

HIS 158: History of Eating and Food

Fall 2011

Professor Thomas Slaughter

Tues-Thurs: 9:40-10:55

Hylan 201

Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday: 1-2 pm and by appointment.

RR 369B

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The class is not a cooking or nutrition class, a chronological narrative of eating, or a study of food over time. Instead, it asks students to braid three stories—humans in nature, eating as history and culture, and how what we eat reflects who we are. The class will be taught in a modified Socratic method—prompts and questions from me to initiate discussions based on assigned readings, films, and research assignments. We will discuss the past, present, and possible future of production and consumption, culture and cuisine.

Assigned Books:

*Richard Wrangham, *Catching Fire: How Cooking Made Us Human*

*William Cronon, *Changes in the Land*

*Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*

*Jane Ziegelman, *97 Orchard: An Edible History of Five Immigrant Families in One New York Tenement*

* Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*

Films:

* *Colonial House* (PBS)

* *Chocolat*

* *Food Inc.*

* *The Road*

All reading assignments should be completed prior to class on the day they are to be discussed. Push yourself to do more than simply skim the material for content; leave yourself enough time to really think about what you've read and be prepared to discuss the selections in class. All readings not drawn from the five assigned course books are available on Blackboard. To gain access to this material, simply click on the hyperlinks in the appropriate places of the online syllabus.

All films will be screened in class.

In addition to the course texts, every student should purchase a “Green Journal” from the college bookstore. These are located for sale alongside the HIS 158 books. The journals are to be used for notes taken in class, notes from the assigned reading, and thoughtful ruminations on the subject and content of the class. Treat your entries as personal journal accounts. Ask yourself large questions, ponder the deeper issues of food and eating in history, and in your life. Journals will be collected periodically, without notice, and returned during the next class meeting. The use of computers, cell phones, mp3 players, or other electronic devices will not be permitted in class.

Course Requirements and Grading:

1. Three essays (10% each)
2. Journals (20%)
3. Informed participation in class discussion (20%)
4. Attendance (10%)
5. A final written assignment (20%)

Late work will be penalized by one letter grade per day (the highest grade attainable for a paper delivered up to 24 hours late is a B; any paper that is four or more days late will receive a grade of F). To be considered on time, work must be delivered at the start of class. Unexcused absences will be penalized 4% of your course grade for each class missed—2% for attendance and 2% for participation, and this includes personal travel. Students are expected to be on time and to attend every class. No incomplete grades will be granted without sanction from the dean’s office.

Syllabus:

Thursday, September 1:

Introduction to Course.

Tuesday, September 6:

Discuss in Class:

NYT, “A Food Manifesto for the Future.”

NYT, “The Can’t-Do Nation.”

Martin Jones, *Feast: Why Humans Share Food* (New York, 2007), 276-304, “A Global Food Web.”

Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York, 1998), 85-191, “The Rise and Spread of Food Production.”

Beginnings:

Thursday, September 8:

Watch in Class: *Colonial House* (PBS) Episode One.

Tuesday, September 13:

Discuss in Class:

Richard Wrangham, *Catching Fire: How Cooking Made Us Human* (New York, 2009), 1-103.

Brian Fagan, *The Little Ice Age: How Climate Made History, 1300-1850* (New York, 2002), 23-44, “The Great Famine.”

NYT, “Cave Drops Hint to Earliest Glass of Red.”

The Atlantic, “The 11th Plague? Why People Drink Sweet Wine on Passover.”

Thursday, September 15:

Watch in Class: *Colonial House* (PBS) Episode Two.

Tuesday, September 20:

Discuss in Class:

Richard Wrangham, *Catching Fire: How Cooking Made Us Human* (New York, 2009), 105-207.

Fernand Braudel, *The Structures of Everyday Life: The Limits of the Possible* (New York, 1979), 183-265, "Superfluity and Sufficiency: Food and Drink."

Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1990), 7-47, "Contrasts."

Thursday, September 22:

Watch in Class: *Colonial House* (PBS) Episode Three.

Environment:

Tuesday, September 27:

Discuss in Class:

William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York, 1983), vii-81.

Alfred Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, Connecticut, 1972), 165-207, "New World Foods and Old World Demography."

Virginia DeJohn Anderson, "Animals in the Wilderness: The Development of Livestock Husbandry in the Seventeenth-Century Chesapeake," *William & Mary Quarterly* 59.2 (April 2002): 377-408.

Tristram Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution: A Cultural History of Vegetarianism from 1600 to Modern Times* (New York, 2006), 418-446, "Vegetarianism and the Politics of Ecology: Thoreau, Gandhi and Hitler."

Thursday, September 29:

Discuss in Class:

William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York, 1983), 82-170.

*Assignment #1 Due.

Food and Society:

Tuesday, October 4:

Discuss in Class:

Norbert Elias, *The History of Manners, I*, (New York, 1978), 84-128, “On Behavior at Table.”

Margaret Visser, *The Rituals of Dinner: The Origins, Evolution, Eccentricities, and Meaning of Table Manners* (New York, 1991), 183-284, selections from “Dinner is Served.”

Thursday, October 6:

Discuss in Class:

E.P. Thompson, *Whigs and Hunters: The Origin of the Black Act* (New York, 1975), 21-24, 270-277, “Introduction” & “Appendix I.”

Tom Standage, *A History of the World in 6 Glasses* (New York, 2005), 112-129, “The Drinks that Built America.”

Andrew Beahrs, “Twain’s Feast: ‘The American’ at Table,” *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture* 7.2 (Spring 2007): 26-34.

Timothy Morton, Ed., *Cultures of Taste/Theories of Appetite* (New York, 2004), 21-41, Nick Groom, “William Henry Ireland: From Forgery to Fish and Chips.”

Tom Standage, *An Edible History of Humanity* (New York, 2009), 171-196, “Food Fight.”

Tuesday, October 11: FALL BREAK— No Class

Sugar and Chocolate:

Thursday, October 13:

Information and research session with the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections. Meet in Rush Rhees 225— enter through the Great Hall.

Tuesday, October 18:

Discuss in Class:

Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York, 1985), xv-214.

NYT, “Is Sugar Toxic?”

Thursday, October 20:

Watch in Class: *Chocolat*.

Read for Class:

Louis Grivetti and Howard-Yana Shapiro, eds, *Chocolate: History, Culture, and Heritage* (Hoboken, NJ, 2009), 67-88, Louis Grivetti, “Medicinal Chocolate in New Spain, Western Europe, and North America.”

Tuesday, October 25:

Watch in Class: *Chocolat*.

Read for Class:

Louis Grivetti and Howard-Yana Shapiro, eds, *Chocolate: History, Culture, and Heritage* (Hoboken, NJ, 2009), 359-373, Louis Grivetti, “Boston Chocolate: Newspaper Articles and Advertisements, 1705-1825.”

*Assignment #2 Due.

Fusion:

Thursday, October 27:

Discuss in Class:

Jane Ziegelman. *97 Orchard: An Edible History of Five Immigrant Families in One New York Tenement* (New York, 2010), xi-82.

Tuesday, November 1:

Discuss in Class:

Jane Ziegelman. *97 Orchard: An Edible History of Five Immigrant Families in One New York Tenement* (New York, 2010), 83-227.

NYT, “A Matter of Blood and Sausage.”

NYT, “A Chicken War in New York, Where Afghans Rule the Roost.”

CSM, “Fish Stew, French Style.”

NYT, “Prosperity Starts with a Pea.”

Industry:

Thursday, November 3:

Discuss: in Class

Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (New York 1962), 13-15, 97-119, 168-178, 232-262: “A Fable for Tomorrow,” “And No Birds Sing,” “The Human Price,” “The Rumbblings of an Avalanche,” & “The Other Road.”

Tuesday, November 8:

Discuss in Class:

Reay Tannahill, *Food in History* (New York, 1988), 306-346, “The Food-Supply Revolution.”

Harvey Levenstein, *Paradox of Plenty: A Social History of Eating in Modern America* (New York, 1993), 40-53, 101-118, 227-236: “From Burgoo to Howard Johnson’s: Eating Out in Depression America,” “The Golden Age of Food Processing: Miracle Whip *über Alles*,” & “Fast Food and Quick Bucks.”

Thursday, November 10:

Discuss in Class:

Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal* (New York, 2001), 1-107.

Tuesday, November 15:

Discuss in Class:

Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal* (New York, 2001), 111-270.

Thursday, November 17:

Watch in Class: *Food Inc.*

*Assignment #3 Due.

Tuesday, November 22:

Watch in Class: *Food Inc.*

Read for Class:

NYT, “An American Thanksgiving, Skewered and Roasted.”

NYT, “Give Thanks for... Eel?”

NYT, “Peace, Love and Puritanism.”

Thursday, November 24: THANKSGIVING BREAK— No Class

Futures:

Tuesday, November 29:

Discuss in Class:

Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* (New York, 2006), 287-333, "The Omnivore's Dilemma" & "The Ethics of Eating Animals."

NYT, "Yielding to His Natural Self."

NYT Mag., "Walgreens Tackles 'Food Deserts.'"

NYT Mag., "The Real Supermarkets of Orange County."

Thursday, December 1:

Discuss in Class:

Michael Pollan, *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto* (New York, 2008), 139-201, "Getting Over Nutritionism."

Heather Paxson. "Slow Food in a Fat Society: Satisfying Ethical Appetites," *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture* 5.1 (Winter 2005): 14-18.

The End of Food:

Tuesday, December 6:

Discuss in Class:

New Yorker, “We Have No Bananas.”

NYT, “How to Make Oatmeal... Wrong.”

Margaret Visser, *The Rituals of Dinner: The Origins, Evolution, Eccentricities, and Meaning of Table Manners* (New York, 1991), 4-17, “The Artificial Cannibal.”

Catalin Avramescu, *An Intellectual History of Cannibalism* (Princeton, NJ, 2009), 162-182, “A Question of Taste.”

Gannath Obeyesekere, “‘British Cannibals’: Contemplation of an Event in the Death and Resurrection of James Cook, Explorer,” *Critical Inquiry* 18.4 (Summer 1992): 630-654.

Thursday, December 8:

*Watch in Class: *The Road*

Tuesday, December 13:

*Watch in Class: *The Road*

Final Essay: Due No Later than 10:00 AM, December 20 Assignment 1: Wrangham, Cronon, and Transformations

Due: September 29

Description:

Based explicitly on your reading of the books by Wrangham and Cronon, what do you believe was the price of the human “progress” they write about? What morals and generalizations do you draw? What are the limitations of generalizations you would make based on your reading of the books? Be specific in your references to the books and cite all ideas and words that are not yours. Part of the idea of this assignment, a central part of the idea, is that I can tell from your paper that you have read the books and can use the information in them critically to think beyond their content and scope. On the other hand, I am not asking you to summarize the books. I am asking you to answer the questions, using the contents of the books as your evidential base. I am asking you to think critically beyond what the authors argue themselves. (Five pages, double-spaced, 12-point type, one inch margins).

Assignment 2: Chocolate and American Newspapers

Due: October 25

Description:

This assignment calls for you to locate as many references to chocolate— whether they are advertisements or articles— as you can from American newspapers. We will divide up the work among class members. There are eighteen “eras” in America’s Historical Newspapers:

<http://infoweb.newsbank.com/iw-search/we/HistArchive/>

In essence, your task is to create a reader of your own, edited and introduced by you. Gather and transcribe no less than seven documents pertaining to chocolate, meaning you will need to read the original sources, type them out verbatim on your word processor, and include them in your final submission. More importantly, you are to preface your transcriptions with an essay of five pages (double-spaced, 12-point type, one inch margins) that offers an interpretation of these primary sources. Taken together, what do your selected documents tell us about attitudes toward chocolate during the era you have examined? What was its social status in the period under review? What can be determined about its availability, cost, and production? Who was eating chocolate (and who wasn’t), and how was it marketed to them?

As you are writing your essay, consider also the arguments posed by Sidney Mintz in *Sweetness and Power*. Are there applicable parallels to his thesis about sugar borne out in your chocolate documents? How useful is it to read history through the lens of a food staple or commodity?

Assignment #3: Menus

Due: November 17

Description:

The year is 1885, the place is New York City, and you intend to open a new downtown restaurant. For starters, your financial backers have asked you to make a sample dinner menu, which embodies your vision for the restaurant. The menu should include the name you intend to give your establishment, as well as a full range of assorted dishes: no less than a dozen entrees as well as several sides and desserts. Your financiers, who know very little about restaurants, have also requested that you provide a detailed description of each item on the menu, a list of its key ingredients, origins, and taste. Be creative, maybe even artistic here, but in any event recognize that aesthetics and ambiance are key elements of any plan.

As your primary-source base for ideas that are historically accurate, use period menus stored as a digital gallery by the New York Public Library, from the “Buttolph American

Menu Collection, 1851-1930.” The collection is available online:

http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/explore/dgexplore.cfm?col_id=159

(Click “see all images” to gain easiest access to the documents, or click the “collection contents” link to search by year.)

Jane Ziegelman, *97 Orchard: An Edible History of Five Immigrant Families in One New York Tenement*, also provides some ideas that may be useful to you.

Be as creative as can with your menu, while also staying true to the time period. That is, while you are free to select your dishes (and feel free to build them around a consistent theme), choose ambitiously; explore such now-alien entrees as calf’s head or boiled tongue, and other delicacies that have all but vanished from most modern restaurants.

Describe your dishes and ingredients in your menu.

In addition to your menu, include a two-page report to your prospective financial backers explaining your business plan. Explain your menu. What sort of diners do you expect to attract? What culinary influences are you borrowing? On the one hand, to answer that question you might consult Jane Ziegelman’s “Edible History” of New York, especially if you choose menu items from immigrant food traditions. On the other, you should give credit where credit is due if you borrow, and you should borrow (that is part of the idea) from historical restaurants. For example, if Delmonico’s menu informs your own, recognize that fact and discuss the implications. Give citations for every menu item you list). How well will your restaurant fit into the cultures of late nineteenth-century New York City?

Final Essay

Due: December 20 by 10:00 AM

Description:

Visit the website of David Icke: <http://www.davidicke.com/>

Based on your perusal of the website, and at least three critical articles about Icke, explain how his ideas about the foods people eat and about humans as food reflect the food cultures and historical processes we have discussed this semester. (Five pages, double-spaced, 12-point type, one inch margins).