

Food and Culture: Identity and Locality in Taste

AN 308/708

CAS 203

Spring Term 2007

Merry White

MWF: 3:00 – 4:00 pm

Office Hours: Mondays 10- 12 and Wednesdays 11- 1 or by appointment. Contact me at corky@bu.edu

Foodways, culinary history, personal, social and cultural identity and the experience of taste are the objects of inquiry in this course. Using perspectives drawn from anthropology, sociology, history and other disciplines, the course treats foods as both direct and emblematic foci for identity, national development, globalization and social change. Special attention will be given to communities in the Boston area as locations of cultural and culinary diversity and identity. In addition we will conduct fieldwork and engage in discussions with food professionals in the Boston area. □

Procedures, Activities and Requirements

This course combines lectures and readings in the scholarly literatures with field work and team projects to demonstrate how cultural history and participant-observation can be combined in an interdisciplinary approach. Food studies are well developed both in the classical disciplines and in new interdisciplinary programs and we are well situated to take advantage of wonderful primary and secondary source materials and analyses. Boston is a wonderful city for examining how foodways may illuminate questions of political and social change, gender and class distinctions and ethnic

diversity. We will thus learn to question assumptions of “tradition” and “authenticity” in what are considered “ethnic” cuisines - and culture. □

The Fine Print

In addition to regular attendance and participation in class, there will be regular journal assignments due every two weeks and I will assign one paper during the term and a final examination. Each week’s readings must be completed during the week of the assignment and class discussions will include these works. There will be films shown in class, as well as occasional films (too long for classtime) shown in Geddes. All films are required and will be used as texts in the course materials. There will be no extensions granted for papers or reports. You are responsible for being responsible – that is, for providing source citations and clear attributions of works used, and for NOT using paraphrased or direct borrowings from the work of others. **The Student Handbook references to plagiarism are required reading for this course, and provide required guidelines for behavior. Unintentional plagiarism is still plagiarism, and will result in failure for the course, at a minimum.** □

Field Work

During the term we will have several **class trips**. You will also be asked to keep a **fieldwork journal** that includes more ordinary visits to food establishments you make on your own or with your team. I will provide directions for this journal. You would do well to carry a notebook with you, jot down menu items of interest, food advertising, news stories, etc. We will also eat out, so be prepared for adventures! We will keep costs down but meals will be self-paid. **I will collect, read and grade your journals, usually about once every two weeks, so keep up.**

Books at Boston University Book Store available for purchase or at Mugar Library on reserve:

Hasia Diner, Hungering for America, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003

Sidney Mintz, Sweetness and Power, New York: Viking, 1995

Eric Schlosser, Fast Food Nation: New York: Harper Collins, 2002

Margaret Visser, Much Depends on Dinner, New York: Grove Press, 1999

All other readings are on reserve at Mugar and on line in courseware.

Part One: Setting the Table: Food in the Social Sciences

- **Week of January 17 (Wednesday):** Food in global history □

Sidney Mintz, “Food and Eating: Some Persisting Questions”

“The Old and New World Exchange”

Stanley Brandes, “Maize as a Culinary Mystery”

Charles Mann “1491”

Film: The
Global
Banquet:
Politics of
Food(in
class) □ □

Week of January 22: Cooking Culture: Ethnicity and Identity

Arjun Appadurai, "How to Make a National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India"

Marvin Harris, "Good to Think or Good to Eat"

Tuchman and Levine, "New York Jews and Chinese Food: The Social Construction of an Ethnic Pattern"

Hasia Diner, (see above required books list) pp 1-20

Week of January 29: Taste as Palate and Culture

Edward Behr, "The Goodness of Salt"

Harold McGee, "From Raw to Cooked: The Transformation of Flavor"

FILM: Mystery of the Senses (in class) January 31

Guest speaker: Larry Flint, February 2: A Social History of Beer

Journals due in class February 2

Week of February 5: Food, History and Politics

Sidney Mintz, Sweetness and Power, entire

FILM: Fast Food Women (Geddes)

field trip: toscanini ice cream, central square, Friday
February 9 at **3:00**

pm (maps will be provided) □

Week of February 12: Embodying Food

Joan Brumberg, Fasting Girls: Emergence of Anorexia Nervosa as a Modern Disease, pp.127-257

Benjamin Wurgaft, “East of Eden: Sin and Redemption at the Whole Foods Market” Gastronomica, vol. 2, no. 3, 2002, pp. 87-89

Jill Dubisch, “You are what you eat: Religious aspects of the Health Food Movement” in Podolefsky and Brown, Applying Cultural Anthropology, Mountain View, California: Mayfield Publishing, pp. 57-64.

Film: Garlic is as Good as Ten Mothers (Geddes)

Week of February 19: Preferences and Tabus: you are what you DON’T eat

NOTE: NO CLASS FEB.19, Substitute class on February 20, Tuesday

Louis Dumont, Homo Hierarchicus, pages 137-151

Raymond Sokolov, “One man’s meat is another man’s person...”

Keith Botsford, “Something so deliciously corrupt about them...”

Marvin Harris, “The Abominable Pig”

FILM: National Geographic. Food Tabus (Geddes)

Journals due Feb 23. □

Part Two: Foodways in Asia

Week of February 26: Origins and Transported Nationalisms Part One: China

Lin Yutang, “The Chinese Cuisine”

Jonathan Lipman, “Chifanle Meiyou”: Have You Eaten?”
(hand-out)

Eugene Cooper, “Chinese Table Manners: You are How You Eat”

Jonathan Spence, “Food” in Chinese Roundabout

David Wu, “Improvising Chinese Cuisine Overseas”

FILM: The Chinese: Eating (March 2)

March 4:Field Trip to Chinatown (Sunday morning!)

Week of March 5: Origins and Transported Nationalisms
Part Two: Japan

Naomichi Ishige, The History and Culture of Japanese Food, pages 45-139

Richard Hosking, “The Fishy and Vegetable Abominations
Known as Japanese Food”

Katarzyna Cwiertka, “Domesticating Western Food in
Japan”

Theodore Bestor, “How Sushi Went Global”

FILM: Full Moon Lunch (March 7, in class) □

March 10 - 18: Spring Vacation

PART THREE: IDENTITY AND RITUALS

Week of March 19: Meeting at the Table: What is a Meal?

Rachel Laudan, “The Birth of the Modern Diet”

Margaret Visser, Much Depends on Dinner, “What Shall We Have for Dinner” “Chicken, from Fowl to Patties” and “Olive Oil” pp 11-55; 115-154; 224-258. □

Journals due in class, March 23 □

Week of March 26: Ritual Meals

Chitrita Banerji, “The Propitiatory Meal”

Patrick Leong, “Graveyard Picnics”

“Tables of the Divine”

Alan Mintz, “Sushi and Other Jewish Foods” bound together with Regenstein and Regenstein, “An Introduction to the Jewish Dietary Laws”

Guest lecturer: Devorah Sperling, March 26

Field Trip: Harvard Street, Brookline, Wednesday March 28 in class time □

FILM: Divine Food (Geddes)

Week of April 2: Women and Food: Cooking Gender

Susan Lanser, “Burning Dinners: Feminist Subversions of Domesticity” in Joan Radner, Feminist Messages, Urbana: University of Illinois, 1993.

Merry White, “Women, Food and Identity Construction”

Laura Shapiro, “Prologue: Toasted Marshmallows...”
Perfection Salad, pp. 4-46; 70-105

Film: Alice Waters and Her Delicious Revolution (in class)

Paper due in class, Friday April 6

Guest Lecturer: Lee Napoli, April 4

Week of April 9: “Hyphenated” diets: movement and localization of food identities

Migrations and the History of American ethnic enclaves

Hasia Diner, Hungering for America, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001, pp. 21-83; 146-219.

Tulasi Srinivas, “As Mother Made It: the Cosmopolitan Indian Family, “Authentic” food and the Construction of Cultural Utopia” □

Augusto Ferraiuolo, Guest speaker April 11 □

Journals due in class, April 11

Field Trip: April 13: North End

Part Three: Globalisms, Trends and the Marketing of Taste

Week of April 16: How Fast is YOUR Food?

NO CLASS APRIL 16; HOLIDAY

Eric Schlosser, Fast Food Nation, entire

FILM: Supersize Me, April 18 (Geddes)

Field Trip: Saturday, April 21, Watertown's Armenian
Tastes

**Week of April 23: Backstairs: Restaurants and the Food
Business**

George Orwell, "Below Stairs in a Paris Hotel"

Anthony Bourdain, "Don't Eat Before Reading This"

Michael Ruhlman, The Making of a Chef, pps. 5-109

**Week of April 30: Review and Annotated Potluck
Banquet To Be Announced** ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐