

AMS 311S: Eating Right in America

Class Meeting

MWF 11:00-12:00
BUR 436A

Unique Numbers

AMS 311: 31097

Instructor Info

Kerry Knerr
Office: BUR 404
Email: kerryknerr@utexas.edu
OH: Tuesday 9 am-noon
Appointments available upon request

Course Materials

Required Texts:

Charlotte Biltekoff, *Eating Right in America: The Cultural Politics of Food and Health*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013)

Ntozake Shange, *If I Can Cook/You Know God Can*, (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1998)

Additional readings or resources will be posted to the class Canvas page.

Introduction

Eating in American culture has always been a fraught prospect. Each stage in the food chain—how food is grown, how it is prepared, and who eats it—is highly contentious on their own; these are then further complicated by pressure to eat correctly. This course will use the lenses of race, gender, ability, and class to understand what it means to eat right in America.

This course investigates the question: what is good food? We will proceed in three units, each built around a different kind of “good” food. The first unit, “Healthy,” will think about the ways in which healthy food and healthy bodies have been constructed and deployed in American culture. The second, “Proper,” will look at the moral valences people have placed on food—which food is proper to eat and which foods are not. The third, “Desire,” will explore the ways that desire for food has been valorized, demonized, constricted, and regulated.

This course will proceed thematically and will cover a variety of time periods from colonization to the nineteenth century to the contemporary moment. This is an interdisciplinary course with a Writing Flag. As such, we will draw primary material from a variety of sources and media, and you will be expected to respond in writing to them. You can expect to analyze images, films, academic texts, poetry, recipes, and physical objects produced by anthropologists, scientists, and artists, among many others.

Expected Outcomes

By understanding the cultural history of food and health in the US, you will gain confidence in the field of American Studies and increase your knowledge of the diversity of American cultural history. You will learn to deeply analyze both primary and secondary sources. You will demonstrate your mastery of these outcomes by making clear written arguments and supporting them with evidence drawn from course materials and from outside sources. You will learn to question familiar narratives of health and modernity and to understand how these categories have shifted over time in response to cultural changes.

Grading Breakdown

Participation: 15%

Weekly Responses (6): 20%

Social Media Analysis: 10%

Unit Papers (2 total): 25%

Final Paper: 30%

Course Website

Information for this course can be found through its Canvas page, accessible via canvas.utexas.edu.

On this page you will find:

- Selected readings
- Lecture slides
- Important announcements
- A course calendar with key dates
- Grades

Writing Guidelines

Thesis: 15%

Argument: 15%

Evidence: 30%

Organization: 20%

Voice: 15%

Conclusion: 5%

This is not a firm rubric, but rather a guide for you to think about how to evaluate your own writing. This is a way to externally check yourself and make sure your writing is clear, coherent, and on topic.

Course Requirements

Participation (15%)

As a small, discussion-based seminar class, participation and attendance are key to the course objectives. It is important that you come to class prepared to substantially discuss the day's readings or materials, actively participate in group activities, and contribute productively to the class environment. Furthermore, significant absences from class will affect your participation grade. Six or more absences will result in an automatic zero for this portion of your grade and will likely affect other portions of your grade negatively as well. Participation grades are posted approximately every two weeks.

Weekly Responses (20%)

You will be asked to respond to the week's assignments over the course of the semester. Usually this will take the form of a **short response** (300-500 words), but as this is an interdisciplinary course, you are free to respond with an object, creative response, or other short presentation, as long as you clear it with me first. You will be required to **complete six responses** of your choosing throughout the semester.

Instagram Analysis (10%)

For this assignment, you will analysis a health-related Instagram (or other social media) account. More detail will be given in class.

Unit Papers (25%)

At the end of Units 1 and 2, you will complete a **short essay (4-5 pages)** built around a theme of your choice, based on the readings for that Unit. The purpose of this assignment is to synthesize course materials and themes and to use an interdisciplinary method. We will practice these methods in discussion and group activities; if you do not participate in these activities or practice developing themes across times and materials, you will struggle with these assignments.

Final Paper (30%)

The **final paper (5-8 pages)** will be based on a theme you have developed in one of your Unit Papers and additional outside research. The purpose of this assignment is to focus on the editing and revision processes as key parts of the writing process. There will be opportunities for peer-review in class, and substantial revision must also take place on your own time.

Q&A Course Policies

Question

I have a question about an assignment, a grade, accessing course material, or setting up an excused absence. What should I do?

I missed class. What should I do?

Can I use my laptop in class?

Can I turn in late work or make up work?

How does the campus carry law affect classroom policy?

Someone is behaving strangely or making me feel uncomfortable. What should I do?

What should I do if I need an accommodation because of a disability?

Answer

I am available in office hours, Tuesday 9 am to noon, and by email at kerryknerr@utexas.edu. I will do my best to respond to your emails in a timely fashion (within 24 hours), but if you email me on evenings or weekends, know that will delay my response somewhat.

You are responsible for all material covered in class. Ask a classmate to share their notes, visit me in office hours, and check Canvas for slides or additional materials. Some in-class activities can be made up with advance notice, but others may depend on being physically present in the classroom.

Expect to take handwritten notes in this class. Laptops will be acceptable during some class activities. If you are not explicitly told that laptops are allowed, assume they are not. I expect to never see or hear your cell phone.

Late work will not be accepted in this class. I will consider exceptions to this policy only under extreme and extraordinary circumstances.

Students and faculty, with the appropriate licenses, are permitted by law to carry concealed handguns, assuming they stay invisible at all times. As per University policy, "The open carry of handguns is not allowed on the campus. Therefore, if you ever see a gun, do not attempt to question or approach the carrier, but immediately call 911. Police are trained to handle this situation."

If you are worried for another student or feel unsafe, you may use the Behavior Concerns Line to discuss your concerns. Call 512-232-5050 or visit www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal.

Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 512-471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (video). Faculty are not required to provide accommodations without an official letter from SSD.

Question

What are evacuation procedures for this classroom?

Answer

Familiarize yourself with all the exit doors of this classroom and building. Remember that the nearest door may not be the one you used when entering the building. Students requiring assistance during an evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first day of class. In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. Evacuation procedures can be found at www.utexas.edu/emergency.

Are there opportunities for extra credit?

Yes! I encourage you to attend various lectures happening around campus. You will find information on Canvas on where to find out about these events and what you will need to write to receive extra credit. First, you must clear the lecture with me before you write it up (send me an email); unapproved lectures will not receive credit. For each write-up you do, you will receive one point added to any assignment of your choosing.

What happens in office hours?

Mostly I sit at my desk and look at my plants. Sometimes students come to see me. Office hours works best when you come in with an idea of what you want to talk about. You can ask me about concepts we have covered or will cover in class, you can ask about upcoming assignments (even if you haven't started them yet), or you can ask about feedback you've gotten in class or on assignments. Coming to office hours (and having a productive conversation) improves your participation grade and is literally free, so you should do it.

What do I need to do to succeed in this class?

- Complete assigned readings on the day they are assigned in the course schedule.
- Keep up with weekly responses—these are also an opportunity to develop themes that you can build on in your unit papers or final paper.
- Actively participate in class discussion and in-class activities.
- Come to class with prepared questions about readings.
- **Visit me in office hours.** Come prepared with questions about course themes or materials.
- Keep up with announcements on Canvas.

Topic	Date	Reading	Special Notes
Week 1: Introductions	Wednesday, August 29	No assigned reading	
	Friday, August 31	Probyn, “Bodies that Eat”	Available on Canvas
Week 2: Foundations	Monday, September 3	No reading assigned	No class for Labor Day
	Wednesday, September 5	Kauanui and Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism Then and Now”	Available on Canvas
	Friday, September 7	Abarca, “Charlas Culinarias”	Available on Canvas and in ebook Weekly response 1 due

Unit 1: Health

Week 3: Science and Health	Monday, September 10	Biltekoff, Chapters 1 and 2	
	Wednesday, September 12	Shapiro, “Perfection Salad”	Available on Canvas
	Friday, September 14	No reading assigned—in-class workshop	Available on Canvas Weekly response 2 due
Week 4: Thinness	Monday, September 17	Biltekoff, Chapter 3	
	Wednesday, September 19	Cevasco, “Hunger Knowledges”	Available on Canvas
	Friday, September 21	No reading assigned—in-class workshop	Writing workshop in class Weekly response 3 due

Week 5: Fatness	Monday, September 24	Biltekoff, Chapter 5	Available on Canvas
	Wednesday, September 26	Markowitz, "Expanding Access," Kwate et al, "Inequality in Obesigenic Environments"	Available on Canvas and in ebook
	Friday, September 28	No reading assigned—in-class workshop	Guest lecture: Judson Barber Weekly response 4 due
Week 6: The Decolonized Diet	Monday, October 1	Excerpt of Abbott Mihesuah, <i>Our Ancestors' Gardens</i>	Available on Canvas
	Wednesday, October 3	Holt-Gimenez, "From Food Crisis to Food Sovereignty"	Available on Canvas and in ebook
	Friday, October 5	Shange, Chapters 1-6	Weekly response 5 due

Unit 2: Proper

Week 7: Veganism and its Discontents	Monday, October 8	Excerpt from Sinclair, <i>The Jungle</i>	Available on Canvas Unit 1 Paper due in class
	Wednesday, October 10	Harper, "Vegan Epistemology"	Available on Canvas and in ebook
	Friday, October 12	<i>Thug Kitchen</i> Twitty, "Thug Kitchen"	Available on Canvas Weekly response 6 due
Week 8: Capitalism and Its Discontents	Monday, October 15	Freidberg, "The Triumph of the Egg"	Available on Canvas
	Wednesday, October 17	Gross, "Capitalism and Its Discontents"	Available on Canvas and in ebook
	Friday, October 19	In-class workshop	Available on Canvas Weekly response 7 due

Week 9: Eating Right in America	Monday, October 22	Wazana Tompkins, "She Made a Table to Ensnare Them"	Available on Canvas
	Wednesday, October 24	Kim, "Incarceration, Cafeteria Style"	Available on Canvas and in ebook
	Friday, October 26	No reading assigned	Weekly response 8 due
Week 10: Disgust	Monday, October 29	Selection from Ku, <i>Dubious Gastronomy</i>	Guest Lecture: Andi Remoquillo Available on Canvas
	Wednesday, October 31	Van Esterik, "Vintage Breast Milk"	Available on Canvas and in ebook
	Friday, November 2	Alkhatib, "Entomophagy"	Available on Canvas Weekly response 9 due

Unit 3: Desire

Week 11: Ethical Consumption	Monday, November 5	hooks, "Eating the Other"	Guest lecture by Kate Grover Unit 2 Paper due in class
	Wednesday, November 7	Adams, "The Rape of Animals"	Available on Canvas
	Friday, November 9	No reading assigned	Class cancelled Weekly response 10 due
Week 12: Desire, Trauma, and Death	Monday, November 12	Reading TBA	Guest lecture by Danielle Good
	Wednesday, November 14	Wallace, "Consider the Lobster"	Available on Canvas
	Friday, November 16	Reading TBA	Weekly response 11 due

Week 13:	Monday, November 19	Shange, Chapters 7-13	Available on Canvas
	Wednesday, November 21	No reading assigned	Class Cancelled for Thanksgiving
Week 14: Othering Desires	Monday, November 26	Probyn, "Eating Sex"	Available on Canvas and in ebook
	Wednesday, November 28	Brazier, "Sex and Fat Chicks"	Available on Canvas
	Friday, November 30	Writing workshop in class	Available on Canvas Weekly response 12 due
Week 15: Peer Review and Presentations	Monday, December 3	Social Media Presentations	Social Media Analysis due in class
	Wednesday, December 5	Social Media Presentations	
	Friday, December 7	No reading assigned	
Week 16:	Monday, December 10	No class, writing day	Final Paper due December 12 at midnight