

Food in History

History 480 – Spring 2012 Professor Robert Weis



Class sessions: Wednesday 3:35-6:35

Office Hours: Wednesday 2:00-3:00

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Food is a universal need, a centerpiece of social and economic organization, and a symbol of social distinction. It unites all humanity yet, at the same time, diverse social groups have used food to distinguish themselves from other classes, ethnicities, sexes, religions, and regions. The study of food, therefore, provides a unique vantage point to historical issues that encompass the large (social classes, trade, colonialism, war) as well as the seemingly small—what's for dinner?

This course will explore how ideas, processes, and structures related to food are key to understanding history. We will examine how the provisioning, production, consumption of food has shaped crucial aspects of human activities, beliefs, and social organization in several different historical contexts. The course will look at food in relation to a different broad theme each week. The intention is to present students with a range of possible research directions—a buffet, so to speak—that they will pursue in their capstone research paper.

ASSIGNMENTS

- Research Paper: One research paper proposal; one secondary and one primary-source presentation; one 12-page draft; one peer review; one 17-20 page research paper; and a condensed 12-15 minute paper presentation.
- Class Participation: Student participation is the motor and life of this course. In particular, come to class having completed the readings and be prepared to address the discussion questions listed below (as well as many other questions related to the readings). Sessions will be divided between class discussions about the readings, small-group presentations about food research, and individual presentations on the development of research papers.

The value of these assignments will be as follows:

Secondary Source Presentation:	10%
Primary Source Presentation:	10%
Outline:	10%
Rough draft of paper:	10%
Research Paper:	40%
Paper presentation:	20%

Letter grades will be calculated according to the following break-down:
94-100 = A; 90-93 = A-; 87-89 = B+; 84-86 = B; 80-83 = B-; and so on.

REQUIRED READINGS

Story. *Writing History*.
Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*.
McWilliams. *A Revolution in Eating*.
Norton. *Sacred Gifts, Profane Pleasures*.
Diner, *Hungering for America*.

DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES

Any student requesting disability accommodation for this class must give appropriate notice to the instructor. Students are encouraged to contact Disability Support Services at (970) 351-2289 to certify documentation of disability and to ensure appropriate accommodations.

HONOR CODE

All members of the UNC community are entrusted with the responsibility to uphold and promote five fundamental values: Honesty, Trust, Respect, Fairness, and Responsibility. These core elements foster an atmosphere, inside and outside of the classroom, which serves as a foundation and guides the UNC community's academic, professional, and

personal growth. Endorsement of these core elements by students, faculty, staff, administration, and trustees strengthens the integrity and value of our academic climate.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1 (January 4): Food, History, and Us

Discussion Questions: Food experiences: social themes and historical cases.

Sign up for weekly site presentations (starting next week).

Research Paper:

For next week: Think about a research theme and one or more particular historical cases that illustrate the theme. Some general ideas: the history of certain foods or cultivars; specific dishes; food-related customs; food taboos; structures of provisioning (agriculture, labor, retail, cooking); government involvement in food; technology; divisions in gender, race, or class in production and consumption; identity.

Week 2 (January 11): Production, Consumption, and Power

Reading: *Sweetness and Power*, pp. xv-73.
Writing History, chapter 1.

Discussion Questions: Where was sugar cane cultivated? Why in these places? How did the structures and mechanisms related to sugar cane cultivation differ from those of sugar production? What ties connected slaves in the New World with wage laborers in Britain?

Research Paper: Discuss proposed topic.

Week 3 (January 18): Production, Consumption, and Power (contin.)

Reading: *Sweetness and Power*, chapters 3-4.
Writing History, chapter 2.

Discussion Questions: What forces changed the uses and meanings of sugar? What does Mintz mean by “extensification” and “intensification” (122, 152), and by “inside” and “outside” meanings (151-153, 167)? Why were factory owners and planters in conflict? Which group won?

Site presentation: _____

Research Paper: Secondary-source report. Locate three to four secondary sources relevant to your topic. What is important and interesting about them? What are differences between them? How will you use them?

Week 4 (January 25): Colombian Exchange

Reading: *Sacred Gifts, Profane Pleasures*, chapters
Writing History, chapter 3.

Discussion Questions:

Week 5 (February 1): Colombian Exchange

Reading: *A Revolution in Eating*, chapters 5-8.
Writing History, chapter 4.

Research Paper: Turn in outline, with discussion of sources.

Conduct research: read, read, read, take notes.

Week 6 (February 8): Food and Settlement

Reading: *A Revolution in Eating*, chapters 1-4.
Writing History, chapter 5.

Week 7 (February 15): Food and Identify

Reading: *A Revolution in Eating*, chapters 5-8.
Writing History, chapter 6.

Begin writing rough draft.

Week 8 (February 22): Immigrant Cuisines

Reading: *Hungering for America*, chapters 2-5.
Writing History, chapter 7.

Discussion Questions: How did both Italians and Irish eat in their countries? How did class differences shape their foodways? How did their food, and their perceptions about their “national” foods, change after immigration?

Week 9 (February 29): Immigrant Cuisines (contin.)

Reading: *Hungering for America*, chapters 6-8.

Discussion Questions: What role did food play within Judaism? What separated and connected wealthy and poor Jews in terms of food? How did the food and class difference change after immigration?

Week 10 (March 7): Research Discussion

Rough Draft Due Today

Spring Break

Week 11 (March 21): Research Discussion

Reading: *Writing History*, chapter 8-10.

Week 12 (March 28): Research Discussion

Week 13 (April 4): Research Discussion

Group A Presentations

Week 14 (April 11): Research Discussion

Group B Presentations

Week 15 (April 18): Research Discussion

Group C Presentations

Week 16 (April 25): Research Discussion

Group D Presentations

Final Research Papers Due.