

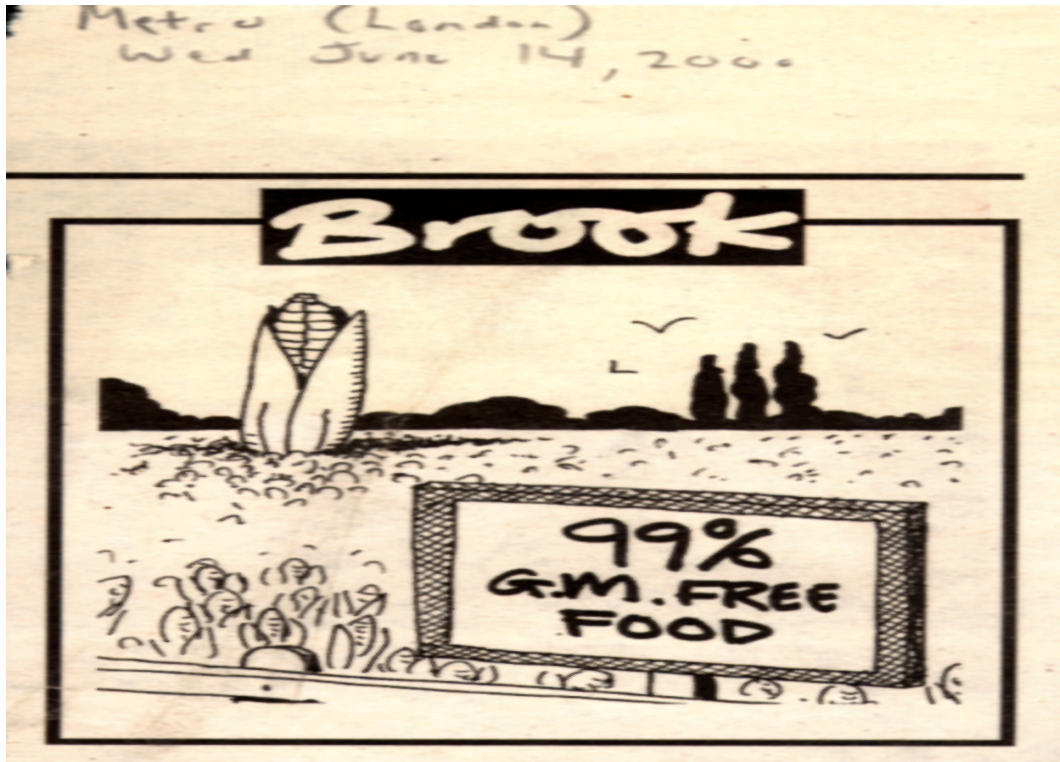
HI589/MET/ML589 (Revised 12/20/16)
Nature's (Re)past: Histories of Food, Environment and Society
(also qualifies for MET 622 History of Food credit)
Spring 2017 Th 6:30-9:15
226 Bay State Road (History) #304
Professor James C. McCann
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Phone: 617 353-7308 e-mail: mccann@bu.edu
Office Hours: M 10-12, Th 11-12 (and by appointment)



Course Objectives:

This course will introduce students to themes in the history of food – production, consumption, aesthetics, and ritual -- through specific historical examples. We will explore the question of how our current system of global agriculture and food supply came to be as it is today. The course focuses on key themes and cultural traditions of producing food, and eating it. It will highlight food as a feature of nature, its physical transformation, and it's appearance at a critical feature of culture and identity. The course explores culinary culture with examples of different times and places, including the non-western world and diasporas. We want to know why people ate as they did in the past and how culinary cultures are formed and influenced one another. Students will also practice writing in various formats and group work.

Image from Metro (London) June 14, 2000



Course Topic: Histories of Food, Environment and Society

The purpose of this seminar is to examine the ways that historians understand and describe the interactions between humans and their physical world, an interaction that expresses itself in terms of landscapes of vegetation, population, disease, built settings of cities, and, especially, cooking as an act of environmental knowledge. Environmental history has its methods defined by the parameters of science and the natural world—flora, fauna, topography, seasons—as well as human elements of technology, demography, and social organization. Cooking and cuisine is at the apex of these interactions. This course will examine the work of key historians in the emerging field of environmental history and the role of food/cooking in that human/nature interaction.

The course begins with historical/cultural landscapes and ends up in Boston's landscape of food in bistros, food trucks, groceries, and storefront restaurants. It will include 3 group sessions in that will focus on particular dishes, for example from Africa, the American South, and Italy to demonstrate the movement of ingredients, ideas, and techniques. The goal is to explore ingredients and the ecologies of cuisine.

This course at its core is a reading seminar that will also provide students with an opportunity to evaluate scholarly and popular writing in the field of environmental history. The course will include reading exercises, two short writing assignments,

weekly précis and a final project that will take the form of a 15-page research paper on the Historical Ecology of a Recipe that analyzes the environmental context of a cooking team's project in the final weeks of the course. That writing project will include each student's exploration of a body of primary sources, secondary literature, and research methods. In this format students will gain exposure to several approaches to environmental history as well as to focus on their own areas of geographic and thematic interest. This course contains more than 25% Africa content as well as comparative materials in North American, Atlantic, and European content.

Assignments and Final Project:

Assignments:

1. For every class each member will prepare discussion questions that arise from the week's reading. These should be turned in to the instructor at the beginning of class, but students should also be prepared to present a question for the class discussion. For book length readings, please write three questions; for articles and chapters, please write two questions for each reading.

2. Each student will be assigned one reading in the term to present to the class. You will be expected to discuss the author's argument, method(s) used, evidence & sources, and observations about the effectiveness of the work. I recommend you provide an outline of your presentation for the class. The assignments will be made during the first class.

The principal written assignments for the course will include a group classroom presentation fifteen-page research paper that describes a topic in food/environmental history, a set of primary sources appropriate to that topic, and a literature review that indicates the context of the research (historical writing, and/or science-based literature). In addition, students will prepare each week a short précis on the core reading. Twice over the course of the semester, each student will prepare a book review that describes and evaluates one of the readings from the comparative list provided for each of the themes.

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| Book précis statements (one page). (Choose 4 of 8 weekly core readings) | 20% |
| Weekly questions on reading | |
| 1 Comparative book reviews 2 pages/500 words | 10% |
| Final class presentation | 20% |
| Final paper (Ecological History of Cuisine) | 35% |
| Class participation | 15% |

All written assignments will be doubled spaced, using bibliographic formats from the *Chicago Manual of Style* (15th edition) and 10 or 12 point fonts and one-inch margins.

Course Requirements:

At Boston University class attendance is not optional. Students are expected to attend class except in the case of illness or other valid excuse approved by the instructor. Students should submit missed or delayed assignments as soon as possible. Unexcused late submissions will receive a half grade reduction (e.g. B+ becomes B) for every day they are late. Students should, however, always submit late work as soon as possible.

Students must submit all written work in hard copy. If a student cannot submit the paper in class he/she should place it in the instructor's mail box (270 Bay State Road, #440).

Finally, students must adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty as outlined in the College of Arts and Sciences *Academic Conduct Code*, copies of which are available in CAS 105. If you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism, please consult the instructor or your academic advisor.

Grading Criteria:

A: Exceptional. No major errors of grammar or logic. Original research that is grounded in historical method, analytical, and theoretically informed. Starts to make or makes a scholarly contribution to the field.

B: Very good. Some minor grammatical or compositional errors. Solid research that shows an ability to apply historical frameworks of analysis and theoretical concepts.

B+: Good. Some grammatical errors and/or weak argumentation. Good research and use of historical method and an attempt to apply theory to the analysis.

B: Quite good. Grammatical errors and/or weak argumentation. Research has some holes. Some attempt at historical method and to apply theory.

B-: Sufficient. Grammatical errors and weak argumentation. Research has some holes. Little attempt to use historical method and apply theory.

C+: Needs improvement. Grammatical errors and weak argumentation. Research has holes. No attempt to apply theory and historical method.

C-F: Unacceptable to not passable work. Major grammatical errors and weak argumentation. Research has major holes. No attempt to use historical method or apply theory.

Seminar Schedule

(Readings should be completed by the day for which they are listed):

Week 1 (Jan 19) Introduction: Food as History

What is environmental history/what is food history? (pass out charts "When the Raw Gets Cooked")

Pass out syllabus

Form working groups

Discuss two images (Polenta and 99% GM Free Food) from ML622/HI589 syllabus.

-Allocation of weekly comparative reading reports and cuisine team assignments.

SECTION ONE: The Ancient Kitchen/Food History

Week 2 (Jan 26) The Food as History/Archaeology: continuum

Guest lecture: Ilaria Patania, Ph.D. candidate, "Archaeology of the Kitchen"

Reading: "3,000 Year-old Cooking Fail Found at a Danish Dig Site" Sept. 21 1996, *the salt npr now WBUR* (on Blackboard).

"Polenta vs Cous Cous. Legally Banning Ethnic Food from Northern Italy" *i-Italy*, April 9, 2010. "With Flights Grounded, Kenya's Produce Wilts" *New York Times*, 4/20/2010

Assignment: Questions turned in and Group Discussion

Assignment:

-Write a one-page (double-spaced) précis of one of the Core Readings.

Week 3 (Feb 2) Foods as Pre-industrial Historical Actor
Food and Nature Chart (Course template on Blackboard Learn)

Reading: Pollen, *Botany of Desire*, Introduction and Chapter 1 (Sweetness)
Film, Excerpts from Olmi, *The Tree of the Wooden Clogs*
Class Discussion with Ilaria Patania.

Assignment: Questions (turned in and discussed in groups);

Week 4 (Feb 9) Food as History (northern Italy)

The Story of Polenta (lecture/images)

Reading: Diner *Hungering for America*, pp. (1-83)

Assignment:

Questions for group discussion

Week 5 (Feb 16) Ethiopia, Africa, and the Atlantic World

Core Reading: James McCann, *Stirring the Pot*. Pp. 1-106.

Comparative Reading#1:

Judith Carney and Richard Nicholas Rosomoff, *In the Shadow of Slavery: Africa's Botanical Legacy in the New World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009)

Assignment:

-Write a one-page (double-spaced) précis of the Core Reading

Week 5 (Feb 16) Modern Europe and America

Core Reading: Hasia Diner, *Hungering for America* (pp, 84-145).

Assignment:

Write a one-page précis of the Core Reading

Week 6 (Feb 23) Human and Political Ecology of Food Commodities

Core Reading: Michael Pollan, *The Botany of Desire*

Comparative Reading #2 (oral reports):

Judith Carney, *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001.

Comparative reading #3

Hannah Nordhaus, *The Beekeeper's Lament*. New York: Harper, 2010.

Assignment:

-Write a one-page précis on Core Reading

Presentation of reports on Comparative Reading

SECTION TWO: FOOD AND COOKING AS ECOLOGY

Week 7 (March 2) Political Ecology of Food and Cooking in the United States

Core Reading: Donna R. Gabaccia, *We Are What We Eat*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.

Comparative Reading #4:

Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal* (New York: Perennial, 2002).

Assignment:

Write a one-page (double-spaced) précis of the Core Reading book

Presentation of reports on Comparative Reading

Film: *Fast Food Nation* (DVD available from NetFlix and rental). View outside of class

Spring Break (March 4-12)

Week 8 (March 16) History and Cuisine in the American South (Is this Soul Food)

Core Reading: Frederick Douglass Opie, *Hog and Hominy: Soul Food from Africa to America* (New York, 2008).

Robert Dirks and Nancy Duran, "African American Dietary Patterns at the Beginning of the 20th Century," *Journal of Nutrition* (2001): 1882-84.

Comparative Reading #5:

Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor, *Vibration Cooking: Or the Travel Notes of a Geechee Girl* (New York: Ballentine Books, 1992).

Preparation for March 23 seminar and guest presentation/reading.

Assignment:

Write a one-page (double-spaced) précis of the Core Reading that contrasts their approaches and conclusions

Week 9 (March 23) Oysters and Chowder: Ethnicity/History of an Ethnic soup

Film and Discussion: Allison Keir and film: *The Oyster Revival*

Reading: Reading: Cox and Walker, *Chowder: Four Centuries of a New England Meal*.

Group discussions of film and questions.

Week 10 (March 30) Italy and the Adoption of Exotic Foods

Core Reading: Diner, *Hungering for America*, (pp. 1-84)

Comparative Reading #6

McCann, *Maize and Grace* "Seeds of Subversion in Two Peasant Empires" (PDF on Blackboard Learn)

Week 11 (April 6) Africa: Taytu's Feast

Core Reading:

McCann, *Stirring the Pot: A History of African Cuisine* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2009).

Assignment:

-Write a one-page (double-spaced) précis of the Core Reading

-Find a cookbook (on-line or in Mugar collection that features cooking of all or part of the African continent and identify iconic ingredients. Choose one recipe to analyze as ecological knowledge.

Organization of groups for final project “Historical Ecology of a Cuisine”

Week 12 (April 13) Ethnicity/History of an Ethnic soup: Ramein and Post-modernity

Food in the post-modern world

Film and discussion: Tampopo (plus Oysters as metaphor)

Week 13 (April 20) An Underside of Food in Modernity?: Restaurant and Industry

Film: Our Daily Bread

Reading: Orwell, *Down and Out in Paris and London* (excerpt on Blackboard Learn)

Assignment: Questions from Groups/ Group meetings

1 page write up of questions on our Daily Bread for each group. Discuss individual role in Week 14 presentation, sources, and rationale of choices.

Week 14 (April 27) 3 team presentations on Ecology of Cuisines

Preparation and cooking of Iconic Meal

Assignment:

Team Presentations: on Historical Ecology of the Recipe and Ingredients

Final individual paper on Historical Ecology of a Cuisine assignment will be passed out due May 8 in my mailbox (History office, 3rd fl 226 BSR).

Readings (books available at the Boston University Bookstore (*) or on reserve):

Judith Carney, *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas*. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2001.

Hasia Diner, *Hungering for America: Italian, Irish, and Jewish Foodways in the Age of Migration*. Harvard University Press, 2001

Donna R. Gabaccia, *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.

James C. McCann, *Stirring the Pot: A History of African Cuisine*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2009.

Frederick Douglass Opie, *Hog and Hominy: Soul Food from Africa to America*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008.

Michael Pollan, *The Botany of Desire: A Plant's-Eye View of the World*. New York: Random House, 2001.

Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation.: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*. Boston: Houghlin Mifflin, 2001.

Recommended, Comparative and Reference books:

Carney, Judith and Richard Nicholas Rosomoff, *In the Shadow of Slavery: Africa's Botanical Legacy in the Atlantic World*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009.

Flanderin, Jean-Louis, *Food: A Culinary History*. New York: Pengui, 1999.

Kipple, Kenneth and Ornelas, Kriemhild Conee. eds. *The Cambridge World History of Food*, vol I., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

McCann, James C. *Maize and Grace: Africa's Encounter with A New World Crop*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005.

Smart-Grosvenor, Vertamae. *Vibration Cooking or The Travel Notes of a Geechee Girl*. New York: Ballentine, 1992.