

ENVST02

FARM TO FORK: THE STATE OF AMERICA'S FOOD SYSTEM

Course Description:

The process by which food travels from farm to fork no longer seems as simple and safe as it used to be. This course will examine the state of America's food system today, following food as it travels from its origins as a crop or an animal to its processing, transportation, and eventual consumption. Topics include the local/organic movement, conventional farming, governmental involvement and regulation, nutrition, and food's impact on culture, including meals themselves. Each seminar features one or two speakers about the week's topic, followed by a discussion that integrates the reading and the lecture. The class will take several field trips, including one to the Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture, the Food Network, and an organic farm. Workload will include one book per week, a 2-page written response each week to the material presented in lecture, and a final paper of 12-15 pages.

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Readings

Class 1

Tuesday, February 6

Introduction: The human relationship to food

Readings

- Everyone Eats: Understanding Food and Culture by E.N. Anderson [available electronically]
- "The Arts (Fine and Culinary) of Nineteenth Century America" by M.F.K. Fisher NYTimes, September 15, 1974

Class 2

Tuesday, February 13

The Omnivorous American

General characteristics of America's food system today according to Michael Pollan, as well as history of food in America leading up to its state today

Readings

- An Omnivore's Dilemma by Michael Pollan
- Unhappy Meals by Michael Pollan, NYTimes, January 28, 2007
- "Chapter 1 in Colonial and Federal America the United States by Sandra Oliver

Class 3

Tuesday, February 20

Agriculture and Agrarian Society

Agricultural history from the perspective of an agricultural economist.

developments of agriculture in America, beginning with the Green Revolution [nitrogen fertilizer, mechanized equipment, pesticides], will provide historical context for the rest of course so that we may understand where the origins of our food system. We will also consider broader environmental and economic impacts.

Readings

- American Agriculture in the Twentieth Century: How it Flourished and What It Cost by Bruce L. Gardner
- "A Food and Agricultural Policy for the Twenty-First Century" in Curse of American Abundance by Willard Cochrane
- "Half a Century of Cropland Change" by John Fraser Hart in Geographical Review, 2001, available through J-STOR
- "Renewing Husbandry" by Wendell Berry in Crop Science May/June 2005 45(3) available through PULS

Class 4

Tuesday, February 27

Transportation and Distribution in a global food system

The structure of the food system, the organization of the commodity chain ...

Readings

- "As American as Budweiser and Pickles: Nation-Building in American Food Industries" by Donna Gabaccia in Food Nations: Selling Taste in Consumer Societies
- Chapters from From Columbus to Conagra edited by A. Bonanno, et. al.
 - o "Transnational Corporations and the Globalization of the Food System" by William D. Heffernan and Douglas H. Constance
 - o "The Behavior of U.S. Food Firms in International Markets" by Michael R. Reed and Mary A. Marchant
 - o "The New Globalization: the Case of Fresh Produce" by William Friedland
- "Opening Spaces Through Relocalization.," by Mary K. Hendrickson and William D. Heffernan in Sociologia Ruralis October 2002, 42(4). (PULS) (optional)
- "Local Knowledge in the Age of Information" by Wendell Berry in Hudson Review Autumn 2005 88(3), available through PULS

Class 5

Tuesday, March 6

Organic Agriculture and Environmental Impacts

This class will cover the history of the organic movement from the first use of the word by the Rodale Institute to describe their biodynamic practices

leading to the creation of the USDA Organic label. We will also examine the growth of Whole Foods and “big organic.” If there is time, we might debate the benefits of local vs. organic food.

Readings

- Organic, Inc.: Natural Foods and How They Grew, by Samuel Fromartz
- “Our Forgotten Pollinators” by Ingram, Buchmann, and Nabhan “[Fatal Harvest)
- “Can Agriculture and Biodiversity Exist? By Catherine Badgley [Fatal Harvest)
- “Uncle Ben: Goin’ Organic Just Like We Used To” by Jim Hightower [Fatal Harvest
- “Ever since Hightower: The Politics of Agricultural Research Activism in the Molecular Age” by Frederick H. Buttel in Agriculture and Human Values Spring 2005 22: 273-283. (available online)

For Ruth Reichl’s visit you might look over a few issues of Gourmet and savor a chapter from Tender at the Bone, Comfort Me With Apples, or Garlic and Sapphires.

Link to interview with Ruth Reichl.

<http://psychologytoday.com/articles/pto-19981101-000030.html>

FIELD TRIP

Friday, March 9

Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture, New York

Class 6

Tuesday, March 13 (midterm week)

The Factory Farm: Industrialization

From battery cages to the industrialized slaughterhouse, this class will consider the factory farm across America and conventional food. We will also look at QSR and fast food restaurants.

Readings chapters from:

- The Jungle by Upton Sinclair
- Animal Liberation and The Way We Eat by Peter Singer
- Fast Food Nation by Eric Schlosser
- Cutting into the Meatpacking Line by Deborah Fink, chapters 1 and 4
- excerpts from Buffalo for the Broken Heart by Dan O'Brien and see

<http://www.wildideabuffalo.com/>

Speakers

- Paul Shapiro, Director of the Factory Farming Campaign at the Humane Society

Film Clip

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hks86Xxx1ZE>

SuperSize Me

SPRING BREAK

Class 7

Tuesday, March 27

Government Regulations I: Food Politics

We will examine lobbyists and farm subsidies in the United States – the large corporation, company, and factory – perhaps the Farm Bill?

Readings

- Food Politics by Marion Nestle
 - "Better Fields of Bland". op-ed by Dan Barber, New York Times, January 14, 2007
 - Browse the Environmental Working Group site, especially for their work on farm subsidies: www.ewg.org
- Field trip

Class 8

Tuesday, April 3

Government Regulations II: Safety, Labelling, and GMOs

We will consider the GMO debate, as well as government regulation in food production, such as cheese-making [the raw milk debate] and food labeling [why this country opposes place of origin labels, etc.]

Readings

- Food, Inc. by Peter Pringle
 - "Desire: Contrl/Plant: The Potato" in The Botany of Desire by Michael Pollan
 - "Epoisses: Satan in a Poplar Box" in The Devil's Picnic by Taras Grescoe
 - "Grades and Standards in the Social Construction of Safe Food" by Lawrence Busch in The Politics of Food.
 - Hugh McHughen's "Uninformation and the Choice Paradox" Nature Biotechnology, vol. 18 (1 Oct 2000): 1018-19.
- Watch

Class 9

Tuesday, April 10

Nutrition I: Obesity of Epidemic Proportions

We will trace the infiltration of high fructose corn syrup and palm oil into the food we eat, as well as the increase in portion size. We might also consider the problems with school lunches as we ease out of the two weeks on Government policy.

Readings

- Food Fight: The Inside Story of the Food Industry, America's Obesity Crisis, and What We Can Do About It by Kelly Brownell
- "Seduced by Snacks? No Not You" by Brian Wansink, New York Times, October 11, 2006
- "For World of Woes, We Blame Cookie Monsters" by Gina Kolata, New York

Times, October 29, 2006

Class 10

Tuesday, April 17

Nutrition II: "Real Food"

We will consider what types of foods are healthiest, perhaps looking at the grassfed beef debate, consider organic food and whether it's healthier, as well as other discussions in the field of nutrition. This discussion will consider "What to eat?"

Readings:

- Real Food by Nina Planck
- Website of the National Cattlemen's Association <http://www.beef.org/>
- "Victual Vicissitudes: Consumer Deskillling and the (Gendered) Transformation of Food Systems" by JoAnn Jaffee and Michael Gertler in Agriculture and Human Values June 2006, 23(2). Electronic access through PL

Class 11

Tuesday, April 24

Future of the food system – what needs to change, what will it look like in 50 years, making it more sustainable (according to each element we've studied)

Readings:

- Meals to Come by Warren Belasco

No Speaker

Field Trip:

- The Food Network
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Class 12

Tuesday, May 1

We will consider the final product – food on one's plate – and the rituals of the table. Important themes of this class are gastronomy, conviviality, and pleasure and share a meal.

Readings

- "Carnal Knowledge: How I Became a Tuscan Butcher" Bill Buford, The New Yorker, 5/01/2006
http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/articles/060501fa_fact?060501fa_fact
- "Savoring Winter" by M.F.K. Fisher, New York Times, October 27, 1985
- "The Red and the White" by Calvin Trillin, New Yorker 8/19/02

Speakers and Field Trips

Speakers and Field Trips

February 6 –No Speaker

February 13—Sandra Oliver, American food historian and publisher of Food

History News <http://foodhistorynews.com/about.html>

February 20--

February 27—No speaker

March 6—

Hansakob Werlen, founder Philadelphia Slow Food Chapter and Ruth Reichl, editor of Gourmet, previously food reviewer for the New York Times and the L.A. Times. <http://www.salon.com/nov96/interview961118.html>

March 9—Field Trip to Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture
<http://www.stonebarnscenter.org/>

March 13—Josh Balk, Outreach Director and head of Cage-Free Campus Campaign instead of Paul Shapiro, Director of the Factory Farming Campaign at the Humane Society

March 27—Field trip with Mike Azzara from NOFA-NJ (www.nofanj.org) to Cherry Grove Meat and Dairy, Cherry Grove Vegetable CSA, Terhune Orchards, and Bent Spoon

April 3—Carl Pray, Professor of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics, Rutgers University, <http://www.dafre.rutgers.edu/faculty.cfm> and Xenia Morin, Professor in the Writing Program, Princeton University

April 10--Joseph Heckman, Professor of Plant Biology and Pathology, Rutgers University,
<http://www.cook.rutgers.edu/~plantbiopath/faculty/heckman/heckman.html>,
and Elise Pivnick, Vice President for Environmental and Community Health, ISLES, Trenton, www.isles.org

April 17—Ann Cooper, Director of Nutrition Services for the Berkeley (CA) Unified School District http://www.lunchlessons.org/html_v2/about.html and Gary Giberson, Director of Dining Services, Lawrenceville School
<http://www.lawrenceville.org/about/news/detail.asp?id=6E6A>

April 24—Field Trip to the Food Network www.foodnetwork.com

May 1—Craig LaBan, food writer and restaurant critic, Philadelphia Inquirer
http://www.philly.com/mld/philly/entertainment/columnists/craig_laban/