

ENVI 294-04/MCST 294-02

Eating for Change?
Food, media and the environment in US consumer culture

Macalester College, Spring 2016
TR 8:00-9:30, Olin-Rice 241

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Office hours: Tuesday/Thursday 9:30-10:30 and by appointment

Course description

In recent years, consumer culture has seen an explosion of media urging individuals to do their bit for the environment by thinking carefully about their food choices. What are we to make of this? This course investigates the historical, economic, and cultural politics of food as a mediated environmental object. The course is organized according to two structuring logics: context and case studies. We will contextualize the intersection of food and the environment within broader questions of race, gender, and class, labor, the political economy of media and agribusiness, and the history of capitalism and consumer culture in the United States. We will work through these themes by investigating a series of media case studies dealing with issues related to food and the environment, ranging from books and magazines to television and films, and from video games and blogs to brands and advertising. In this course, students will bring social and cultural theory to bear on these texts and develop critical skills in multimodal writing and analysis (satisfies WA requirement).

This course takes for granted that food is always already an environmental object. It also understands the environment as something that cannot be abstracted from larger questions of power, discourse, and history. This means that we may not explicitly address the environment in all of our course readings or class discussions, but may focus, for example, on food and masculinity, food and the politics of representation, food and white supremacy, among many others. It will be your job to tie these intersecting threads together in your formal papers—it will be my job to provide you with the tools to do so successfully. *This course is animated by the question of how—and to what effect—food media participate in what it means to be a good citizen in ways that are, among other things, racialized, gendered, and classed.*

Required text

Most of our readings will be available on our course Moodle page
Lappé (1978) *Diet for a Small Planet* and Pollan (2008) *In Defense of Food* will be on reserve in the library

Classroom expectations and format

This is a discussion-based, seminar style class. I will open discussion by introducing key themes, terms and main ideas from the readings. I will also close with a few concepts and background information for upcoming readings. We will also use class time to screen and analyze media examples.

Keeping up with the reading and participating in class discussion will be essential to your own success in this course, and everyone's collective effort will be essential for us all to get the most out of the class. Completing the reading will require a significant amount of time. Please do not try to rush through the

reading material. To do well in this class, you'll need to closely follow the authors' arguments, take notes, and start formulating your own responses in your discussion material.

Attendance

Your input is crucial to the course development and to your classmates' learning. You are required to come to class prepared to engage the assigned material at each class meeting. I will take attendance at each class. Extenuating circumstances do arise and, thus, students can miss 2 class periods without penalty. Every absence thereafter, however, will result in a 3-point deduction from your final grade. You are responsible for any and all missed material. If you know in advance that you will be absent, please arrange for a classmate to take notes for you and collect any handouts/materials in your absence.

All absences will be considered unexcused unless the student presents proper documentation (a note from a doctor, clergy member or college official on letterhead) for one of the following reasons:

- verified illness
- participation in athletic events or other group activities sponsored by the U of M
- serious family emergencies
- subpoenas
- jury duty
- military service
- religious observances

Additional expectations

The use of cell phones or text messaging is not permitted in class. Laptops also may not be used during class. You are permitted to use computers during group activities, for your presentations, and to share media examples. Otherwise, I expect you to have your desks free of technology. Do not spend the class period surfing the internet or checking your email, twitter, facebook, etc. Doing so is disrespectful to me and to your classmates. It is also distracting. If I see you using technology in ways that are not relevant to our discussion, I will ask you leave the class and you will be counted as absent for that day.

Classroom Conduct

It is crucial that we cooperate in making this classroom as safe space for everyone and facilitate the learning of our fellow students. This means remembering that we come from many different backgrounds, have different views and have had different experiences. This also means keeping up with the reading, being supportive and considerate of others—sometimes this will mean respectfully disagreeing. I expect you to come to class with a willingness to express your responses to the readings and to your classmates' comments. I also encourage you to add to class discussion even when you are still thinking things through or you are puzzled by something. Finally, discriminatory language on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, class, religion, nationality, legal status, physical ability or sexual orientation will NOT be tolerated in presentations or class discussions. We are a diverse group of people and many of our differences are not visible or readily evident.

Academic Integrity

Students discovered to be cheating or engaging in plagiarism will receive a grade of zero for the assignment in question and an F for the course. Any violations of academic integrity will also be reported the Director of Academic Programs. According to the Macalester website, such violations include: forgery such as the "alteration of college forms, documents or records, or signing such forms or documents by someone other than the proper designee"; cheating or "the dishonest or unauthorized use of materials for academic work"; and plagiarism, or, "the unacknowledged use of another person's work (words, ideas, data, etc.) in a graded or published piece or in a speech." It is also expected that all work done for this course will be original and created for the class. You may not re-use papers, research or

text you have completed for other courses. For questions regarding plagiarism and the academic integrity, please see me. Available at <http://www.malester.edu/academicprograms/academicpolicies/academicintegrity/>

Accommodations for students with disabilities

I am committed to ensuring access to course content for students. Reasonable accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Contact the Office of Student Affairs, 651-696-6220 to schedule an appointment and discuss your individual circumstances. It is important to meet early in the semester; this will ensure that your accommodations can be implemented early on. The Assistant Dean of Students, Robin Hart Ruthenbeck, coordinates services for first, second and third year students, as well as seniors new to accommodations. The Associate Dean of Students, Lisa Landreman, coordinates students for seniors.

A note about sexual misconduct

Macalester College is committed to fostering a safe and productive learning environment for all students. As a faculty member, it is my goal that you feel able to share information about your experiences as a student; however, please know that I am required to report any disclosure of harm to self or others, or any reported sexual misconduct of any kind, to the appropriate college personnel who are responsible for responding to such reports.

Grades

ASSIGNMENTS and GRADING:

All written assignments must be printed double-sided on 8 ½ by 11, with one-inch margins, in 12 point Times New Roman font. It must include a works cited page in proper MLA or APA format, and must cite all materials referred to in the paper. Failure to cite your sources or is plagiarism (see above) and will be grounds for further action. A helpful resource for citing sources can be found here: <http://www.writing.umn.edu/sws> - Quick Help - “Quick Tips” – Under “Documentation” click on MLA or APA.

Late Work

All assignments must be turned in at the beginning of class on the due date indicated on your syllabus. **If you are not prepared, your assignment will be considered late and subject to a grade penalty.** Emailed assignments will not be accepted. You will be penalized one letter grade for each day an assignment is late. “Day,” here, refers to a day in real time, not a class period. An assignment due on Monday and handed in on the following Wednesday class period will be considered two days late.

GRADES:

An “A” is awarded for outstanding work that goes well beyond the basic course/assignment requirements.

A	93%-100%
A-	90%-92%

A “B” is awarded for work that exceeds the basic course/assignment requirements.

B+	88%-89%
B	83%-87%
B-	80%-82%

A “C” is awarded for work that meets the basic course/assignment requirements.

C+	78%-79%
C	73%-77%

C- 70%-72%

A “D” indicates that, while the work is worthy of credit, it fails to meet the requirements of the course/assignment.

D+ 68%-69%

D 63%-67%

D- 60%-62%

A grade of “NC” indicates that work fails to meet the basic requirements and does not warrant credit.

NC 0%-59%

S/SD/N – “S” represents “satisfactory,” which is equivalent to a grade of “C-“ or better. “N” stands for “no credit,” or any grade less than C-. Students who wish to take the course S/SD/N should consult with their academic advisor. Courses taken under this grading option may not be included on major, minor or concentration plans without specific departmental approval

I – Incompletes are awarded only in extremely rare circumstances. Please see Macalester’s policy on incompletes at the following address:

http://catalog.macalester.edu/content.php?catoid=10&navoid=1013#Graduation_Requirements

ASSIGNMENTS

You must complete *all* of the assignment in order to receive a passing grade in the class.

Course Requirements

Discussion Material (20%)

Reading Summaries/Presentations (10% each)

Paper #1 and Paper #2 (6-8 pages each) (15% each)

Final Paper, including presentation (8-10 page revision of Paper #1 or Paper #2) (20%)

Class Participation (10%)

Discussion Material

To facilitate a good discussion, all students are required to bring TYPED discussion questions (DQs) to every class meeting. Your DQs are due on the date the readings are scheduled to be discussed and will be graded using a check/check-plus/check-minus system. You must write **one discussion question for each reading assignment listed on the syllabus**. Select a passage (2-3 sentences or more) from each reading that you feel is important, provocative, inspiring, and/or confusing. Type your passage (note the page number on which it appears), explain the passage in your own words, situating it in the author’s main argument, and develop a discussion question RELATED TO YOUR PASSAGE that is designed to prompt intelligent discussion with your peers (avoid simplistic YES/No or “DO YOU AGREE” type questions). Your question must be directly related to the reading assignment in ways you can further clarify in class. Type the question below the passage. Your write-up should demonstrate close, careful reading. I will call on students during the class to put forth their discussion questions, so be sure to be prepared to engage in meaningful discussion about your passages and questions.

Everyone is allowed one “free pass” on the discussion material without penalty. If you fail to provide discussion material for more than one reading assignment, points will be deducted from your final grade.

Reading Summary

Each student will take TWO turns summarizing a reading assignment in depth. This will involve reading the essay carefully, identifying the **thesis** and outlining and **main points**. Synthesize this material in

written form (3-4 pages) and present a clear and concise **oral version** of your synthesis (**10 minutes**) to the class. Your job is to identify and recap **major conceptual themes and arguments**. Reading summaries should include **AT LEAST 2 quotations** from the article, set up and contextualized in your own words.

When you present your reading summary, you will also find and present a media example (video clip, website) that illustrates one or more definitions or arguments presented in the reading assignment. **Video clips can be no longer than 5 minutes.** YOU MUST EXPLAIN HOW THE EXAMPLE IS RELEVANT TO THE READING. If your example is online, please email the link to me in advance. ALL MEDIA EXAMPLES WILL BE PROJECTED USING THE INSTRUCTOR'S COMPUTER.

Please submit a typed copy of your reading summary to the instructor (REQUIRED) prior to your oral presentation. The summary should include a description/explanation of your media example—use concrete detail and do not assume your reader is familiar with the example. You may read your paper, or summarize extemporaneously from your notes, as long as you do your best to convey the material clearly. We will begin each class meeting with a student presentation to refresh our memory of the reading assignment for the day and warm up to questions and discussion. We will usually watch additional screening material related to the reading assignment, and make connections between the presentation and this material.

Formal Papers

Each student will submit TWO initial formal papers (6-8 pages each) based on the reading assignments listed on the syllabus. The aim of the papers is to synthesize course material and apply it to an example of your choice.

Students will also choose ONE of their initial papers, and SIGNIFICANTLY REVISE AND DEVELOP that paper (8-10 pages) to submit at the end of the term. The revision process will include an individual meeting with the instructor as well as peer review. Students will attach a REVISION MEMO with their final papers in which they discuss how they addressed the comments from the instructor and their peers and reflect on the revision process.

The instructor will distribute instructions for each paper. PAPERS ARE DUE ON THE DATE INDICATED ON THE SYLLABUS – NO EXCEPTIONS. EMAILED PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.

Class Participation

Students are expected to attend class meetings and actively participate in discussion and group work. This includes arriving on time and staying until class is dismissed. Everyone begins with an A grade for participation. IF YOU MISS MORE THAN TWO CLASS MEETINGS, ARRIVATE LATE OR LEAVE EARLY ON A REGULAR BASIS AND/OR CHOOSE TO TEXT, CHAT, SURF, SLEEP OR DISENGAGE FROM CLASS DISCUSSION, POINTS WILL BE DEDUCTED.

Case studies

We will look at images, read pamphlets, watch clips, TV programs and documentaries in order to contextualize lectures, discussions and reading assignments. READ THE SYLLABUS CAREFULLY, FOR SOME OF THESE CASE STUDIES ARE BOOKS AND ARTICLES THAT MUST BE READ PRIOR TO CLASS. Others we will view during class.

*** I reserve the right to change the syllabus. If I do so, I will give you at least one week's notice and I will email the class. Please check email regularly for course-related updates.**

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introduction to the course

Thursday 1/21: Introductions and welcome to the class, review syllabus

Screening: *In Defense of Food* (PBS 2014)

Week 2: A brief history of eating for change in America

Tuesday 1/26: Discuss paper #1 & reading summaries; Syllabus Q&A.

Readings: Dupuis, Melanie (2007), "Angels and Vegetables"
Nissenbaum, "Sylvester Graham and the Physiology of Subsistence"

Screening: Finish *In Defense of Food*

Due: Bring in a media example that demonstrates a trace of one (or more) of these modes of social reform through dietary reform to share with the class (if you wish to share a clip, please make sure it is NO LONGER than 1 minute—you may choose a clip of a longer example if you wish). Please address your example in one of your DQs.
Be prepared to choose readings from our course schedule for your summaries.

Thursday 1/28

Reading: Belasco, "Food Morality and Social Reform"

Case study: Lappé, *Diet for a Small Planet*, on reserve in library. Please read chapter 1 closely and skim the remainder, reading one additional section closely that is interesting to you.
Choose a passage to relate to the Belasco reading in your discussion question.

Week 3: Producing food, producing citizens

Tuesday 2/2

Reading: Kingsbury, "Food will win the war"

Case study: WWI victory gardening materials

Thursday 2/4

Reading: Miller (2003), "In the Sweat of Our Brow: Citizenship in American Domestic Practice During WWII Victory Gardens"

Case Study: PBS Victory Garden clips and Let's Move website (view at <http://www.letsmove.gov/eat-healthy>)

Week 4: Distribution and marketing

Tuesday 2/9

Reading: Retsinger, "The Embodied Rhetoric of 'Health' from Farm Fields to Salad Bowls"

Case study: "green" food advertisements

Thursday 2/11

Meet for peer review of Paper #1

Due: ***Draft of Paper #1***

Week 5: Lifestyle and Consuming for Change

Tuesday 2/16

Reading: Veblen, "Conspicuous Consumption"
Bourdieu, "Introduction to Distinction"

Case Study: Pollan, *In Defense of Food* (on reserve in library) pp. 1-100

Thursday 2/18

Reading: Wald, "Visible Farmers/Invisible Workers"

Case study: Pollan, *In Defense of Food* pp. 100-end

Due: ***Final draft of Paper #1***

Week 6: Regarding the consumption of Others

Tuesday 2/23: Discuss Paper #2

Reading: Guthman, "Bringing Good Food"

Case study: TBD

Thursday 2/25

Reading: Williams-Forsen, "More than just the 'big piece of chicken'"

Case study: TBD

Week 7: Cooking and provisioning

Tuesday 3/1

Readings: Swenson, "Domestic Divo? Televised Treatments of Masculinity, Femininity and Food"
Hollows (2002), "*The Bachelor Dinner: masculinity, class and cooking in Playboy, 1953–1961*"

Case study: Food TV (we will screen in class)

Thursday 3/3

Reading: Deutsch, "Memories of Mothers in the Kitchen: local foods, History, and Women's Work"

Case study: Pollan, "Out of the Kitchen, Onto the Couch" (read before class)

Week 8: Eating

Tuesday 3/8

Reading: hooks, "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance"

Case study: *No Reservations*

Thursday 3/10: Discuss upcoming peer review session

Reading: Hayes, "Foucault goes to weight watchers"

Case study: TBD

Week 9: No class. Happy spring break!

Week 10: Heidi not here, work on papers, peer review

Tuesday 3/22: Screening TBD

Thursday 3/24: Meet for peer review

Reading: none

Due: ***Draft of Paper #2***

Week 11: Pleasure and disgust

Tuesday 3/29

Reading: Nutter, “From Romance to PMS: Images of Women and Chocolate in Twentieth Century America”
Case study: TBD

Thursday 3/31

Reading: Jameson, “Gagging the other: America’s gross food challenge” in *Food and Everyday Life*
Case study: TBD
Due: **Final draft of paper #2**

Week 12: Governing the eating self

Tuesday 4/5: Discuss final paper and presentation, sign up for individual meetings

Reading: Biltekoff, Chapter 1: “The Cultural Politics of Dietary Health”
Biltekoff Chapter 4: “From Microscopes to ‘Macrosopes’”
Case study: TBD

Thursday 4/7

Reading: Lavin, Introduction: “Food Politics in the Twilight of Sovereignty”
Lavin, Chapter 5: “The Year of Eating Politically”
Case study: TBD

Week 13: Citizen brands?

Tuesday 4/12

Reading: Ouellette, “Citizen Brand”
Case study: *Jamie Oliver’s Food Revolution* (we will screen during class)

Thursday 4/14

Reading: Arvidsson, “Introduction” to *Brands: Meaning and Value in Media Culture*
Case study: Please visit Whole Foods Market (or another “brand space” that trades on environmental credentials) before class. Bring in an object, image, or detailed (typed) description or quotation from your trip and use your discussion question to relate it to today’s reading.

Week 14: Waste and leftovers

Tuesday 4/19

Readings: Clark, “The Raw and the Rotten: Punk Cuisine”
Screening: Agnès Varda (2000) *The Gleaners and I*

Thursday 4/21

Reading: Viet, “An Economic history of leftovers”
Screening: Finish Agnès Varda (2000) *The Gleaners and I*

Week 15 – Last week of class

Tuesday 4/26 – final research presentations

Thursday 4/28 – final research presentations

Friday 5/6 – Final Exam Period: no exam

Due: Final Paper (substantial revision of paper 1 or 2) by 5pm