

# FOOD, SYMBOL & SOCIETY

Professor David Sutton

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*Office Hours: Tuesday, Thursday 11-12:30, Friday 9:30-11,  
or by appointment*

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** In this course we will explore all aspects of the social uses and symbolic meanings we attach to food and eating. How do we use food to make friends, to make enemies, and to make ourselves? What is changing in our food consumption patterns? What are some of the politics and the ethics involved in food consumption? Why are we obsessed with fat? What is the significance of eating out? Of "ethnic" restaurants? Of Starbucks? How do we analyze the smell and taste of food cross-culturally? These and other questions will be approached from a variety of anthropological perspectives.

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

All reading on the syllabus is required, and should be done before the class for which it is assigned

Class Attendance is Required

There will be 6-7 regular short food assignments throughout the term. Buy a notebook in which to keep these assignments. These assignments will be marked on a 3-pt. scale and will count collectively for 20% of your grade.

There will be a mid-term assignment of 6-8 pages, due by the **beginning of 9th week**. This will involve research. It will be worth 35% of your grade. Details to follow.

There will be a final essay exam worth 45% of your grade.

Graduate Students taking the course for credit will write a final research paper of 15-20 pages in lieu of the final exam. Graduate students must arrange to see me to discuss this paper by **9th week**. An outline, including proposed bibliography (at least 15 citations) will be due by the end of **10th week**. A first draft of the paper will be due by the beginning of **14th week**. A final draft, including annotated bibliography, will be due by the beginning of **16th week**. Failure to adhere to this schedule will count against your grade on this assignment.

**EXTRA CREDIT:** Graduate Students are required but all students have the option of doing an in-class presentation. This will be based on a topic set by me. Presentations will also involve a written component.

## REQUIRED BOOKS

David Sutton *Remembrance of Repasts*

Mark Winegardner *We Are What We Ate*

Frances Short *Kitchen Secrets*

Richard Wilk *Home Cooking in the Global Village* □

WEEK 1 INTRODUCTION: TELL ME WHAT YOU EAT, I'LL TELL YOU WHO YOU ARE...

Reading: □

Diana Beach "Anthropology of the Sandwich." (handout)

Lawrence Taylor "Coffee: The Bottomless Cup" (handout) □

## WEEK 2 FOOD AND THE MAKING (& BREAKING) OF KINSHIP

Charles Baxter "My Son, Eating Dinner." In *We Are What We Ate*

Beth Conklin "Mortuary Cannibalism"

Janet Carsten "The Heat of the Hearth"

Mary Weismantel "Kinship and Zumbagua Adoptions" □ □

## WEEKS 3-4 FOOD, IDENTITY, MEMORY

Reading:

Mark Winegardner "Introduction" IN *We Are What We Ate* □

Ian Cook & Phil Crang "The World on a Plate"

David Sutton *Remembrance of Repasts* Chs 1-3

Elena Castedo "Watercress"

## WEEKS 5-6: GENDER, ETHNICITY, CLASS: DIFFERENCE & IDENTITY

Readings:

Carole Counihan "Food, Sex and Reproduction"

Jean Duruz "Haunted Kitchens"

Robert Girardi "Spaghetti." *We Are What We Ate*

Anne Allison "Japanese Mothers and Obenitos: The Lunch Box as Ideological State Apparatus."

Brett Williams "Why Migrant Women Feed their Husbands Tamales"

Pierre Bourdieu "Taste of Luxury, Taste of Necessity"

Laura Shapiro *Perfection Salad* Chs. 2, 4

Steve Yarbrough "Grandma's Table." *We Are What We Ate* □ □

**The Film *Fishing in the City* will be shown**

WEEK 7: THE MEANING OF MEALS

Readings:

John Dufresne "Nothing to eat but food." In *We Are What We Ate*

Mary Douglas "Deciphering a Meal."

Anne Murcott "Family Meals--a thing of the past?"

Sutton *Remembrance of Repasts* Chapter 4

Luce Giard "'When it Comes Down to it, Cooking Worries Me'"

*The Film "The Family Table" Will be Shown* □ □ □

WEEKS 8-9 EATING MORALITIES AND THE POLITICS OF FAT

Sidney Mintz "Sugar and Morality"

Michael Pollan "The Market: Greetings from the Non Barcode People"

Susan Bordo "Anorexia Nervosa"

Elise Sobo “The Sweetness of Fat”

Anne Meneley “Oil” In *Fat: The Anthropology of an Obsession*

Joan Gross “Phat” In *Fat: The Anthropology of an Obsession*

Fanny Ambjornnson “Talk” In *Fat: The Anthropology of an Obsession*

Wendell Berry "The Pleasures of Eating." *We Are What We Ate*

Ellen Meloy "Eat Your Pets." *We Are What We Ate* □

*MID-TERM Due beginning of Week 9*

WEEKS 10-11 PRODUCTION, CONSUMPTION,  
DEVELOPMENT AND THE GLOBAL ECONOMY □

Richard Wilk *Home Cooking in the Global Village* □

*The Film “Isle of Flowers” will be shown.*

*The Film "Coffee Break" will be shown*

WEEK 12 WATCHING COOKING

Sutton *Remembrance of Repasts* Chapter 5

Shirley Wadja “Kmartha”

Amy Bentley “Martha's Food: Whiteness of a Certain Kind”

Mary Ann Beecher “The Mythical Making Martha” □

WEEK 13: RESTAURANTS AND RESTAURANT WORK

Emailed Restaurant Articles

Karla Erickson “Bodies at Work: Performing Service in American Restaurants”

Jim Arndorfer “McSploitation”

Stewart O'Nan "Tots" in *We Are What We Ate* □ □

WEEK 14-15 IS COOKING DEAD?

Risto Moisio et. al. “Between Mothers and Markets: Constructing family Identity Through Homemade Food”

Frances Short *Kitchen Secrets* □ □ □