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Social Systems and Issues: Food & Culture: Honors Breadth Social Sciences HNR 1340 (Freshman)

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SARAH GORDON

Social Systems and Issues: Food & Culture

Honors Breadth Social Sciences HNR 1340 (Freshman) 3 Credit Hours

SARAH GORDON

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM

CHRISTIE FOX, DIRECTOR

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

This interdisciplinary course explores the complex roles of food and consumption in western and non-western cultures from pre-history to the present day, using socio-historical, developmental, and comparative approaches. Food and foodways are universal aspects of the human experience across time and geographical boundaries. This class investigates the relation of food to changing and static cultural values, beliefs, attitudes, rituals, and practices. We eat and consider how foods such as chocolate, sugar, potatoes, and insects have had an impact on different societies and cultures. We discuss current world events and issues related to food and hunger, health and disease.

TEXTS

Book: Tannahill, *Food in History*.

E-mail Weekly News Alerts on Food Topics. Students must sign up on: CNN <http://www.cnn.com/youralerts/>, and on BBC <http://news.bbc.co.uk/>

Other required readings, short excerpts from books, and journal articles are listed below and available on Library Electronic Reserve.

SYLLABUS

1/10 Introduction to course, discussion of food issues today

Book intro. xv–38

1/12 What is culture?

Excerpt, Kuper *The Anthropologist's Cookbook*

1/17 Prehistory, "Raw vs. Cooked"

Excerpt Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked: Mythologies*

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- 1/19 Meat, Beef, and the Expansion of the American West
Article Willard, "The American Story of Meat: Discursive Practices on Cultural Eating Practice," *Journal of Popular Culture*
- 1/24 Hunting, debates and critical discussion of readings
Article Cartmill "Hunting and Humanity in Western Thought," *Social Resarch*. Book 118–122, 45–86
- 1/26 The Salt of the Earth
Book 177–80, 174–181, Excerpt Kurlansky *Salt: A World History*
- 1/31 Chocolate and (Post) colonialism
Excerpt, Coe *True History of Chocolate*
- 2/2 Hunger and Social Issues, group discussion on readings, video on hunger
Two recent newspaper articles on hunger, copies distributed in class
- 2/6 Sacred Foods and Taboos, Cannibalism, Documentary Film clips: *Keep the River on Your Right: A Modern Cannibal Tale* 1999
Article, Petersen "Great Apes as Food," *Gastronomica*
- 2/9 Entomophagy: Insects, Survival and Spectacle. Bug eating in class!
Book 105–115, 211–214
- 2/13 Visit to Anthropology Museum on campus: Presentation of food and agriculture artifacts, treasure hunt group exercise
- 2/16 Corn, Agricultural developments and problems
Excerpt Kneen, *Farmageddon: Food and the Culture of Biotechnology*
Book 124–140, 202–208, 281–303
- 2/21 Food Industry Guest Speaker. Rep. from Aggie Ice Cream / USU Dairies
- 2/23 Potatoes and famine, group problem solving exercise and discussion
Jonathan Swift, "A Modest Proposal," Excerpt Zuckerman *The Potato: The Humble Spud That Saved the World*, Book 214–218, 347–371
- 2/28 MIDTERM EXAM
- 3/2 "I'm Loving It" Food and advertising, marketing discussion
- 3/6 Food and Television, FoodTV clips and discussion
Article Adema, "Vicarious Consumption: Food, Television, and the Ambiguity of Modernity," *Journal of American Culture*
- 3/9 Library Research Instruction on Social Sciences and Food Resources
- 3/13–3/16 Spring Break
- 3/21 Documentary Film: *Supersize Me 2004*
Excerpt, Schlosser *Fast Food Nation: Dark Side of the American Meal*
- 3/23 Documentary Film *Supersize Me* continued, discussion of film and *Fast Food Nation*
Article Boym "My McDonald's," *Gastronomica*, Book 141–146, 252–79
- 3/28 France Today: *la gastronomie* vs. le fast food
Book 218–223, 230–251
- 3/30 Breaking Bread
Book 51–3

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- 4/4 Fish: exploration, trade, slavery, technology, tradition
Book 147–151, 332–346, 224–228 Excerpt, Kurlansky *Cod: A Biography of the Fish that Changed the World*
- 4/6 Table Manners, Artifacts and Rituals
Excerpt Visser *The Rituals of Dinner*. Article Banerji, “The Bengali Bonti,” *Gastronomica*
- 4/11 Library Special Collections: Rare Cookbooks Collection visit
- 4/13 Cultural Documents: Cookbooks, Recipes, Cooking Shows, Celebrity Chefs
Book 246–247
- 4/18 Sugar & Spice and Everything Nice
Excerpts, Turner *Spice: The History of a Temptation*
- 4/20 Food as Medicine and Menace: food-borne illness, disease, social issues
CDC website info, Excerpt Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*
- 4/25 FINAL PAPER DUE. In-class presentations and discussion of paper topics.
- 4/27 Conclusions. In-class discussion of paper topics. Review for Final Exam
Article Miner “Body Ritual Among the Nacirema,” *American Anthropologist* 1956
- 5/2 FINAL EXAM

Grading

- 10% Participation in in-class discussion, group work/field trip tasks, preparation
- 25% Paper and oral presentation on a food
- 30% Midterm Exam
- 35% Final Exam

Exams: Exams are short answers and choice of essays covering lectures, readings. Review sessions are offered by our Honors UTF fellow (TA) before each exam.

Paper: Required 1 research essay, length 7–8 full pages, plus bibliography, with minimum 6 scholarly sources on one specific *food of your choice* that is *not* listed on syllabus. Students should choose one perspective and theoretical framework based on the methods of sociology, political science, history, or anthropology that we have used in class. Meeting with professor to discuss topic required. Our visits to the library will highlight interdisciplinary resources helpful in the study of food in culture. Project will culminate in a short presentation of research topic in class and question-and-answer session with classmates. Further details on expectations for the paper, useful on-line resources, and an introduction to various Social Sciences research methods will be given in class.

Participation: This course encourages active learning. Voluntary active verbal participation is expected in class discussions and group discussions/group work.

SOCIAL SYSTEMS AND ISSUES: FOOD & CULTURE

Social: Evening social with ethnic food, music, and cultural activities (optional).

Food in Class: Foods discussed are served on occasion (chocolate, insects, etc.)

Please let the instructor know if you have food allergies or dietary restrictions.

Contact person: Sarah Gordon,
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