

ANT 316.01 FOOD AND CULTURE

Fall 2009

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Thought for Food

Tell me what you eat and I will tell you what you are. Anthelme Brillat-Savarin (1755-1826)

There is no love sincerer than the love of food. George Bernard Shaw

Part of the secret of success in life is to eat what you like and let the food fight it out inside.
Mark Twain

The meat is white and tastes like chicken. Christopher Columbus, after eating an iguana in the Bahamas.

Chi mangia bene sta molto vicino a Dio (Who eats well stays close to God)—Italian saying

Anthropology 316 is neither a cooking course nor a piece of cake. Margaret Blackman
(For what it really is, see below).

FOOD is the very core of life, meeting our most basic human need. Food is also one of the most culturally elaborated areas of human experience. Our cultural and ethnic identities are closely tied to food. Life's important rituals and religious celebrations include the preparation, serving and sharing of food (and/or abstaining from food). Food is about gender, about class, about politics. Food is about aesthetics, about friendship, about community. Food is also about contemporary issues, many of them global—food policies, sustainable agriculture, the genetic modification of foodstuffs, environmental degradation, the safety of our food, obesity and hunger, to name a few. In ANT 316 we will explore the culture of food with an emphasis on contemporary food-related issues and critical reflection on our own individual and cultural foodways.

This course fulfills the following General Education requirements: Contemporary Issues, Perspectives on Women, Oral Communication

OBJECTIVES

- Master course knowledge/content on the relationships between culture and contemporary food systems
- Explain and give examples of the myriad approaches to the study of food
- Identify and explain salient contemporary issues related to food
- Apply critical thinking skills in the exploration of one's own foodways
- Write effectively, clearly, critically and persuasively

- Know your local foodshed and eat more knowledgeably and wisely!

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADES

50% of grade—3 Exams, and an optional final = (10/6,11/3,12/1)

30% of grade—4 Essays on food and food issues covered in class (9/17,10/15,11/12, 12/3)

20% of grade—Class participation, leading class discussion, and Attendance

READINGS

Steve Striffler

Chicken: The Dangerous Transformation of America's Favorite Food (2005)
Yale University Press

Michael Pollan

In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto (2008) Penguin Books

A selection of articles and book chapters online, accessible through Angel.

ANGEL (class website)

“ANGEL” is the college’s online course management website. To access it, go to Brockport’s home page (www.brockport.edu), click on the Angel link on the horizontal green bar at the top of the page. You use your Brockport login and password to access all of the courses in which you are currently enrolled.

On the ANT 316 ANGEL site you will find class handouts, websites related to food and culture, and the syllabus. Here it is easy to send e-mails to classmates or to me. You can also keep track of your recorded grades on assignments and check your course grade at the end of the semester.

There are a number of readings, listed by week assigned on the course outline, available through ANGEL and in the folder, “Course Reserves.” You can either read them online or print them out.

POLICIES

- Readings and Discussion: You should complete the readings for each week by the beginning of the week (with the exception of week 1) and be prepared to discuss in class the assigned readings.
- Attendance: Class attendance is expected. If you miss more than three classes your course participation grade will be lowered. If you miss more than 15% of the course (5 classes) your course grade will be lowered, and, at the instructor's discretion you are subject to failure of the course.
- Electronic devices: Please turn off cell phones, pagers, and other communications devices before class begins. You may use a laptop computer for note taking during class, but not unrelated activities (e-mail, web browsing). Students caught indulging in unrelated activities will be disallowed from using a laptop in class for the remainder of the term.

- Grading: see Anthropology Departmental Guidelines for Student Evaluation (posted on the ANGEL site). College policies on attendance, incompletes, withdrawals, and academic dishonesty can be found on the Student Policy webpage at www.brockport.edu/policies/. Please familiarize yourself with them.
- Exams: The final exam is optional (unless you have missed an exam). The final exam counts ONLY if you get a higher grade than that on any of the other exams. Your final exam grade can replace any or all of your other exam grades.

No Make-up Exams will be given. If you miss an exam you must take the final.

Disability statement

Students with documented disabilities may be entitled to specific accommodations. Brockport's Office for Students with Disabilities makes this determination. Please contact the Office for Students with Disabilities at 395-5409 or osdoffic@brockport.edu to inquire about obtaining an official letter to the course instructor detailing approved accommodations. You are responsible for providing the course instructor with an official letter. Faculty work as a team with the Office for Students with Disabilities to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

COURSE OUTLINE

September 1–3 FOOD FOR THOUGHT: Food as history, biography, memoir, politics, & culture

READINGS

John McPhee: "Oranges"

Austin Clarke: "Introduction" to *Pigtails 'n Breadfruit: A Culinary Memoir*

Sept 8-10 FOOD FOR THOUGHT, CONT.

READINGS

Marion Nestle: "Introduction" to *Food Politics*

VIDEOS: "Food 360 Degrees", "Milk"

Sept 15-17 FOOD IS MORE THAN FOOD: Food and meaning, "Nutritionism"

READINGS

Blackman "Birds—Not of a Feather"

Pollan Introduction and Part 1, "The Age of Nutritionism"

VIDEO: "Bread"

Discussion Group 1, 9/17

First writing assignment due, 9/17

Sept 22-24 FROM THE ABORIGINAL TO THE WESTERN DIET AND THE DISEASES OF CIVILIZATION (Inuit and Pacific Islanders)

READINGS

Blackman "Of Meat and Hunger and Everlasting Gobstoppers"

Shell "New World Syndrome"

Pollan pp. 85-101

VIDEO: "Food and Intimacy"

Discussion Group 2, 9/24

Sept 29–October 1 FOODWAYS: JAPAN

READINGS

D'Aluisio: "Dinner is Served"

Menzel and D'Aluisio: "Japan: Vitamin Sea"

Allison "Japanese Mothers and *Obentos*"

VIDEO: "Food and Intimacy"

Discussion Group 3, 10/1

Oct 6–8

EXAM 1—October 6th (all lectures, videos, readings through October 1st)

Oct 8th Field trip to Sycamore Manor Dairy Farm, Holley, NY

Oct 13-15 AMERICA: THE SUPERMARKET IS WHERE WE LEARN TO FORGET (Industrialized Agriculture; Farm subsidies, GM crops, cheap food, and how these affect our diet)

READINGS

Pollan: 101-136

Striffler: *Chicken*, pp. Preface-31

VIDEO: The Natural History of the Chicken

October 15th –second writing assignment due

Discussion Group 4, 10/15

Oct 20-22 (no class Oct 20th -enjoy fall break): THE SUPERMARKET IS WHERE WE LEARN TO FORGET, cont.

READINGS

Striffler: *Chicken*, pp. 32-71

Discussion group 5, 10/22

Oct 27-29 WHERE DOES IT COME FROM AND WHAT'S IN IT (Food labeling, food security, food industry workers and the globalization of our diets)

READINGS

Striffler: *Chicken*, pp. 73-110

Pollan: "Power Steer"

VIDEO: "Modern Meat"

Discussion group 6, 10/29

Nov 3-5 FOOD AND THE MATTER OF OBESITY

EXAM 2—Nov 3rd (all lectures, videos, readings through October 29th)

READINGS

Striffler: *Chicken*, pp. 110- 171

Kolbert: XXXL: Why are we so Fat?

VIDEO: "Fat"

Discussion group 7, 11/5

Nov 10-12 COMING HOME TO EAT—organic, locavorism, sustainable agriculture, getting over nutritionism

READINGS

Pollan: 139-201

Nestle: "The Produce Section"

VIDEO: "To Market, To Market" (Rochester, NY Public market)

Discussion group 8, 11/12

November 12th—third writing assignment due

Nov 17-19 FOOD, RELIGION AND RITUAL (Thanksgiving, the American Eating Holiday)

READINGS

Siskind: "The Invention of Thanksgiving"

VIDEO: "Myths and Taboos"

November 19th—Fieldtrip to Ridgecrest Turkey Farm

Discussion group 9, 11/17

Nov 24-26 (no class Nov 26th —Happy Thanksgiving!)

VIDEO: “What’s Cooking”

Dec 1–3

FOODWAYS: ITALY, ITALIAN AMERICANS, AND THE IMPACT OF IMMIGRATION ON THE AMERICAN DIET.

EXAM 3—December 1st (all lectures, videos, readings through Nov 24th)

READINGS

Menzel and D’Aluisio: “Italy: Fish Tales”

Levenstein, “The American Response to Italian Food, 1880-1930”

VIDEO: “Pasta”

December 3rd–4th writing assignment due
Discussion Group 10, 12/3

Dec 8-10 FAMINE BEFORE FEAST Hunger and its causes, WHY AMERICA DOESN’T COOK, CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ON FOOD AND CULTURE

READINGS

Menzel and D’Aluisio: “Chad—Refuge”

Pollan: “Out of the Kitchen and Onto the Couch”

Your Just Desserts—eating day, December 10th. Bring a dish to pass.

Final Exam week—Optional Final Exam (cumulative)