locavores Get It Wrong and How We Can Truly Eat Responsibly* (New York: Back Bay Books, 2010).

OPTIONAL (to buy) TEXTS

Mark Kurlansky. *The Big Oyster: History on the Half Shell* (New York: Random House, 2007).

Laura Shapiro. *Perfection Salad: Women and Cooking at the Turn of the Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

CLASS POLICIES

This upper-division seminar is primarily a discussion class. Thus, students are expected to engage the day's reading before the class meets, bring the reading materials to class, and be prepared to discuss them in the context of other assigned readings. I will lecture briefly on many of the topics in order to provide background and context to our topics and readings.

Attendance:

Because we are building a community of scholars in this class, the regular participation of each class member is crucial. Attendance in this class is mandatory. Consistent absences will result in a deduction from your final grade. **After three (3) unexcused absences, each additional absence will result in one half (1/2) letter grade deduction from your final grade.** For example, if you have four unexcused absences and a "B+" at the end of the semester, your final grade will drop to a "B" due to your absences. If you are absent due to illness, I will need a doctor's note in my box by the first class day after your illness that clearly excuses the days absent.

Tardiness will count against your grade as well. **Four late arrivals will equal one unexcused absence.** If you accrue absences due to serious external circumstances, please contact me as soon as possible to see if other arrangements can be made.

If you arrive on time and prepared for every class and participate for the full class period, you will be well on your way to success. Being prepared for class means more than skimming the reading for the day. Students are expected to engage the day's reading before the class meets, bring the reading materials to class, and be prepared to discuss them. Finally, I expect that you will each visit me during my office hours over the course of the semester.

Religious Holidays:

Religious holy days sometimes conflict with class schedules. If you miss a class, work assignment, or other project due to the observance of a religious holy day you will either be excused from the class or will be given an opportunity to complete the work missed within a reasonable time after the absence. **It is the policy of The University of Texas at Austin that you must notify each of your instructors at least fourteen (14) days prior to the classes scheduled on dates you will be absent to observe a religious holy day.**

Scholastic Honesty:

In this course, you are a public scholar and writer. All sources used in any of your assignments (directly or indirectly) must be cited; use a standard style for documentation, preferably Chicago or MLA. As per university guidelines, scholastic dishonesty "includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, collusion, falsifying academic records, and any act designed to give unfair academic advantage to the student." Most cases of academic dishonesty will result in a zero (0%) on an individual assignment and will be referred to the Dean of Student's office. For more information, see the University website at:

http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acint_student.php.

Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. For further information, visit the Student Judicial Services web site at www.utexas.edu/depts/dos/sjs. We will discuss plagiarism in more detail when we come to the first writing assignments.

Students with Disabilities:

In compliance with the UT Austin policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for students with disabilities. Students who require special accommodations need to get a letter that documents the disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities area of the Office of the Dean of Students (471-6259 (voice) or 471-4641 (TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing)). This letter should be presented to me at the beginning of the semester and needed accommodations should be discussed at that time. For more information: <http://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/ssd/providing.php>.

Cultural Diversity in the United States:

This course carries the flag for Cultural Diversity in the United States. Cultural Diversity courses are designed to increase your familiarity with the variety and richness of the American cultural experience. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from

assignments covering the practices, beliefs, and histories of at least one U.S. cultural group that has experienced persistent marginalization.

Independent Inquiry:

This course carries the Independent Inquiry flag. Independent Inquiry courses are designed to engage you in the process of inquiry over the course of a semester, providing you with the opportunity for independent investigation of a question, problem, or project related to your major. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from the independent investigation and presentation of your own work.

Writing:

This course carries the Writing Flag. Writing Flag courses are designed to give students experience with writing in an academic discipline. In this class, you can expect to write regularly during the semester, complete substantial writing projects, and receive feedback from your instructor to help you improve your writing. You will also have the opportunity to revise one or more assignments, and you may be asked to read and discuss your peers' work. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from your written work. Writing Flag classes meet the Core Communications objectives of Critical Thinking, Communication, Teamwork, and Personal Responsibility, established by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

GRADING POLICIES

Note: Plus/Minus letter grades will be assigned for the final grades

Grade Breakdown:

Canvas Discussion	10%
Response Papers/Discussion Questions	20%
Short Analysis Paper	20%
Rough Draft/Peer Review	10%
Student-led Discussion	10%
Final Paper	30%

Participation:

Thirty percent of your final grade will be based on in-class and online participation (careful reading, active listening, thoughtful discussion, engaged group work, etc.), response papers, and discussion questions.

As stated earlier, this class is primarily a discussion section. The goal of the class is not for everyone to speak all of the time, but for each member of the class to participate on an ever-improving level. If you find it difficult to speak in class, especially during larger discussions, you should discuss ways to work on this with me.

Canvas Discussion:

Each week one or two of your peers will post discussion questions for the week's readings. These questions will hopefully spur online discussion of the readings each week. The discussions on Canvas will represent 10% of your final grade. If you read the assigned texts and take a few minutes to engage with your classmates about their questions or your own response to the readings, then you will nab an easy 10% of your grade. I will evaluate your participation in the discussion each week and keep the ten (10) highest graded weeks (of 13 total weeks) for your final average. I grade the discussions as follows:

0 – No responses

4 – One response

7 – Two responses

10 – Two responses plus a clear reference to the reading (quoted or paraphrased) in one of your responses.

Response Papers/Discussion Questions:

You are required to turn in one (1) response paper per unit for a total of four (4) papers throughout the semester. The response paper should be 1- to 2-pages regarding one of the week's readings. Please do not give me a book report; you should turn in a personal response to the readings. Does the reading relate to your personal experience, does it touch an ethical nerve, does it piss you off? I want to see a clearly organized and written, short, personal essay response.

Again, do not summarize the reading for me. I've read them all many times. You will not get credit if you do so.

I will pass around a sign-up sheet for the response papers so that you all don't turn them in on the same day. You choose which weeks you want to complete the assignment, but remember you must turn in one response paper for each unit of the syllabus.

In addition to the response paper, you will be required to submit two discussion questions on the Canvas discussion board by 10 pm on Sunday before you write your response papers. Ideally, you will engage these questions in your papers. I will select a number of these questions to integrate into classroom discussion during the week's classes.

ASSIGNMENTS

Note: Please submit all assignments through Canvas

Major Writing Assignments:

In addition to the weekly response papers, there will be three larger writing assignments required for the class (two papers and one rough draft). Early in the course, you will choose a recipe, ingredient, ritual, or specific food practice to investigate. Over the course of the semester you will produce a ten-page research paper on the cultural, historical, material, and symbolic resonance of the item or practice. This project will be completed in stages, with peer review, revision, and presentation. The assignment will be discussed further as the semester continues.

The first major writing assignment will be a 4-5 page analysis of your chosen subject. The final paper for the course will be an 8-10 page paper with a research component. Hopefully, you will be able to expand on your previous short analysis paper by researching, critiquing, and analyzing your subject in a particular context. Toward the end of the semester, you will submit a rough draft of your final paper for peer review. I will provide an in-depth description of the writing assignments in the first couple of weeks of the semester.

Student-led Discussion:

The final requirement for the course will be a student-led discussion of a potential source for your final (or mid-term) paper. Discussions will be 10-15 minutes long. You will receive instructions for this assignment in the first two weeks of the course.

Late Papers:

Papers are due at the beginning of class on the date due. Late papers will be penalized according to the following (**NO EXCEPTIONS**):

By the end of class:	5%
After class to next class day	10%
Each additional class day:	10%
More than 14 calendar days:	100%

If you must turn in a paper late due to exceptional circumstances, please contact me as soon as possible to discuss possible arrangements. Late papers need to be emailed to me as soon as possible, and then turned in the next class date.

RESOURCES:

The Undergraduate Writing Center:

Located in the UT Learning Commons at Perry-Castañeda Library (PCL 2.330), the center is a valuable resource for writing assignments. See the website for information and handouts on specific writing issues: <http://uwc.utexas.edu/>

Office Hours:

I will have regular office hours every week (starting the second week of classes) to discuss class themes, progress, issues, etc. My office hours are listed at the top of this syllabus. If the times do not work for you, please email me to set up a separate appointment.

SCHEDULE

Key Dates:

9/10-17	Paper/Project Discussion -- Mandatory Office Hours Meeting
9/19	Paper/Project Topic Due
9/24	Student-led Discussion Begin
10/24	Analysis Paper Due
11/28	Rough Draft Due
12/5	Peer Reviews
12/15	Final Paper Due

The schedule may change here and there throughout the semester depending on where we are in the class. Readings and assignments should be completed by the day they are listed.

Introduction to Course

Week 1:

8/29: Introduction to the Course & Syllabus

Week 2:

9/3 *Labor Day – No Class*

9/5 What is Foodways? What is American Food? How and why do we study food?
Engelhardt, *The Republic of Barbecue*, Foreword – p. 37
*Cresswell, *On the Move*, 1-24
*Mintz, “Time, Sugar, and Sweetness,” from *Food & Culture Reader*, p. 91-106

The Politics of Food

Week 3:

9/10 McWilliams, Intro & Ch. 1
Paper Project/Topic Discussion (mandatory office hours visit)

9/12 McWilliams, Ch. 2
Paper Project/Topic Discussion (mandatory office hours visit)

Week 4:

9/17 McWilliams, Ch. 3
**American Appetites*, p. 177-179, 207-222
Paper Project/Topic Discussion (mandatory office hours visit)

9/19 Watch *Food, Inc.*
Paper/Project Topic Due

Week 5:

9/24 McWilliams, Ch. 4 (Ch. 5 – skim)
*Schlosser, “The Chain Never Stops,” from *Food & Culture Reader*, p. 441-451
**American Appetites*, p. 125-128
Student-led Discussion (1)

9/26 McWilliams, Ch. 6 & Conclusion
Agricultural Act of 2014
Student-led Discussion (1)

Food Science & Gender Roles

Week 6:

10/1 *Shapiro, *Perfection Salad*, Prologue & Ch. 1-3 (selections)
*Neuhaus, *Manly Meals and Mom’s Home Cooking*, p. 1-26
**American Appetites*, p. 123-125, 129-139
Student-led Discussion (1)

10/3 *Shapiro, Ch. 4 (selections)
*Tipton, Martin, *The Jemima Code*, Forward & Introduction
Student-led Discussion (1)

Week 7:

10/8 *Shapiro, Ch. 5-6 (selections)
*Engelhardt, *A Mess of Greens*, p. 1-19, 83-117
Student-led Discussion (1)

10/10 *Shapiro, Ch. 7 (selections)
Engelhardt, *The Republic of Barbecue*, 108-132
Student-led Discussion (1)

Week 8:

10/15 *Shapiro, Ch. 8 & Conclusion (selections)
*Neuhaus, *Manly Meals and Mom’s Home Cooking*, p. 73-98
Student-led Discussion (1)

10/17 *Coe, *Chop Suey*, p. 180-210
Student-led Discussion (1)

Food & Place

Week 9:

10/22 Kurlansky, Prologue-Ch. 1
Engelhardt, *The Republic of Barbecue*, 40-71
*Cresswell, 1-14
Student-led Discussion (1)

10/24 Kurlansky, Ch. 2
*Selections from *American Appetites*
Analysis Paper Due

Week 10:

10/29 Kurlansky, Ch. 3-5
Student-led Discussion (1)

10/31 Kurlansky, Ch. 6
*Engelhardt, "Appalachian Chicken and Waffles: Countering Southern Food Fetishism,"
73-83
Student-led Discussion (1)

Week 11:

11/5 Kurlansky, Ch. 7-8
**American Appetites*, p. 101-105, 109, 114-118
Student-led Discussion (1)

11/7 Kurlansky, Ch. 9-10 & Epilogue
Engelhardt, *The Republic of Barbecue*, 159-167
Student-led Discussion (1)

Week 12:

11/12 *Coe, *Chop Suey*, p. 144-179
Student-led Discussion (1)

Food, Community & Identity

11/14 Engelhardt, *The Republic of Barbecue*, 75-105
Student-led Discussion (1)

Week 13:

- 11/19 *Pilcher, "Taco Bell, Maseca, and Slow Food: A Postmodern Apocalypse for Mexico's Peasant Cuisine?," from *Food & Culture Reader*, p. 400-410
Student-led Discussion (1)

11/21 No Class (Thanksgiving Holiday)

Week 14:

- 11/26 *Coe, *Chop Suey*, p. 103-143
Student-led Discussion (1)
- 11/28 *Coe, *Chop Suey*, p. 211-252
**American Appetites*, p. 71-72
Rough Draft of Final Paper Due

Week 15:

- 12/3 *Vu, "Natives of a Ghost County...", from *Asian Americans in Dixie*, p. 165-189
*Cooley, "'The Customer is Always White': Food, Race, and Contested Eating Space in the South," from *The Larder*, p. 240-275
**American Appetites*, p. 223-226
Student-led Discussion (1)
- 12/5 *Williams-Forsen, "More than Just the 'Big Piece of Chicken': The Power of Race, Class, and Food in American Consciousness," from *Food & Culture Reader*, p. 342-353
*Tipton-Martin, *The Jemima Code*, 11-37
Peer Reviews Due

Week 16:

- 12/10 *Nystrom, "Italian New Orleans and the Business of Food in the Immigrant City: There's More to the Muffaletta than Meets the Eye," from *The Larder*, p. 128-153
* Rawson, "'America's Place for Inclusion': Stories of Food, Labor, and Equality at the Waffle House," from *The Larder*, p. 216-239
- 12/15 ***Final Paper Due (by 10:00 pm)***

*** Readings found on Canvas**