

Food Issues of Contemporary Society

Department of Nutrition, Food Studies, and Public Health

Course no. E33.0071

Fall 2007

Tuesdays, 9:30 AM-12:15 PM

Education Building, Room 1078

Instructor: Anne E. McBride, anne.mcbride@nyu.edu

Office Hours: Tuesdays after class, and by appointment

Course Description and Objectives:

In this course¹, we will examine a number of prominent issues that determine how we make, allocate, choose, and even talk about food in today's world. Rather than looking at the largest number of issues possible, we will focus on a manageable quantity, with the aim to take each issue and look at it from several angles. To use a method that is perhaps most specific to food studies, each issue will be approached from both its production and its consumption perspective, although certainly not always separately or in that order. When we talk about media, for example, we will not only consider the implications of increased readership and viewership of food topics among the public; but also we must fathom who is producing words and images about food, and to what ends.

To evaluate the food issues chosen—space/place, marketing and branding, media, family meal, restaurant industry, globalization, and the future of food—students will need to actively engage in assigned readings, class discussions, and blogging. To facilitate this, students will be responsible for coming to class with discussion questions, reading about food in the media (the “Dining In/Out” section of the NY Times is only *one* example), getting out of the classroom entirely to observe and interrogate food issues in the city, and posting on a class blog.

This course is required for all undergraduate food studies and food management majors, and highly recommended as an elective for nutrition majors as well as those outside of the department.

Any student attending NYU 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.

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Readings:

A course packet is available for purchase at Unique Copy (Greene Street, between 8th St. and Waverly Place) and on reserve at the library. Other articles will be posted on Blackboard and distributed in class. You can access newspapers and magazines through the NYU Library online system, or at the library itself. Since the topics of this course are constantly evolving, articles listed here may be substituted for more current ones. Such changes will be announced in class, and by email, with links posted on Blackboard.

Methods of Evaluation:

Participation (25% of final grade):

Students are expected to actively participate in this class, by completing all readings, preparing for class discussion, and remaining knowledgeable of current food issues as presented in daily newspapers and weekly and monthly magazines. These include the food (and often business) sections of the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, and others of their choosing (see sautewednesday.com for a list of national and international food sections), *Wall Street Journal*, *Newsweek*, *Time*, *Nation's Restaurant News*, *Restaurant Business*, *Forbes*, *Gourmet*, *Food & Wine*, *Saveur*, *Eating Well*, etc.

By 9 p.m. on the Monday evening before class, students should have emailed the instructors a discussion question (or several if they choose) inspired by the week's readings or by current events if applicable.

The class blog, foodissuesfall07.blogspot.com, can also be used to post articles students deem relevant to the class, discuss food-related issues as they come up in media, continue class discussions, or other uses suitable to the class. Discretionary participation points will be awarded if appropriate.

Field Research (25% of final grade)

During the semester, students will spend—in pairs of their choosing—time observing a food business of their choosing and writing a field report of their observations. Students should seek places where both production and consumption stand out. Appropriate businesses include supermarkets (both regular and gourmet), farmer's and community markets, bakeries, and specialty shops. Restaurants will be acceptable only if students spend considerable time in both the dining room *and* the kitchen. Also consider sites that may be less conventional for observation—like Hunt's Point or even Sullivan Street

Bakery—in that they conduct both retail and wholesale business. By October 16, your group should have its location approved.

Observations will range from clearly identifying what purpose and impact the business has in its neighborhood to determining who its patrons are and why they select it. So that the class observes a diverse range of sites and to ensure there is little or no overlap, the instructor must first approve the business that you propose to observe. Additional information will be given on possible sites, observation methods, and examples of such work.

To keep others, and their instructor, informed of their observations, students will post summaries (or all if they wish) of their field observations on a class blog, foodissuesfall07.blogspot.com. A final observation report, which can include blog posts, will be turned in on November 20. It should be 8 to 10 pages long.

Midterm Exam (25% of final grade):

The exam will cover class readings and discussions, and consist of short essay answers. You will receive a list of questions and select 3 or 4 to answer in class, on October 16.

Final Paper (25% of final grade):

Students will receive a list of questions and select one to answer at home in a 10-page paper. The final paper should incorporate a majority of the readings and themes covered in class. No outside research is required, but students should feel free to include additional sources where relevant. The final paper is due on Friday, December 14.

Students who wish to examine a topic related to the class in a research paper instead can do so with approval from the instructor. Discuss your topic and the sources you'll use with me no later than November 27.

Schedule:

Week 1: September 4

Course introduction and outline of current issues

Week 2: September 11

Space and Place: Production

A. Fuat Firat and Nikhilesh Dholakia, *Consuming People: From Political Economy to Theaters of Consumption* (London: Routledge, 1998). pp. 13-20. [Reading Packet (RP)]

Charles Fishman, *The Wal-Mart Effect: How the World's Most Powerful Company Really Works, and How It's Transforming the American Economy* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006). pp. 197-247 [RP]

C. Clare Hinrichs, "The Practice and Politics of Food System Localization" in *Journal of Rural Studies*, 19 (2003): 33-45. [BB]

Michael Pollan/John Mackey online exchange [BB]

Week 3: September 18

Space and Place: Consumption

Richard Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye: The Design and Social Life of Cities* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992). pp. 163-168. [RP]

Lizabeth Cohen, "From Town Center to Shopping Center: The Reconfiguration of Community Marketplaces in Postwar America," *The American Historical Review* (Oct., 1996): 1050-1081. [BB]

John McPhee, "Giving Good Weight," *The New Yorker* 54 (3 July 1978): 36-68. [RP]

Kim Severson, "Greenmarket at 30," *New York Times* (19 July 2006). [BB]

Week 4: September 25

Marketing and Branding: Production

Douglas B. Holt, *How Brands Become Icons: The Principles of Cultural Branding*, (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2004). pp. 13-61 and pp. 189-208 [RP]

Pierre Boissard and Richard Miller, transl. *Camembert: A National Myth* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003). pp. 160-224 [RP]

Week 5: October 2

Marketing and Branding: Consumption

Paco Underhill, *Why We Buy: The Science of Shopping* (New York: Simon &

Schuster, 1999). pp. 11-33. [RP]

Kalman Applbaum, "[The Sweetness of Salvation: Consumer Marketing and the Liberal-Bourgeois Theory of Needs](#)," *Current Anthropology* (Jun., 1998): 323-349. [BB]

Dana Goodyear, "The Simple Life," *The New Yorker* (11 October 2004). [BB]

Week 6: October 9

Media: Production and Consumption

Andrew Chan, "'La grande bouffe': Cooking Shows as Pornography," *Gastronomica* 3(4): 47-53. [RP]

Priscilla Parkhurst Ferguson and Sharon Zukin. "What's Cooking?" *Theory and Society*, (Apr., 1995) 193-199. [BB]

Molly O'Neill, "Food Porn," *Columbia Journalism Review*, 2003. [BB]

Doug Brown, "Haute Cuisine," *American Journalism Review*, February/March 2004 issue. [BB]

Donna R. Gabaccia, *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998). pp. 175-201 [RP]

Selection of current magazine articles, blogs, cookbooks

Week 7: October 16

Midterm

Field Observation Selection due

Week 8: October 23

Family Meal: Production and Consumption

Caron F. Bove and Jeffery Sobal, "Foodwork in Newly Married Couples: Making Family Meals," *Food, Culture & Society* 9:1, (Spring 2006): 69-89. [RP]

Krishnendu Ray, [*The Migrant's Table : Meals and Memories in Bengali-American Households*](#) (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2004). pp. 48-76. [RP]

Helene Brembeck, "Home to McDonald's: Upholding the Family Dinner with the Help of McDonald's," *Food, Culture and Society*, 8:2 (Fall 2005): 215-226. [RP]

Kim Severson and Julia Moskin, "Meals That Moms Can Almost Call Their Own," *New York Times*, 26 March 2006. [BB]

Bonnie Benwick and Candy Sagon, "Putting a Trend to the Test," *The Washington Post*, (30 August 2006). [BB]

Week 9: October 30

Restaurant Industry: Production

Gary Alan Fine, *Kitchens: The Culture of Restaurant Work* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996). pp. 177-198. [RP]

Michael Ruhlman, *The Reach of a Chef: Beyond the Kitchen* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2006). pp. 9-30 and pp. 212-236. [RP]

Bill Buford, "The Secret of Excess" in *The New Yorker*, August 2002. [BB]

Week 10: November 6

Restaurant Industry: Consumption

Rick Fantasia, "Fast Food in France," *Theory and Society*, (Apr., 1995): 201-243. [BB]

Samantha Barbas, "Just Like Home: 'Home Cooking' and the Domestication of the American Restaurant," *Gastronomica* 2:4 (Fall 2002): 43-52. [BB]

Week 11: November 13

Globalization: Production and Consumption

Lawrence Osborne, *The Accidental Connoisseur: An Irreverent Journey Through the Wine World* (North Point Press, 2005). [Amazon or Barnes & Noble]

→read the whole book preferably (it's very accessible), but skimming the following chapters is OK: The Spirit of Place, An Afternoon in Bordeaux, and Mondo Antinori

Week 12: November 20

Field Research paper due

Movie: The Future of Food

Week 13: November 27

The Future of Food: Production

Pete Wells, "The Recipe Burglar," *Food & Wine* (November 2006). [BB]

Jeffrey Schwartz, "The Once and Future Kitchen," *Food Arts* (May 2006). [BB]

Hervé This, "Molecular Gastronomy: A Scientific Look to Cooking" [BB]

Rachel Laudan, "A Plea for Culinary Modernism" *Gastronomica* [BB]

Optional: Hervé This, "Food for Tomorrow?" *EMBO Reports* [BB]

Movie: Decoding Ferran Adria

Week 14: December 4

The Future of Food: Consumption

Burkhard Bilger, "The Lunchroom Rebellion," *The New Yorker* (4 September 2006) [BB]

Robin Marantz Henig, "Fat Factors," *New York Times Magazine* (13 August 2006) [BB]

Other readings TBD