



AMERICAN TASTE

Scribner Seminar 100, 003
TLC 307

Prof. M. C. Lynn

Fall 2009

W & F, 12:20-2:10

This course is an interdisciplinary analysis of the evolution of American cuisine. Beginning with a taste of native American food, we will study regional food patterns of the colonial period, consider the development of distinctively American styles of cooking and eating in the 19th century with special attention to the effect of immigration, and explore the impact of science, business, technology, globalization and changing family patterns on U.S. food in the 20th and 21st centuries.

REQUIRED TEXTS: (available in the Skidmore Shop)

James McWilliams, *A REVOLUTION IN EATING*

Hasia Diner, *HUNGERING FOR AMERICA*

Laura Shapiro, *PERFECTION SALAD*

Eric Schlosser, *FAST FOOD NATION*

BLACKBOARD READINGS (all excerpts)

Alcott, "Transcendental Wild Oats"

Applebaum, *THANKSGIVING: AN AMERICAN HOLIDAY*

Beecher, *THE AMERICAN WOMAN'S HOME*

Betty Crocker, PICTURE COOKBOOK
 Child, THE AMERICAN FRUGAL HOUSEWIFE
 Farmer, BOSTON COOKING-SCHOOL COOKBOOK 1896
 Marling, AS SEEN ON TV
 Mayer, BELONGING TO THE ARMY
 Miller & Fuller, THE BEST OF SHAKER COOKING
 Pollan, THE OMNIVORE'S DILEMMA
 Boria Sax, "Apples" in Wilson & Gillespie, ROOTED IN AMERICA
 Sokolow, EROS & MODERNIZATION
 Pillsbury, NO FOREIGN FOOD

(Students should be sure to read the Dining Out section of the New York Times each Wednesday.)

FILMS:

"Food, Inc."
 "Julie & Julia"
 "Supersize Me"

GOALS: This course will introduce you to disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives on American food and foodways, as a way of deepening and broadening student understanding of American culture. We will use the resources of American Studies, history, human ecology, environmental studies, government, sociology, and popular culture to explore one essential aspect of our society and how it has evolved over time. This is also a course about knowing, particularly about ways to identify problems, formulate productive questions, and go about answering those questions. Because this course is interdisciplinary, you should further develop your abilities to distinguish among, and formulate, the types of questions asked by different disciplines, and the evidence and methodologies each one uses.

This is also a course about critical thinking. We will work on strategies for critical reading, ways to gather and interpret evidence, and tactics for thinking about and addressing complexities and ambiguities. You are encouraged to make connections among ideas, recognize choices, examine assumptions and ask questions of yourself and of your own work. In this class, it will be important to formulate conclusions based upon evidence, communicate ideas both orally and in writing and relate the results of the course to your educational goals and, of course, to your daily life.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **CLASS PARTICIPATION:** On-time completion of assigned reading, regular participation in class discussion, and weekly contributions to the class electronic discussion list. Because all of us have some expertise in the course topic, attending every class is very important – we will rely on each other to an unusual degree in this class. Missing more than three classes will have a negative impact on your grade for class participation. I will make one exception to this policy for any student who catches the flu. If you have flu symptoms (fever, aches & pains, sore throat, respiratory or intestinal problems) please stay in your room and away from others. Have friends bring food to your door, and use e-mail to keep up with your classes. If you e-mail me I'll ask someone to take notes for you and suggest makeup assignments while you work on getting some rest and fighting the virus.

2. **TERM PAPER:** An interdisciplinary analysis of a particular food, in which you provide information about its nutrition, history, environmental impact, political implications, and cultural aspects. You may choose a favorite food (no more than three papers on chocolate, please), or a particular recipe (your favorite, or a family treasure, or one which horrifies you!) as your topic, and should clear your choice with me by MONDAY, September 28; working bibliographies are due October 9; outlines are due on October 21; rough drafts are due on MONDAY, November 9; conferences on rough drafts will be held during the week of November 9 to 13, and the final draft is due in class on November 20. Your paper should be ten to twelve pages long, and should be well-written, carefully organized, interdisciplinary, and accompanied by a bibliography of appropriately scholarly print and electronic resources. (No in-text citations, please – use footnotes instead.)

3. **THANKSGIVING PAPER:** Since we will not meet during the week of Thanksgiving vacation, you will choose from ONE of the following and write a short paper in response; these papers will be due Wednesday, December 2.
 - a. oral history: interview, on tape, the oldest member of your Thanksgiving party (hopefully a grandparent or other senior citizen) about his or her memories of Thanksgiving and how the holiday has evolved in the past half-century. Transcribe your tape and write a two to three page analysis for the class .
 - b. gender distinctions: carefully observe the way gender roles play out in your Thanksgiving celebration; for at least one hour, reverse your own gender role (women might watch football; men could wash the dishes or make the stuffing.) A brief (2-3 page) analysis of gender roles would be

- enlivened by a discussion of the subject with some of the men and women at your feast.
- c. purpose: for what are you and your family/guests thankful? How do you express your gratitude? Is this a holiday about Family? Prosperity? Patriotism? History? Consumption? A thoughtful analysis of your celebration and the national holiday, 2-3 pages long will add to our class discussion.
4. **BOOK REVIEW:** A 2-3 pp. review of a recent book on American cuisine, chosen from a list handed out in September. Your review should identify the author, restate the central thesis of the book, analyze the evidence presented to support that thesis, and place the book in the context of other work on the subject (reading other reviews of your choice will be very helpful on this last point.) Book reviews will be due in class on Friday, October 2.
5. **VIDEO:** working in pairs, you will film some aspects of our October field trip to Hancock Shaker Village, read some scholarly analyses of the Shakers, and choose an aspect of Shaker foodways for a specified audience (your choice – perhaps middle school students, European visitors, senior citizens or some other identifiable group.) Once you return to campus you will edit and narrate your video to create a thoughtful treatment of Shaker ideas about food, cooking, and eating for the group you have chosen. The video will be due in class on Friday, October 30.
6. **FINAL EXAMINATION:** self-scheduled, morning or afternoon sessions during the final examination period. I will distribute six essay questions at the last class; you will write on two of the questions (my choice) depending on when you choose to take the final.

SUBMISSION OF WORK: ALL WORK IS DUE IN CLASS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE PERIOD (please note that there are two assignments – the term paper topic and the rough draft of the term paper – which are due on a Monday – by 4:30 p.m.) LATE SUBMISSIONS WILL BE PENALIZED BY A GRADE REDUCTION OF ONE FULL GRADE FOR EACH DAY OF LATENESS. SUBMISSIONS MUST BE HARD COPIES. (If the class is affected by the flu I will revisit this issue.)

GRADING: Book review & Thanksgiving paper (10%each)
 Shaker video (10%)
 Final Examination (20%)
 Term Paper (30%)
 Class participation (20%)

THE FOURTH HOUR: Although this class is scheduled to meet for three hours each week, you will earn four credits. The additional credit comes from various activities: On September 9, you will attend a presentation on diversity by my colleague, Professor Winston Grady-Willis; that week you will also attend Professor Eric Foner’s lecture on Thursday, September 10. As the semester progresses you will earn additional hours: We will carry out two field trips – the first, on Friday September 11, will be a trip to the Saratoga National Historical Park, where park staff will present a workshop on camp cookery in the patriot army during the American Revolution. The second field trip will be on Friday, October 16, when we will travel to Hancock Shaker Village (on the outskirts of Pittsfield, Massachusetts) to explore Shaker foodways. You will also attend one of the three writing workshops offered by the writing center, visit the Hudson River exhibit at the Tang, and participate in several cooking workshops.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND ASSIGNMENTS

Wednesday, September 9	Beginnings: As American As Apple Pie Read, “Apples,” by Boria Sax in Wilson & Gillespie (handed out on Tuesday, 9/8) and McWilliams, Introduction
Friday, September 11	Revolutionary Food: FIELD TRIP: Saratoga National Historical Park – 12:15-3:30 pm Holly Mayer, <i>Belonging to the Army</i> , ch. 2 [BB]

PART ONE: HISTORICAL SURVEY OF AMERICAN FOODWAYS

Wednesday, September 16	Creole Origins of American Food, McWilliams, ch. 1 & 2
Friday, September 18	Native American Foodways: McWilliams, ch 2 & 3; Guest presenter, Jim Bruchac, Ndashinna Wilderness Center,
Wednesday, September 23	Southern Patterns: McWilliams, ch.3 & 4
Friday, September 25	Middle Colonies and British Influences: McWilliams, ch. 5 & 6
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 28	TERM PAPER TOPIC DUE

Wednesday, September 30 Alcohol & Culinary Independence:
 McWilliams, ch. 7 & 8
 NB Class will meet in the Bibliographic Instruction Room of the Library today

Friday, October 2 Technology & Food Supply in the 19th Century:
 Pillsbury, ch 3 & 4 [BB]
 BOOK REVIEW DUE

PART TWO: FOOD AND ETHNICITY

Wednesday, October 7 Marketing to the Masses: Pillsbury, ch. 5,
 Diner, ch. 1

Friday, October 9 Italian Immigrant Foodways: Diner, ch. 2 & 3
 TERM PAPER BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE

Wednesday, October 14 Food Reform: Graham, Beecher & Alcott;
 Child, Sokolow(BB)

Friday, October 16 Field Trip to Hancock Shaker Village
 Read Miller & Fuller, Ott [BB]

Wednesday, October 21 Irish Immigrant Experiences: Diner, ch. 4 & 5
 TERM PAPER OUTLINE DUE

Friday October 23 STUDY DAY – no class

Wednesday, October 28 Jewish Immigrant Cuisine: Diner, ch. 6 & 7

Friday, October 30 Food and Ethnicity in the 20th century: Diner,
 ch. 8;
 VIDEO DUE

PART THREE: GENDER AND FOOD

Wednesday, November 4 Domestic Cuisine: Shapiro, pp.3-46

Friday, November 6 Domestic Science: Shapiro, pp. 47-70

Monday November 9 TERM PAPER DRAFTS DUE
 CONFERENCES ON TERM PAPER DRAFTS THIS WEEK (11/9--11/13)

Wednesday, November 11 Delicate Food: Shapiro, pp. 71-105
 Farmer [BB]

- Friday, November 13 Food as Americanizer: Shapiro, pp. 106-168
Crocker & Marling [BB]
- Wednesday, November 18 Women Rule the Home: Shapiro, pp. 168-216
Thanksgiving: Applebaum [BB]

PART FOUR: MODERN FOODWAYS

- Friday, November 20 Looking Back: Shapiro, 217-237
TERM PAPERS DUE IN CLASS TODAY

THANKSGIVING VACATION

- Wednesday, December 2 Fast Food: Schlosser, ch. 1, 2, & 3
SHORT PAPERS ON THANKSGIVING DUE
- Friday, December 4 Food Business: Schlosser, ch. 3, 4, & 5
- Wednesday, December 9 Meat and Potatoes: Schlosser, ch. 6, 7, 8, & 9
"Supersize Me"
- Friday, December 11 Consequences: Schlosser, ch. 10
Pollan [BB]

FINAL EXAMINATION: SELF-SCHEDULED

FINDING ME:

My office is Learning Center 329; my extension is 5025. (If you hate voicemail, leave a message with a real person at the American Studies office, extension 5020.) You can also reach me through electronic mail, which I check daily; my username is mcl. My office hours are on Wednesday from 2:00 to 3:00 and on Tuesday and Thursday, from 9 to 10 am and from 2:30 to 3:30. If you have classes at these times, please talk to me to arrange another time, as I am normally on campus all day Monday through Friday. (In an emergency you may call me at home, 587-0193.)

HELPFUL EXPERTS:

Lucy Scribner Library: Linda Hofmann: help with locating resources on line and in the library lhofmann@skidmore.edu x5516

Writing Center: Martha Wiseman: help with writing – short papers, long ones, etc. mwiseman@skidmore.edu x5144

IT: Kelley Dempsey-Little: help with IT problems, video assignment, etc. kdempsey@skidmore.edu x5933

GIS: Alex Chaucer:GIS instructional technology achaucer@skidmore.edu x5918

Res Life: Sean Faulkner '10, Head Resident, Kimball Hall

Peer Mentor, Callison Stratton