

You are what you eat:

Food and Farm Politics, Policy, and Culture in 20th Century America

Instructor Information:

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Office Hours: T/Th 11:30-12:00 in Gilman 346 or by appointment

Overview:

As conveyed in the adage that provides the title to this course, food and identity share an intimate relationship. Food presents a unique window into the workings of any society, yet its production, consumption and surrounding politics are all too frequently overlooked or taken for granted. While in recent years, some prominent figures have argued for critical examination of the sources of our caloric intake and the socioeconomic factors that seem to govern it – from Michelle Obama’s movement to combat childhood obesity to the rise of locavore cuisine and policy fights over the use of government assistance to purchase food at farmers’ markets – many consumers are missing a longitudinal understanding of how America’s foodways have arrived at their current state.

This course will help fill in those blanks by synthesizing narratives of American foodways and farm policy in the twentieth century. Using a wide variety of texts, we will examine both food production and food consumption to create a more complete picture of a complex world where high-stakes policy and grassroots culture meet to shape our nutritional reality. The readings will address themes of rural activism and decline, food security and standards, food and ethnic and national identities, federal policy, and the foodways of empire. You will be asked to consider the relationships between federal policy and the food on their dinner table, socioeconomic status and diet, consumers and producers, and urban, suburban and rural interests and to investigate the ways in which food and food policy defines “the other” and in which power – both domestically and internationally – can be both wielded and gauged by changes in food policies.

Assignments and Grading:

25%: Class Participation

20%: Farm-to-Table Field Report

20%: Cookbook Analysis

35%: Final Paper

5% Outline

10% Rough Draft

20% Final Draft

A Note on the Reading: Reading for this course is quite important, given the format of the course as a continuing and *informed* discussion. The class participation grade reflects engagement with the weekly texts in the context of classroom discussion. There are some weeks in which the reading is less significant than others, but you should anticipate anywhere between 75-150 pages of reading each week. **Reading forms the basis of our discussion portion of the class, and your participation grade will reflect your interaction with the readings as well as your overall contribution to the discussion.**

Writing Assignments:

Farm-to-Table Field Report: Students will visit a local farmers' market or local farm on one of the dates offered (see p. 7 for list of options) for organized visits. During the visit, students will compile a field report that reflects conversation with farmers and customers (if relevant) as to the impact of farm policies and seasonal, cultural and economic conditions on products offered as well as observations made during the visit. A 3-5 page report on the visit will be due within 10 days of the visit itself. (Students who wish to participate in more than one of the field trips are welcome, but only need to submit a report following their first visit.)

Cookbook Analysis: Students will select either a primary-source cookbook from a list provided during the second week of class or suggest one for approval by the instructor. Students will submit a 3-5 page paper in which they analyze its contents with reference to the historical context, foodways and modes of agricultural production represented in the text.

Final Paper: At the end of the course, students will submit a 8-10 page paper in which they select a food or edible commodity available in the United States. In the paper, they will trace how policy and foodways have interacted to shape that item's presence in American society in 2016. The final paper will be due on the day assigned for this class's final examination, and interim deadlines for submitting an outline/abstract and a rough draft are noted in the syllabus.

Texts

All of the texts for this class will be available on Blackboard and/or at the URLs indicated on the syllabus. There are no required texts for purchase in this class.

Absences

Students who need to miss class can make up for the absence by writing a 2–3 page response paper on that week's assigned readings, due in class the following week. No more than two absences will be excused in this manner. Any further absence must be discussed with the lecturer or it will be considered unexcused.

Course Outline:

PART I: INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction to Food and Farm Policy (**Week of January 30**)

- a. Guess Who's Turning 100? Tracking a Century of American Eating
<http://www.ers.usda.gov/AmberWaves/March10/Features/TrackingACentury.htm>
 The facts about food and farming <http://www.latimes.com/features/food/la-fo-calcook6-2010jan06,0,6888223.story>
- b. Warren Belasco, "Why Study Food?" in *Food: The Key Concepts*, (Berg, 2008) p 1-12.
- c. Short writing assignment will be posted to Blackboard
- d. **The second class this week will be an exploration of research opportunities for food and farm in the Digital Humanities.**

PART II: HOMESTEADING NO MORE: THE CHANGING FACE OF
 AGRICULTURE AND FOOD

2. Food Purity and the Industrial Age (**Week of February 6**)
 - a. Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (Chapters TBA)
 - b. Renee Johnson, *The Federal Food Safety System: A Primer*. Congressional Research Service, 2011. Download under Food Safety at <http://www.nationalaglawcenter.org/crs/index.phtml#foodsafety>
3. Jefferson under assault – The Country Life Commission, Expanded Homestead Act and the rise of the Non-Partisans (**Week of February 13**)
 - a. Douglas Hurt, *American Agriculture: A Brief History* (Purdue, 2002), "The Progressive Era" p. 3-40
 - b. Patrick H. Mooney and Theo J. Majka, "Prosperity and Depression, 1900-1939" in *Farmers' and Farm Workers' Movements - Social Protest in American Agriculture* (Twayne, 1995), p. 51-80
 - a. Report of the Country Life Commission (1909). Accessible at https://ia601408.us.archive.org/0/items/reportofcommissi00unitiala/reportofcommissi00unitiala_bw.pdf
4. Eating empire, eating immigration (**Week of February 20**)
 - a. Harvey Levenstein, "The American Response to Italian Food, 1880-1930," in *Food in the USA: A Reader*, Carole M. Counihan, ed. (Routledge, 2002), p. 75-90.
 - b. Russek, Audrey. "Appetites without Prejudice: U. S. Foreign Restaurants and the Globalization of American Food Between the Wars," *Food and Foodways: Explorations in the History and Culture of Human Nourishment* 19, (2011): 34-55.
 - c. Mrs. Simon Kander and Mrs. Henry Schoenfeld, *The Settlement House Cook Book* (1903)
5. The Great Depression and the Rise of Food and Farm Security Policy (**Week of February 27**)
 - a. R. Douglas Hurt, "The New Deal," *American Agriculture: A Brief History*, (Purdue, 2002), p. 67-96
 - b. John Steinbeck, *In Dubious Battle* (Chapters TBA)

- c. Harvey Levenstein, *Paradox of Plenty* (Oxford University Press, 1993), Prologue, Chapters 1-4, p. 3-63.

PART III: AMERICAN FOOD AND FARMS ENTER THE GLOBAL ERA

- 6. World War Two: Victory Gardens, Coca-Cola, and the Spamming of the Pacific (**Week of March 6**)
 - a. Harvey Levenstein, “Oh What a Healthy War: Nutrition for National Defense” and “Food Shortages for the People of Plenty” in *Paradox of Plenty* (Oxford University Press, 1993) pp. 64-100
 - b. Mark Weiner, “Consumer Culture and Participatory Democracy: The Story of CocaCola during World War II” in *Food in the USA: A Reader* (Routledge: 2002), Carole M. Counihan, ed., p. 123-142.
 - c. Carolyn Wyman, *Spam: A Biography* (Harcourt Brace, 1999) (selections)
 - d. Ruth Berolzheimer, *The Victory Binding of the American Woman's Cookbook Wartime Edition* (1943)
 - e. **Students should submit detailed outline of final paper**
- 7. Farms on the frontlines: Cold War Agricultural Policy (**Week of March 13**)
 - a. R. Douglas Hurt, “Prosperity and Decline,” *American Agriculture: A Brief History* (Purdue, 2002), p. 97-123
 - b. Paul Conkin “Dimensions of an Agricultural Revolution,” in *A Revolution Down on the Farm*, (University of Kentucky Press, 2008) p. 97-122
 - c. United States Department of Agriculture, *The Yearbook of Agriculture*. U. S. Government Printing Office, 1968.
- 8. Unlikely Allies: Urban activists and rural conservatives find common ground (**Week of March 27**)
 - a. Harvey Levenstein, “The Politics of Hunger,” *Paradox of Plenty* (Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 144-159.
 - b. John Mark Hansen, “Constraints, Alternatives and Access in Agriculture,” in *Gaining Access: Congress and the Farm Lobby, 1919-1981*, (University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 164-214
 - c. Susan Levine, *School Lunch Politics: The Surprising History of America's Favorite Welfare Program* (Princeton University Press, 2008) pp. 39-48, 71-126
 - d. **Cookbook analysis due**
- 9. Strange Fruit: Farm Workers and Supermarket Activists (**Week of April 3**)
 - a. Patrick H. Mooney and Theo J. Majka, “The United Farm Workers Era,” in *Farmers' and Farm Workers' Movements - Social Protest in American Agriculture* (Twayne, 1995), p. 150-183
 - b. Shane Hamilton, “Supermarkets, Free Markets, And The Problem Of Buyer Power In The Postwar United States,” in Kim Phillips-Fine and Julian Zelizer, eds, *What's Good For Business: Business And Politics Since World War II*. (Oxford University Press, 2012) p. 177-194.

- c. Dolores Huerta, “Proclamation of the Delano Grape Workers for International Boycott Day,” May 10, 1969 and Cesar Chavez, “US Senate Testimony on Farm Workers’ Unions,” 1979 in Steven Mintz, ed. *Mexican American Voices: A Documentary Reader* (Wiley-Blackwell: 2009) p. 169-176.
 - d. “City, farm women clash over food prices” and “Butz to stores: pass on price cuts” *The Chicago Tribune*, Thursday, October 18, 1973, Section 1A p. 2.
10. The Farm Crisis (**Week of April 10**)
- a. Film: *Country* (1984) [One copy of DVD is available from my private collection. Students may coordinate screenings with me or independently.]
 - b. John Cougar Mellencamp, “Rain on the Scarecrow” (video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=joNzRzZhR2Y> ; lyrics at <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/johncougarmellencamp/rainonthescarecrow.html>)
 - c. *Middle West Review* Farm Crisis Special Edition, University of Nebraska Press (publication forthcoming in late 2015/early 2016 – selections TBA)
 - d. **Rough draft of research paper due.**

PART IV: FOODWAYS ENTER A NEW MILLENIUM

11. Corn Syrup Nation: Agribusiness, supermarkets and the Fast Food Explosion (**Week of April 17**)
- a. Schlosser, Eric. “On the Range” in *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*, (Harper Perennial, 2001), p. 133-148
 - b. Marion Nestle, “Influencing Government: Food lobbies and lobbyists,” *Food Politics*, (University of California Press, 2007) p. 95-110.
 - c. *Super Size Me*, 2004. (Documentary)
 - d. Bartow J. Elmore, “High-Fructose Corn Syrup: Storing Sweeteners in Stomach Silos” in *Citizen Coke* (Norton, 2015), pp. 262-296
12. Nutrition, Diversification, and Class in the American Diet (**Week of April 24**)
- a. Margot Sanger-Katz, “Americans are Finally Eating Less,” *New York Times*, July 24, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/25/upshot/americans-are-finallyeating-less.html?abt=0002&abg=0>
 - b. Let’s Move! Accomplishments, <http://www.letsmove.gov/accomplishments> “Kid’s Meals: Obesity on the Menu,” Center for Science and the Public Interest, <http://cspinet.org/new/pdf/cspi-kids-meals-2013.pdf> 11
 - c. “The Rise of Yuppie Coffees and the Reimagination of Class in the United States,” in *Food in the USA: A Reader*, Carole M. Counihan, ed. (Routledge, 2002), p. 149-169
 - d. Rene Alexander Orquiza, “Exotic but problematic: the commodification of Southeast Asian cuisine by American magazines and newspapers, 1965-2002,” (publication forthcoming)
 - e. Portinari, Folco. "Slow Food Manifesto." December 10, 1989 <http://www.slowfoodusa.org/manifesto>
13. Eating with a Conscience: Sustainability, Organic and Locavore and the war on GMOs (**Week of May 1 – class will be one session this week**)

- a. Frances Moore Lappe, *Diet for a Small Planet* (Ballentine Books, 1971)
 - b. Michael Specter, "Seeds of Doubt: An activist's crusade against genetically modified crops," *The New Yorker*, August 25, 2014
<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/08/25/seeds-of-doubt>
 - c. William Saletan, "Are GMOs Safe?," *Slate*, July 2015,
http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/science/2015/07/are_gmos_safe_yes_the_case_against_them_is_full_of_fraud_lies_and_errors.html
 - d. Michael Pollan, "Naturally: How Organic Became a Marketing Niche and a Multibillion-dollar Industry," *The New York Times Magazine* (May 13, 2001).
 - e. -Michael Pollan, "The Farm," & "The Processing Plant," in *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* (Penguin, 2006), pp. 32-56, 85-99.
14. **Final paper to be submitted via e-mail before 5 pm on date assigned for class final examination.**

Field Study Options:

“Approximately 350,000 people are employed in some aspect of agriculture, making it the largest commercial industry in Maryland. Agriculture also remains the largest single land use in the State, with 2.0 million acres, or roughly 32 percent of total land area used for farming in 2014. The majority of Maryland's farmland is located in the north central part of the State and the upper Eastern Shore. In 2014, some 12,300 Maryland farms averaged 165 acres each.”¹

Option 1:

Baltimore City Farmers Market (JFX)- Sunday morning, date TBA

Option 2:

Real Food Farm – Urban agriculture

Option 3:

Hybridoma Organic Fruit Farm (Baldwin, MD) – Organic agriculture

Option 4:

South Mountain Creamery (Frederick Country, MD) – Sustainable local dairy farm and processing facility

Option 5:

Eastern Shore Industrial-Scale Poultry Farm (Site TBA – this is a FULL DAY trip)

Option 6:

Gunpowder Bison Ranch (Monkton, MD) – Niche Production

Students are required to select at least one option. Trip days/times will be staggered to provide for scheduling flexibility. Transportation will be provided, but registration for each session is limited to one van-load of students (7), with the exception of the two Baltimore City destinations.

¹ State of Maryland, “Maryland at a Glance: Agriculture,”
<http://msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdmanual/01glance/html/agri.html>