

Professor Benjamin R. Siegel
History Department, Boston University
226 Bay State Road, Room 203
617-353-8316
siegelb@bu.edu

Lecture, Fall 2014:
M, W, F 9:00 – 10:00
Room: CAS 233
Office Hours:
M, W, 10:15 – 11:45

HI343: Taste, Culture, and Power: The Global History of Food



Course Description

Across time and across borders, humans have eaten not only for sustenance, but for pleasure, and food has helped shape the creation of societies and religions as well as nations and corporations. Eating together or eating similar cuisine binds families, cultures, and states together, while food taboos and distinctions draw stark distinctions between strangers. What we eat is not an incidental or insignificant component of life, but an essential part of how it is structured. And every meal, drink, or snack we ingest represents a confluence of power, culture, technology, and taste that can be traced back far into the past.

In this course, we will investigate the history of food from prehistory to the present day and beyond, as we consider examples from every corner of the world. Beginning with the science of food and taste, we will consider the origins of agriculture and the role of food in antiquity and religious life. We will explore the spread of crops and food practices across the oceans in the early modern world, and investigate the intimate and uncomfortable relationship between food and the global slave trade.

We will think about hunger, intoxication and stimulation, and the origins of industrial food before considering the birth of national cuisines, and the way in which imperialism changed the eating practices of people around the world. We will look at the foods that immigrants brought with them to the United States and elsewhere, while probing the linkages between race and modern eating practices. We will look at the birth of nutrition as a way of thinking about food, and the scandals of food adulteration that helped shape how we eat today.

As we approach the twentieth century, we will consider the relationship of food, famines, and war, and the new technologies that led many to believe the world was approaching end of hunger. Towards the end of our class, we will unpack some of the problems in our food system today, from the rise of fast food to the “inventions” of anorexia and obesity. At the very end of the course, we will think – as historians – about the future. How will we eat in the future, as the tastes of the rich and the middle classes grow more cosmopolitan, but we contend with the twin specters of global malnutrition and obesity? What will our meals look like two hundred years from now?

Assignments and Evaluation

There will be three lecture classes each week, with ample time allotted in each session for discussion. The readings listed below are to be done before class: some weeks there is a relatively light workload, and other weeks are more demanding, but rarely will the reading exceed thirty pages per session. Most of our readings are book chapters, articles, or selections from longer works, and will be available on Blackboard Learn.

In addition to regular lectures, we will also have a number of special class sessions. There will be three film screenings, where we will watch, and later discuss, feature films and documentaries that deal provocatively with questions of food and eating. We will also have several guest lecturers over the course of the semester to provide different perspectives on some of the material covered over the semester.

Class attendance is expected, as is arriving on time and staying for the entire class: the lectures cover different (often very different) material from the assigned reading, which should be finished prior to class. Computers and cell phones are not permitted in the classroom, unless the former are required for documented accessibility needs. Plagiarism is a serious offense and, if suspected, will be referred to the Dean's Office; a copy of Boston University's code of conduct is available at <http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/>.

I encourage you to make an appointment to come to office hours; appointments may be made online up to 24 hours in advance at <http://calendly.com/benjaminsiegel>. I will respond to all e-mails within twenty-four hours but not necessarily on the same day that you write; I also expect you to be similarly accessible via your BU e-mail address.

Final grades will be based on the following rubric:

- Attendance and participation on discussion days: 10%
- First in-class exam: 25%
- Second in-class exam: 25%
- Final examination: 40%

Weekly Reading and Lecture Schedule

Note: this schedule is subject to change subject to the availability of guest lecturers. A current version, and updated readings, will always be available on Blackboard Learn.

January 21, 2015 – Introductory Lecture

January 23, 2015 – Science of Food

- Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, “On Taste,” in *The Taste Culture Reader: Experiencing Food and Drink*, ed. Carolyn Korsmeyer (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 15–24.
- Harold McGee, “The Four Basic Food Molecules,” in *On Food and Cooking: The Science and Lore of the Kitchen* (New York: Scribner, 2004), 792–810.
- Immanuel Kant, “On the Standard of Taste,” in *The Taste Culture Reader: Experiencing Food and Drink*, ed. Carolyn Korsmeyer (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 209–214.

January 26, 2015 – Hunger Gathers and the Birth of Agriculture

- Alan K. Outram, “Hunter-Gatherers and the First Farmers,” in *Food: The History of Taste*, ed. Paul H Freedman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 35–62.

January 28, 2015 – Food in Antiquity

- Veronika Grimm, “The Good Things That Lay at Hand,” in *Food: The History of Taste*, ed. Paul H Freedman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 63–98.

January 30, 2015 – Food and Religious Life

- R.S. Khare, “Food with Saints,” in *The Taste Culture Reader: Experiencing Food and Drink*, ed. Carolyn Korsmeyer (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 156–165.
- Carolyn Korsmeyer, ed., “Bitter Herbs and Unleavened Brea (from the Passover Haggadah),” in *The Taste Culture Reader: Experiencing Food and Drink* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 181–183.
- D.T. Suzuki, “Zen and the Art of Tea,” in *The Taste Culture Reader: Experiencing Food and Drink*, ed. Carolyn Korsmeyer (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 166–174.

February 2, 2015 – Guest Lecture 1

February 4, 2015 – The Columbian Exchange

- Alfred W Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 2003); selections TBA.

February 6, 2015 – Sugar and Slaves

- Sidney Wilfred Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1986); selections TBA.

February 9, 2015 – Uppers and Downers: Coffee, Alcohol, and Other Drugs

Guest Lecturer: Lucy Valena

- Tom Standage, “Civilized Beer; The Coffeehouse Internet,” in *A History of the World in 6 Glasses* (New York: Walker & Co, 2005), 24–42; 151–174.

February 11, 2015 – Hunger and the Moral Economy

- Thomas Malthus, “An Essay on the Principle of Population,” 1798; selection TBA.

February 13, 2015 – Industrial Food

- Martin Breugel, “How the French Learned to Eat Canned Food, 1809–1930s,” in *Food Nations: Selling Taste in Consumer Societies*, ed. Warren Belasco and Philip Scranton (New York: Routledge, 2002), 113–130.

February 17, 2015 – Discussion Section

February 18, 2015 – First Exam

February 20, 2015 – Food and the Modern World

- Film Screening; TBA

February 23, 2015 – Making National Cuisines, Part 1

- Elliot Shore, “Dining Out: The Development of the Restaurant,” in *Food: The History of Taste*, ed. Paul H Freedman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 301–332.
- Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, *Rice as Self: Japanese Identities through Time* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993); selections TBA.
- Jeffrey M Pilcher, *Que Vivan Los Tamales!: Food and the Making of Mexican Identity* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998); selections TBA.

February 25, 2015 – Food and Empires

- Diana Wylie, *Starving on a Full Stomach: Hunger and the Triumph of Cultural Racism in Modern South Africa* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001); selection TBA.

February 27, 2015 – Migrant Cuisines

- Donna R. Gabaccia, “Immigration, Isolation, and Industry” in *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 36-63.

March 2, 2015 – Food and Race

- M.M. Manring, *Slave in a Box: The Strange Career of Aunt Jemima* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998); selections TBA.

March 4, 2015 – The Discovery of Nutrition

- Nick Cullather, “The Foreign Policy of the Calorie,” *The American Historical Review* 112, no. 2 (April 1, 2007): 337-364.

March 6, 2015 – Adulteration and Scandal

- Bee Wilson, “German Ham and English Pickles” in *Swindled: The Dark History of Food Fraud, from Poisoned Candy to Counterfeit Coffee* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 1-45.

March 18, 2015 – Food, War, and Famines

- E. M. Collingham, *The Taste of War: World War II and the Battle for Food* (New York: Penguin Books, 2013); selections TBA.

March 20, 2015 – Food and Nationalism

- Arjun Appadurai, “How to Make a National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 30 (1988): 3-24.

March 23, 2015 – The Green Revolution

- John H. Perkins, “Science and the Green Revolution, 1945-1975,” in *Geopolitics and the Green Revolution: Wheat, Genes, and the Cold War* (Oxford University Press, USA, 1997), 210-255.

March 25, 2015 – Crops, Grains, and Genes

- Film Screening: *Food, Inc.*

March 27, 2015 – Discussion Day and Exam Review

March 30, 2015 – Second Exam

April 1, 2015 – Globalizing Hunger

- Nick Cullather, “Introduction; The World Food Problem,” in *The Hungry World: America’s Cold War Battle Against Poverty in Asia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 1–42.

April 3, 2015 – Fast Food

- Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the all-American Meal* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2012); selections TBA.

April 6, 2015 – Eating Animals

- Peter Singer, “Animal Liberation,” *New York Review of Books* (April 5, 1973).

April 8, 2015 – Too Fat, Too Thin

- Excerpts from Joan Jacobs Brumberg, “‘Fasting Girls’: Reflections on Writing the History of Anorexia Nervosa,” *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development* 50, no. 4/5 (January 1, 1985): 93–104.
- Marion Nestle, *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health*, Revised and Expanded Edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); selections TBA.

April 10, 2015 – Discussion Day

April 13, 2015 – Globalizing Tastes

- Theodore C. Bestor, “How Sushi Went Global,” *Foreign Policy* no. 121 (November 1, 2000): 54–63.
- Allison James, “Identity and the Global Stew,” in *The Taste Culture Reader: Experiencing Food and Drink*, ed. Carolyn Korsmeyer (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 372–383.

April 15, 2015 – The Global Politics of Food

- Raj Patel, “Better Living Through Chemistry,” in *Stuffed and Starved: The Hidden Battle for the World Food System* (Brooklyn: Melville House, 2012), 129–172.

April 17, 2015 – Guest Lecture 2

April 22, 2015 – Food and Public Politics

- Film Screening: *Food, Inc.*

April 24, 2015 – The Future of Food

- Rachel Laudan, “A Plea for Culinary Modernism: Why We Should Love New, Fast, Processed Food,” *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture* 1, no. 1 (February 1, 2001): 36–44.
- Warren James Belasco, *Meals to Come: a History of the Future of Food* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006); selections TBA.

April 27, 2015 – Concluding Lecture

April 29, 2015 – Review Discussion

Final exam between May 5 and May 9, 2015 (TBA)