

**Eating Cultures: Food and Race**  
**Ethnic Studies 289.**

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SSB-223

Office Hours: Tues 10:30-11:30  
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Food is perhaps one of the most ignored topics in ethnic studies, the humanities and the social sciences. Although we all celebrate the tastes produced from our own cultural backgrounds and enjoy discovering the new, food is often not a topic of concern when we speak of power, hierarchy and race. This course addresses this genre and opens a discussion on the systemic and hierarchical dimensions of food practices, food systems and their relationships to power and race. Indeed, one of the principal interventions here is the paradox of food origins and their role in both the state and current social structure. On one hand this course is about how we create and often essentialize our food habits and patterns with nation, race and ethnicity. On the other hand, the course explores the contradictions inherent in current practices and food concerns such as the organic movement, global agriculture, neoliberalism, and food purity. The history of food systemics parallel fundamental changes in ideology, society, the global as well as in the local. This course reviews and interrogates the social construction of food uses through a number of texts and readings on topics including, labor and citrus, tropical agriculture and empire, soul food, milk as the perfect food, the organic movement, sugar, and cultural politics.

**Requirements for the Course:** This is a seminar in which reading and discussion are the basis of our exploration. All participants are expected to be prepared each class period to discuss the assigned readings.

**Course Assignments:**

1) **Weekly Reading response papers.** For each week=s assigned reading, class participants will write a response paper not to exceed two pages (double-spaced with one inch margins). These assignments are to be handed in at the end of each class on the day that reading is scheduled for discussion. Late papers will not be accepted. Each student will be responsible to lead the discussion. Topic assignments will be done on the second class meeting.

2) **Final Paper: 2) Term Paper.** Each student will write a discussion paper on a topic from the primary reading categories (e.g. Identity, Consumption, Resistance etc.). Building from the readings assigned in class you are responsible for a term paper of about 15 pages **The paper is due on the final day of class Thursday June 7**

**Class Schedule**

**April 5- Introduction**

**April 12- Globalism and the State.** Reading: Alvarez 2005; 2005: Draft.

- April 19-** Commodity and Power: Reading: Mintz 1985; McDonald and Topik 2006; Appadurai 1986
- April 26-** Food and Identity: Probyn 2005; Murphy 2003;
- May 3-** Perfection and Control: Dupuis 2001; Bobrow 2005
- May 10-** Labor and Resistance: Garcia 2001; Rouse and Hoskins 2004.
- May 17-** Consumption: Cohen 2003; Miller 1995; Pollan 2006; McDonald and Topik, 2006.
- May 24-** Race and Food: Williams-Forson 2006; Cleaver 1986; Poe 1999
- May 31-** Tidbits: Watson and Caldwell TBA; Guthman (forthcoming); Alkon, n.d.
- June 7-** Digestion —Watson and Caldwell TBA:

### **Required Texts**

- Alvarez, Robert  
2005 *Mangos, Chiles and Truckers*. University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis
- Dupuis, E. Melanie  
2001 *Nature's Perfect Food*. New York U. Press: New York
- Garcia, Matt  
2001 *A World of its Own. Race, Labor and Citrus in the Making of Greater Los Angeles, 1900- 1970*. University of North Carolina: Chapel Hill
- Mintz, Sidney  
1985 *Sweetness and Power*. Penguin: New York
- Probyn, Elspyth  
2000 *Carnal Appetites: Food, Sex, Identities*. Rutledge: New York.
- Watson, James and Melissa L. Caldwell  
2005 *The Cultural Politics of Food and Eating*. Blackwell
- Williams-Forson, Psyche A.  
2006 *Building Houses Out of Chicken Legs*. University of North Carolina Press: Chapel Hill.

### **Readings: Articles. TBA**

- Alvarez, Robert  
2006 The Transnational State and Empire: US Certification in the Mexican Mango and Persian Lime Industries. *Human Organization* 65(1) 35-46.  
2007 Hunting Plants and Creating Export Markets: The USDA and Tropical Fruit Control. Draft.
- Appadurai, Arjun  
1986 "Commodities and the Politics of Value". In *The Social Life of Things*. Cambridge U. Press: Cambridge and New York.
- Alkon, Allison

- n.d. Paradise or Pavement: The social constructions of the environment in two urban farmers markets and their implications for environmental justice and sustainability. University of California: Davis
- Bobrow-Strain, Aaron  
2005 Since Sliced Bread: Purity, Hygiene, and the Making of Modern Bread. Prepared for the “Science, Culture and the Making of Modern Food” Session at the 2005 Meetings of the Association of American Geographers
- Cleaver, Eldridge  
1999 (1968) “Soul Food” in Soul on Ice, pp. 46. Delta: New York
- Cohen, Lizabeth  
2003 The Birth of the Consumer’s Republic in A Consumer’s Republic: the Politics of Mass Consumption in Post-War America. Vintage: New York
- Haverluk, Terrance  
2002 Chile Peppers and Identity Construction. *Journal for the Study of Food and Society*. Vol. 6 (1) winter. 45-59.
- Poe, Tracy  
1999 The Origins of Soul Food. *American Studies International*, Feb. 1999, Vol. XYXVI. NO. 1. pp. 4-33.
- Guthman, Julie  
Forthcoming. Neoliberalism and the making of food politics in California. *Geoforum*.
- Jones, Michael Owen  
2005 Food Choice, Symbolism, and Identity: Bread-and-Butter Issues for Folkloristics and Nutrition Studies. In press. *Journal of American Folklore*.
- Kamp, David  
2006 *The United States of Arugula*. (excerpt) Random House: New York
- McDonald, Michelle Craig and Steven Topik.  
2006 *Americanizing Coffee: Consumption, Culture and Diplomacy*.
- Miller, Daniel  
1995 Consumption as the Vanguard of History. In *Acknowledging Consumption*. Rutledge: New York pp. 1-43.
- Murphy, Brenda  
2003 Pure Genius: Guinness Consumption and Irish Identity. *New Hibernium Review* 7 (4) winter: 50-62
- Pollan, Michael  
2006 The Omnivore’s Dilemma. (Chapter 5, 8, 13). Penguin 2006
- Rouse, Carolyn and Janet Hoskins  
2004 Purity, Soul Food and Sunni Islam: Explorations at the intersection of Consumption and Resistance. *Cultural Anthropology* 19 (2) 226-249