

Food and Cooking in Literature and Popular Culture

English 203: Genres and Themes

Instructor: Michelle Parke (parkemic@msu.edu)

Meeting Times: Monday and Wednesday, 10:20 – 11:40 a.m., 106 Bessey Hall

Office Hours: Mondays, 2:00 – 3:00 p.m. online (ANGEL) and Wednesdays, after class @ Sparty's in Erickson Hall, or by appointment

In this course, we will explore how food and cooking provide us with an understanding of American popular culture, and we will examine both the literal presence and the figurative implications of food in literature, film, and television. The breadth and centrality of food in our daily lives makes it a useful avenue through which we can gain better insight into our society; consider philosopher Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin's quote: "Tell me what you eat, and I shall tell you what you are." We will also address other cultural issues, such as race, class, and gender, alongside our broader topic of food and cooking. We will look at various forms of food writing as well as how our visual culture represents food and cooking. Among the types of food writing that we'll examine will be cookbook introductions, cookbook and restaurant reviews, meditations on food, recipe narratives, culinary novels, and food memoirs, and we will also look at food television as well as representations of food and cooking in television programs and films.

Some questions I want to consider include why and how do food and cooking hold such a central place in writing and visual culture? How do gender, race, and class influence our understanding of food and cooking and therefore our culture at large? How are these various types of writing reflecting a decidedly American culture? What does the range of narratives tell us about our relationship to food and cooking? What can we learn about writing in general from these various forms of food writing? How has food impacted our visual culture and vice versa?

Required Texts:

Your course packet will be online on our ANGEL site. The texts will be located under the Lessons tab and are organized by week. You are responsible for not only reading these materials prior to class but also bringing them to class for discussion. The other required texts are:

How to Cook a Tart, Nina Killham

Daughter of Heaven, Leslie Li

Course Requirements:

Primary Writing Assignments: Your written assignments will be submitted entirely online. This does not, however, mean that basic writing style, grammar, etc. should be ignored. You will be expected to have good paragraph structure, solid grammar and syntax, effective organization, etc.

Writing Portfolio:

You will develop an online writing portfolio over the course of the semester (mostly in blog format). You will submit your work on ANGEL by the due date given. I will grade your work and return my comments and the grade to you over email/on your ANGEL account. You will have an opportunity to revise two pieces by the end of the semester for a better grade if you would like to improve some of your work. I will explain the details of the assignments as we move through the semester. The types of writing you will be doing include cookbook introductions, restaurant and cookbook reviews, short responses to literature and visual media, and food meditations.

Class Cookbook:

As a class, we will compose a cookbook based on recipes that you will submit on the ANGEL site (on an almost weekly basis). I will create a blog on the ANGEL site and you will use the new entry feature to post a particular type of recipe. (If necessary, you will also include a paragraph narrative to accompany your recipe – explaining the recipe itself, why you chose, the significant it holds for you, a particular story behind it, etc.)

Grading Guidelines:

4.0: Superior work that develops an insightful argument about the text/develops a narrative effectively modeling texts we have read with precision and clarity. Paper is well-organized and free of writing errors.

3.5: Very good work that develops an effective argument/narrative and is relatively free of writing errors.

3.0: Good work that develops a coherent argument/narrative about the text but displays problems of organization, conceptualization, or both. Writing is above average but may be weakened by writing errors, clichéd language, etc.

2.5: Average or above average work. Thesis is insufficiently focused, too dependent on plot, or both. Writing is acceptable but may be weakened by writing errors, clichéd language, etc.

2.0: Acceptable work that lacks a coherent thesis, relies on plot summary, or both. Writing is likely weakened by writing errors, clichéd language, etc.

1.5/1: Work meets minimum standards but is insufficient for predicting success in upper level courses requiring writing. Writing is marred by confused purpose, lack of organization, and frequent writing errors.

0.0: Writing does not meeting minimum standards and/or fails to address the assignment.

Attendance:

Attendance is a requirement, and I will take attendance in each meeting. You will be allotted two absences during the semester, and subsequent absences will affect your grade (.25 after two absences). You are responsible for any material and assignments that you miss due to an absence. Finally, if you sleep in class, you will be marked absent, and if you are repeatedly tardy, it will affect your attendance grade.

Participation:

Participation is also required. Discussion about the texts and media is key to our understanding of what these authors are trying to do with their writings. You will be expected to not only participate in general class discussions but also group work. Quick note: cell phones off or on silent – not vibrate, silent.

Preparation:

Preparing for class ensures a productive discussion. You will be required to come to each class with a thoughtful question (i.e. no “yes or no” type questions) about the text/media on a 3x5 notecard that you will submit to me at the beginning of class. (These questions will count towards your participation grade and I may add these questions to an online discussion forum.) We may address these questions in small groups or as a whole class.

Plagiarism:

Students are expected to do their own, original work on each assignment. Plagiarism includes recycling work from another class as well as the “appropriation of another person’s ideas, processes, results or words without giving appropriate credit.” When in doubt, cite it. If you plagiarize, you will fail the course.

Grading:

- Writing Portfolio: 50%
- Blog Submissions: 20%
- Attendance: 10%

- Participation: 20%

Course Drop:

October 16 is the last day to drop the course.

Note to Students with Disabilities:

It is Michigan State University's policy to not discriminate against qualified students with documented disabilities in its educational programs. If you have a disability-related need for accommodations in this course, contact your instructor and the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities. The RCDP is located in 120 Bessey Hall. For an appointment with a counselor, call 353-9642 (voice) or 355-1293 (TTY). Instructors should be notified as early in the semester as possible.

Resources for Students:

- The Writing Center offers students an opportunity to meet with one-on-one with a consultant while they are engaged in the process of writing class papers and other documents. It also offers consulting on digital writing projects and Grammar Hotline. The Writing Center is located in 300 Bessey Hall. For information about appointments and satellite locations, see <http://writing.msu.edu/>.
- The Learning Resource Center, located in 202 Bessey Hall, offers academic support seminars and workshops, consults with students about study and learning styles and time management, and provides one-on-one tutoring in such areas as critical reading. For a more detailed description of LRC services and hour, see <http://www.msu.edu/user/lrc/>.

Final Note:

This class demands a great deal of reading and writing, and critical thinking skills that students will use for the rest of their lives. This class requires consistent and conscientious attention; falling behind in reading assignments can be detrimental to your grade. Most importantly, this class depends on student preparation. This includes not only reading assignments but also coming to class having thought about the material and ready to question, explore, and share your ideas with others. Critical thinking also means independent views. Your views will be respected and, NO, you will not be penalized for disagreeing with your classmates or me. However, you will be expected to defend your opinions. The idea is to keep an open mind and a willingness to try looking at things from different points of view as well as to be respectful and prepared to listen to others' opinions even when you do not agree with them. So please disagree with a view and not the person presenting the view.

Schedule

Week 1	
August 27	Syllabus, Intros, and Requirements
August 29	<u>The Meaning and Function of Food</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • J.A. Brillat-Savarin, “On Gastronomy” and “On the Pleasures of the Table” • Gertrude Stein, “From American Food and American Houses” • Leslie Brenner, “Dining and the American Palate” • Barbara Holland, “Experts and Fashionistas”
Week 2	
Sept. 3	No class
Sept. 5	<u>Food and Writing</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diane Jacob, “What, Exactly, is Food Writing?” • Carolyn Korsmeyer, “Narratives of Eating” • M.F.K. Fisher, “The Anatomy of a Recipe” • Molly O’Neill, “Food Porn” • Lynn Z. Bloom, “Writing and Cooking, Cooking and Writing”
Week 3	
Sept. 10	<u>Cookbook Introductions</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Julia Child, “Mastering the Art of French Cooking” • Rachael Ray, “30-Minute Get Real Meals” and “365: No Repeats” • Bobby Flay, “Boy Meets Grill”

Sept. 12	<u>Cookbook Introductions Cont.</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delilah Winder, “Delilah’s Everyday Soul” • Rick Bayless, “Authentic Mexican” • Giada De Laurentiis, “Everyday Pasta”
Week 4	
Sept. 17	<u>Cookbook Reviews</u>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Claudia Kousoulas and Sandy Tallant, “Chez Panisse Cookbook Review” • Irene Sax, “Lidia's Family Table” and “Paula Deen & Friends: Living It Up, Southern Style” • “Booty Food': Just add heat” • Anne L. Bower, “Romanced by Cookbooks”
Sept. 19	<u>Recipe Narratives</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M.F.K. Fisher, “A Lusty Bit of Nourishment” and “How Not to Boil an Egg” • Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, from “Cross Creek Cookery” • Edna Lewis, “Morning-After-Hog-Butchering Breakfast” • Raymond Sokolov, “An Original Old-Fashioned Yankee Clambake”
Week 5	
Sept. 24	<u>Recipe Narratives Cont.</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alice B. Toklas, “Food in the United States in 1934 & 1935” • James Beard, from “Delights and Prejudices” • Michael Field, “Vichyssoise” • Anna Thomas, “Zucchini Quiche” • Julia Child, “Coq Au Vin”
Sept. 26	<u>Meditations on Food</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terri Pischoff Wuerthner, “First You Make a Roux” • Allen S. Weiss, “Reflections on the Stuffed Cabbage” • Craig Claiborne, “The Perfect Hamburger” • John Grossman, “In Search of the Perfect Peach” • Julie Moskin, “Macaroni and Lots of Cheese”
Week 6	
Oct. 1	<u>Food Memoir</u> Leslie Li, <i>Daughter of Heaven</i> , Chapters 1-5
Oct. 3	Leslie Li, <i>Daughter of Heaven</i> , Chapters 6-10
Week 7	
Oct. 8	Leslie Li, <i>Daughter of Heaven</i> , Chapters 11-15
Oct. 10	<u>Food Memoir – Short Works</u>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alexandra Stein, “The Only Way to Know the Taste of a Pear Is to Eat It” • Janelle Brown, “Granny Takes a Trip” • Jack Foster, “Sadie’s Tomatoes”
Week 8	
Oct. 15	<u>Beverages and Drinking</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M.F.K. Fisher, “Coffee” • Natalie MacLean, “The Making of a Wine Lover” • Chip Brown, “My Parents Are Driving Me to Drink” • Ken Wells, “Why Beer, Why Me?” • Alström Bros, “Dogfish Head Festina Pêche” • Dmitrii Stakhov, “The Prose (and Cons) of Vodka”
Oct. 17	<u>Food and...</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jacqui Malouf, Selections from <i>Booty Food</i> • “Sex, Food and Myth” • Josh Pahigian and Kevin O’Connell, “Best Signature Ballpark Food and Hot Dogs” • “Ballpark dining O.C. style” • David Rowan, “Trendsurfing: Competitive eating”
Week 9	
Oct. 22	<u>Restaurant Culture</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bruce Kraig, “Man Eats Dogs” • Brett Anderson, “One Last Meal in the Old New Orleans” • James Villas, “Vive Le Restaurant” • John T. Edge, “Eating Space” • Jason Sheehan, “Mama’s House” • Gael Greene, “Lessons in Humility and Chutzpah”
Oct. 24	<u>Restaurant Reviews</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doris Rodriguez de Platt, “Andina Restaurant” • Craig Claiborne, “Erna’s Food And a View In the Sierras” • Jules Van Dyck-Dobos, “Le Dog, Ann Arbor, Michigan” • Laurie Bernstein, “Ray’s Café and Tea House” • “Small Restaurants, Big Ideas”

Week 10	
Oct. 29	<u>Food and Locale</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lolis Eric Elie, “A Letter from New Orleans” • Brett Martin, “Ho Chi Minh City” • Alice Waters, “The Farm-Restaurant Connection” • Daniel Pinkwater, “Where Is the Grease of Yesteryear” • M.F.K. Fisher, “The Art of Eating, California Style”
Oct. 31	<u>Food Fiction</u> Nina Killham, <i>How To Cook a Tart</i> , Chapters 1-4
Week 11	
Nov. 5	Nina Killham, <i>How To Cook a Tart</i> , Chapters 5-8
Nov. 7	Nina Killham, <i>How To Cook a Tart</i> , Chapters 9-15
Week 12	
Nov. 12	<u>Food TV</u> Julia Child and Rachael Ray
Nov. 14	<u>Food and Celebrity</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Judith Jones, “Julia The Ever-Curious Cook” • Sara Moulton, “Julia’s Greatest Lesson” • Jacques Pépin, “My Friend Julia Child” • Betty Fussel, “Never Alone” • Benjamin Aldes Wurgaft, “Stardom and the Hungry Public” • Michael Ruhlman, “Emeril and Rachael”
Week 13	
Nov. 19	<u>Television and Food</u> <i>Gilmore Girls</i> and <i>Seinfeld</i> Gregory Stevenson, “Dining with the Gilmores”
Nov. 21	No class

Week 14	
Nov. 26	<u>Food and Film</u> <i>Soul Food</i>
Nov. 28	<u>Food and Film Cont.</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paul Tatara, “Review: 'Soul Food' tastes great, less filling” • Tracy N. Poe, “The Origins of Soul Food in Black Urban Identity: Chicago, 1915-1947”
Week 15	
Dec. 3	Wrap Up
Dec. 5	Last day of class