

Food and Film

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New York University

Department of Nutrition, Food Studies and Public Health

Undergraduate Program in Food Studies

Course Description and Objectives

In this course we will examine the representations of food and diet in a specific media: film.

We will specifically look at how films illustrate the relationship between food and culture, ethnicity, gender, age, class, religion, sex, fantasy and fear. Additionally, the symbolic significance of food in film and the cinematic approaches toward food will be examined.

The students will be required to see some films in advance and to read some essays as preparation to the class. The readings will deal with specific "food movies," but also with more general issues regarding movies, the film industry, and film theory. In the class, the students will examine and discuss sequences from various movies, each class dealing with different themes.

Methods of Evaluation

Class participation from the students will constitute 50% of the final grade. Students are expected to be constantly prepared for class, having seen the movies that the instructor will indicate, reading the day's assignments, asking questions and responding to questions, etc. Since the course is made of only 10 classes, students are allowed only one absence to get a full A.

A final 7-12 page paper will constitute the other 50% of the final grade. Students will research a topic we explored in class, an area of personal or academic interest, or will write their own in-depth analysis of a "food movie." The class presentations will be brief and informal: just an occasion to discuss with the professor and the other students the topic idea, the angle, and the arguments. Students will have to send the paper by email by December 10.

Required Readings

Anne L. Bower, editor, *Reel Food*, Routledge: New York and London, 2004

Warren Buckland, *Teach Yourself Film Studies*, McGraw-Hill: Chicago, 2003

1. Children's snacks

Watch prior to class: **Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory; Charlie and the Chocolate Factory**

Chapter 1: Film Aesthetics, Realism and Formalism, pp. 7-30 in *Teach Yourself Film Studies*

Charles F. Altman

"Towards an Historiography of American Cinema"

Cinema Journal, Vol. 16, No. 2. (Spring, 1977), pp. 1-25

2. Food and Ethnicity

Watch prior to class: **What's cooking; Like Water for Chocolate**

Chapter 2: Film Structure, Narrative and Narration, pp. 31-56 in *Teach Yourself Film Studies*

Debnita Chakravati, "Feel Good Reel Food: A taste of the Cultural Kedgerees in Gurinder Chadha's *What's Cooking?*", in *Reel Food* pp. 17-26

Miriam Lopez-Rodriguez, "Cooking Mexicanness: Shaping National Identity in Alfonso Arau's *Como Agua para Chocolate*", in *Reel Food* pp. 61-74

Carole Counihan

"Food, Feelings and Film: Women's Power in *Like Water for Chocolate*"

Food, Culture & Society vol 8 no. 2 (2005) pp. 201-214

3. Soul Food

Watch prior to class: **Soul Food; The Color Purple**

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"Bootylicious: Food and the Female Body in Contemporary Pop Culture"

WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly 35: 1 & 2, pp.110-125 (Spring/Summer 2007)

Robin Balthrope, "Food as Representative of Ethnicity and Culture in George Tillman Jr's Soul Food, Maria Ripoll's Tortilla Soup, and Tim Reid's Once upon a Time When We Were Colored", in *Reel Food* pp. 101-116

Noel Carroll

"Towards a Theory of Point-of-View Editing: Communication, Emotion, and the Movies"

Poetics Today, vol 14. no. 1 (Spring 1993), 123-141

4. Women's Kitchens

Watch prior to class: **Babette's Feast; Baghdad Cafe**

Margaret McFadden, "Gendering the Feast: Women, Spirituality, and Grace in Three Food Films", in *Reel Food*, pp. 117

Cynthia Baron

"Food and Gender in Baghdad Café"

Food & Foodways, 11 (2003): 49-74

Jennifer Hammett,

"The Ideological Impediment: Feminism and Film Theory",

Cinema Journal, Vol. 36, No. 2. (Winter, 1997), pp. 85-99

5. Men's Chow

Watch prior to class: **Sideways; Big Night**

Chapter 3: Film Authorship, The Director as Auteur, pp. 72-100 in *Teach Yourself Film Studies*

Margaret Coyle, "Il Timpano: The Italian American Reconciliation", in *Reel Food*, pp. 41-60

Jennifer Gillan

"No One Knows You're Black: Six Degrees of Separation and the Buddy

Formula", *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 40, No. 3. (Spring, 2001), pp. 47-68

6. Food and Sex

Watch prior to class: **Tampopo; The Cook, The Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover**

Raymond Armstrong, "All Consuming Passions: Peter Greenaway's *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*", in *Reel Food* pp. 219-234

Michael Ashkenazi, "Food, Play, Business, and the Image of Japan in Itami Juzo's *Tampopo*", in *Reel Food*, pp. 27-40

Andrew Chan

"La Grande Bouffe: Cooking Shows as Pornography"

Gastronomica fall 2003, pp. 46-53

Todd McGowan

"Looking for the Gaze: Lacanian Film Theory and Its Vicissitudes"

Cinema Journal, Vol. 42, No. 3. (Spring, 2003), pp. 27-47

7. Restaurant Business

Watch prior to class: **Dinner Rush; Mostly Martha**

Chapter 4: Film Genres, Defining the Typical Film, pp. 101-129 in *Teach Yourself Film Studies*

Cecilia Novero

"Nouvelle Cuisine Meets the German Cinema: Bella Martha's Recipe for Contemporary Film"

Food & Foodways, 12: 27-52, 2004

David Bordwell,

"Intensified Continuity: Visual Style in Contemporary American Film"

Film Quarterly, Vol. 55, No. 3. (Spring, 2002), pp. 16-28

8. Food and Violence

Watch prior to class: **Pulp Fiction; Goodfellas**

Rebecca Epstein, "Appetite for Destruction: Gangster Food and Genre Convention in Quentin Tarantino's Pulp Fiction", in *Reel Food*, pp. 195-208

Marlisa Santos, "Leave the Gun; take the Cannoli: Food and Family in the Modern American Mafia Film", in *Reel Food*, pp. 209-218

Kenneth Chan

"The Construction of Black Male Identity in Black Action Films of the Nineties"

Cinema Journal, Vol. 37, No. 2. (Winter, 1998), pp. 35-48

9. Documentary

Watch prior to class: **Mondovino; The Future of Food**

Chapter 5: The Non-Fiction Film: 5 Types of Documentary, pp. 130-150 in *Teach Yourself Film Studies*

Dirk Eitzen

"When Is a Documentary?: Documentary as a Mode of Reception"

Cinema Journal, Vol. 35, No. 1. (Autumn, 1995), pp. 81-102

David MacDougall

"When Less Is Less: The Long Take in Documentary"

Film Quarterly, Vol. 46, No. 2. (Winter, 1992-1993), pp. 36-46

10. Science Fiction & Horror

Watch prior to class: **Soylent Green**

Laurel Forster, "Futuristic Foodways: The Metaphorical Meaning of Food in Science Fiction Film", in *Reel Food*, pp. 251-266

Robert Baird

"The Startle Effect: Implications for Spectator Cognition and Media Theory"

Film Quarterly, Vol. 53, No. 3. (Spring, 2000), pp. 12-24

Stephen Prince

"True Lies: Perceptual Realism, Digital Images, and Film Theory"

Film Quarterly, Vol. 49, No. 3. (Spring, 1996), pp. 27-37