

Nanyang Technological University
Humanities and Social Sciences
Semester 2, AY2014-15

HH2008
Feasting and Fasting: Food and Drink in History
(Updated: January 6th 2015; subject to revision)

Subject description:

Food history is an exciting new area of scholarship that draws on social, economic, cultural and political histories to help explain how and why practices and patterns of consumption have changed over the centuries. This course will explore the idea that everything has a history – even habitual actions like cooking and eating and seemingly mundane foodstuffs like rice and chili. Food history challenges the boundaries of nationalist histories to demonstrate long histories of trans-cultural connections and culinary collaborations. Students will learn how food can be used as a lens to understand complex cultural, political, social, economic, and environmental phenomena.

Prerequisites: HH1001
Academic Units: 3AUs

Teaching Staff:

Assistant Professor Hallam Stevens
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Course Meetings and Attendance requirements:

Students will be expected to attend one 3-hour seminar per week as follows:
Wednesday, 2.30-5.30pm, S3.2 SR6

Each seminar will be structured as follows:

- 1) During the first hour, I will give you a primary source related to the theme for the week. You read this text and write a short response, which will be handed in at the end of the hour.
- 2) The second hour will be used for discussion of the readings for that week.
- 3) The final hour will be used for student presentations and other activities such as experiments and tastings.

Website and Readings:

The course *Blackboard* website is an important source of information for this subject. Useful resources such as this subject guide, links to further readings,

details of assessment, and subject announcements will be available through this website. Check the website regularly for subject announcements and updates.

Copies of the required readings will be made available on the website.

Expectations:

I have made a concerted effort to keep the readings around an average of 75pp. per week and to make them as interesting as possible. Required readings represent the minimum expected for you to participate effectively in class.

In class work with primary sources will also comprise a significant component of your grade. There will be no way to make up for missed classes. Coming to class prepared for these exercises is also a basic expectation.

Assessment:

- a) Group presentation – 20%
- b) Menu – 20%
- c) Weekly in-class writing exercises – 30%
- d) Feature article (final written project) – 30%

Group Presentation (20%)

Once during the semester you will be called upon to make a presentation in class. The topics for the presentations will be provided by the end of the second week of the semester (ie. before add-drop). The organization of groups and timing of the presentation will depend on the size of the class and will also be worked out by the second week of class. They should be thoroughly researched – this requires going to the library, not just looking up a few things online. If you have difficulty with your topic, consult with Prof. Stevens.

Menu (20%)

This assignment will require you to prepare a menu for a meal based on what you have learned in a particular week of the class. For example, you might do some further research to learn what a typical meal might have looked like in one of the first civilizations (when settled agriculture was just beginning). Or you might imagine a meal prepared in Europe using spices or ingredients imported from the New World. Or you might think about how gender has influenced menus in the twentieth century. There are many possibilities. This is supposed to be a creative project, but it is also supposed to be based on your own reading and research. The presentation of the menu will also be taken into consideration in the grading.

It should be based on a topic or set of readings that is different from your research paper.

Due date: First class meeting after mid-semester break, March 11th, 2015.

Weekly in-class writing exercises (30%)

Each week (with the exception of the first week, the last week and the week the menu is due), the class will complete a writing exercise during the first hour. These will usually be based on primary sources and are designed to give you practice working with such sources. At the end of the hour I will expect you to hand in a the completed exercise. The exact nature of the exercise will vary from week to week. If I suspect that people are not completing the reading, this may evolve into a mini-quiz on the readings.

These will be graded on a 1, 2, 3 scale: 1 for below-average work; 2 for average work; 3 for outstanding work. Each exercise will contribute to approximately 3% of your grade. There will be no make-up for missed exercises (that is, if you are absent for any reason, including with an MC, you will forfeit the grade for that week).

Feature Article (30%)

Each student is required to write a 2500-3000 word 'feature article.' This should be in the style that would appear in a literary periodical such as *The New Yorker*, *The Atlantic*, *The London Review of Books*, *The New York Review of Books*, or similar (with the exception that I expect you to follow the citation conventions of an academic paper). Several examples of such writing are part of the reading for the course, but encourage you to familiarize yourself with other examples too.

Due date: Last class meeting, Wednesday 15th April, 2015.

Plagiarism

Ensure that you follow appropriate citation conventions for all assignments and familiarize yourself with the University's policies on plagiarism and collaboration. The University had recently clarified and strengthened its rules regarding plagiarism. Plagiarism does not have to be intention in order for it to count as an infringement. Be careful. Start work early so you are not rushing to complete things at the last minute. An breaches will be taken very seriously and – in addition to any grade penalties – a permanent citation will be made on your student file.

Late Work and Extensions:

Any assessable material that is late will lose marks at the rate of 10% (of the maximum grade) per day. Missing a presentation or not scheduling a presentation will result in a zero grade that component.

Extensions will only be granted in very special cases and only then when requested at least one week in advance of a deadline.

Week-by-week Guide:

*** Indicates that these readings are examples of “feature articles” in the style that will be required for your final writing assignment for the module.*

Meeting I (January 14th): Introduction: Themes in Food History

No readings.

Watch: Eat Drink Man Woman (1994)

Meeting II (January 21st): Food, Biology, and Evolution

Read: [84]

- Mark Nathan Cohen, *Health and the Rise of Civilization* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989) [Chapters 1, 2, and 5; pp. 1-15 and 55-74]
- Sarah A. Tishkoff et al. (2007). Convergent adaptation of human lactase persistence in Africa and Europe. *Nature Genetics* 39: 31-40.
[if you need help understanding this article, go to:
http://evolution.berkeley.edu/evolibrary/news/070401_lactose]
- Marlene Zuk (2013) *Paleofantasy: What Evolution Really Tells Us About Sex, Diet, and How We Live*. W.W. Norton. [pp. 92-133]

Taste: Cheese

Meeting III (January 28th): The Rise of Agriculture

Read:

- Reay Tannahill, *Food in History* (New York: Stein and Day, 1973; rev. edn, Three Rivers Press, 1988) [Part I, pp. 3-41.]
- Jared Diamond, “To Farm or Not to Farm” and “How to Make an Almond” from *Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997).

Taste: Bread dough.

Meeting IV (February 4th): Trade, Colonialism, and Globalization

Read:

- Paul Freedman (2009) *Out of the East: Spices and the Medieval Imagination* (Yale University Press) [Introduction and Chapter 1, pp. 1-49]
- Alfred W. Crosby (1973) *The Colombian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Greenwood) [Chapter 5: “New World Foods and Old World Demography,” pp. 165-207]

- Sophie D. Coe and Michael D. Coe (2007) "The Tree of the Food of the Gods" in *The True History of Chocolate*, 2nd ed. (Thames and Hudson).

Taste: Chocolate

Meeting V (February 11th): Health and Medicine

Read:

- Ken Albala. *Eating Right in the Renaissance*. University of California Press, 2002. [Chapter 3, "Food: Qualities, Substance, Virtues," pp. 78-114]
- Gerald J. Gruman, *A History of Ideas About the Prolongation of Life: The Evolution of Prolongevity Hypotheses to 1800*, Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, n.s., Volume 56, part 9 (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1966), pp. 5-10 and 68-74.
- E. N. Anderson, "Traditional Medical Values of Food," in *Food and Culture: A Reader*, ed. Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 80-91.

Taste: Bring to class a food that you consider healthy.

Meeting VI (February 18th): Ritual and Religion

Read:

- Margaret Visser (2000) *The Rituals of Dinner: The Origins, Evolution, Eccentricities, and Meaning of Table Manners*. HarperCollins. [pp. 1-38]
- Caroline Walker Bynum, "Fast, Feast, and Flesh: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women," in *Food and Culture: A Reader*, ed. Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 138-158.
- Frederick J. Simoons (1994) *Eat Not This Flesh: Food Avoidances From Pre-History to the Present*, 2nd ed. (University of Wisconsin Press) [Chapter 9, pp. 297-328]

Taste: Bring to class a food item you would never eat.

Meeting VII (February 25th): Gender and Domesticity

Read:

- **Laura Shapiro, "Do Women Like to Cook?" *Granta* 52 (Winter, 1995), 153-62.
- Jay Mechling, "Boy Scouts and the Manly Art of Cooking" *Food and Foodways* 13 (2005): 67-89.
- Harvey A. Levenstein (2003) "The Great Regression: The New Woman Goes Home" in *Paradox of Plenty: A Social History of Eating in Modern America*. (University of California Press), pp. 24-39.
- Christopher Dummitt, "Finding a Place for the Father: Selling the Barbeque in Postwar Canada" *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association / Revue de la Societe Historique du Canada* 9, issue 1 (1998): 209-233.

Taste: Bring to class a food you consider 'masculine' or 'feminine'

Mid-Semester Break!

Meeting VIII (March 11th): Aesthetics and Connoisseurship

Read:

- Susan Pinkard (2010) *A Revolution in Taste: The Rise of French Cuisine, 1650-1800* (Cambridge University Press). [Chapter 3: "Foundations of change, 1600-1650," pp. 51-94]
- Joanna Waley-Cohen (2007) "The Quest for the Perfect Balance: Taste and Gastronomy in Imperial China" in *Food: The History of Taste*, Paul Freedman, ed. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press): 99-134.

Taste: Olive oil

Meeting IX (March 18th): Manners and Customs

Read:

- Stephen Mennel (1985) *All Manners of Food: Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present*. Basil Blackwell. [pp. 20-39]
- Margaret Visser (2000) *The Rituals of Dinner: The Origins, Evolution, Eccentricities, and Meaning of Table Manners*. HarperCollins. [pp. 137-195]
- ** (2013) "A Fork of One's Own: A History of Culinary Revolution" *The New Yorker* 18 March. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/03/18/a-fork-of-ones-own>

Meeting X (March 25th): Sustainability, Diversity, and GMOs

Read:

- William Boyd (2003) "Wonderful Potencies? Deep Structure and the Problem of Monopoly in Agricultural Biotechnology" in *Engineering Trouble: Biotechnology and its Discontents* (University of California Press): 24-62.
- Cary Fowler and Pat Mooney (1990) *Shattering: Food, Politics, and the Loss of Genetic Diversity* (University of Arizona Press) [Chapters 6 and 9, pp. 115-139 and 174-200]
- ** Michael Specter (2014) "Seeds of Doubt: An Activist's Controversial Crusade Against Genetically Modified Crops" *The New Yorker* 25 August. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/08/25/seeds-of-doubt>

Taste: Bananas

Meeting XI (April 1st): Food Inc.

Read:

- Harvey Levenstein. "The Golden Age of Food Processing" in *Paradox of Plenty: A Social History of Eating in Modern America* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press): 101-118.
- Marion Nestle. *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health*. University of California Press, 2007. [Introduction and Chapter 2, pp. 1-28 and 51-66]
- **Michael Pollan, "Unhappy Meals" *New York Times*, January 28th 2007.

Taste: Spam, American cheese, canned versus fresh vegetables

Meeting XII (April 8th): Diets, Fads, Food and Body Image

Read:

- Colin Spencer (2000) *Vegetarianism: a history*, 2nd ed. (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows) [Chapters 10 and 13, pp. 213-237 and 296-330]
- **Lizzie Widdicombe (2014) "The End of Food" *The New Yorker* 12 May. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/05/12/the-end-of-food>

Taste: Nothing.

Meeting XIII (April 15th): Cooking, Food Science, and Molecular Gastronomy

Read:

- Ferran Adria, Heston Blumenthal, Thomas Keller, and Harold McGee (2006) "Statement on the 'New Cookery'" *The Observer* (London), 10th December.
- John Carlin (2006) "If the World's Greatest Chef Cooked For a Living, He'd Starve" *The Guardian*, 11 December.
- Herve This (2009) *Building a Meal: From Molecular Gastronomy to Culinary Constructivism* (Columbia University Press) [Introduction and Chapter 1, pp. 1-38]
- Nicolas Kurti and Herve This (1994), "Chemistry and Physics in the Kitchen" *Scientific American*, April.
- **John Lanchester (2011) "Incredible Edibles: The Mad Genius of 'Modernist Cuisine'" *The New Yorker* 21 March. <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/03/21/incredible-edibles>

Taste: Spheres