Food, Culture and Society
Syllabus – Working Copy

Course Description
“Tell me what you eat and I will tell you who you are.”
-- Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, (1755-1826).

Where does our food come from? How does the study of food help us understand what we call “society”, “culture” and “identity”? This course explores connections between what we eat and who we are through the study of how personal identities and social groups are formed via food production, preparation, and consumption. The course examines the social context shaping the literal and symbolic production of food. We will discuss the cultural meanings attached to food, the institutional and industrial creation of food, its preparation, and rituals of eating. We will work towards a better understanding of how food is related to identity, ethnicity, religion, politics, economics, nationalism, gender, health and environment.

We will survey some of the major debates, controversies and issues in food studies, and relate these to contemporary debates on environmental sustainability, globalization, social class, and social justice.

In the first few weeks, we will focus on the role that food plays in the formation of group identities. Next, we consider the industrialization of the food supply and globalization of food. Finally, we consider the corresponding efforts to find alternatives.

Learning Goals
Students who complete this course will:
1. Explore how systems of food provision and consumption are related to social, cultural, and political factors.
2. Gain an understanding of sociological, anthropological and historical perspectives on food and eating.
3. Assess contemporary debates related to food production.

Course Requirements:
A) Attendance and active participation. Active participation includes a number of components:
   1. Being present in class and actively involving yourself in class discussion.
   2. Contributing throughout the semester to the class on-line discussion board. Your posts can either answer the question posted by me or raise your own questions or insights regarding the reading or the week’s topic. Students are also encouraged to respond to each other.
B) Complete two short paper covering readings and other course material (3 pages each) – 40% of final grade.
C) Final research paper of 10-15 pages, 60% of your final grade. Your paper should present sociological/cultural/historical analysis of a culinary case study or any culinary text (films about
food, cookbooks, gastronomic magazines, food in arts, etc.). You will outline what scholars know (and do not know) about the food item (or the case/text) and describe your own analysis (based on your accumulated academic knowledge). This type of assignment is designed to give you experience in writing literature reviews, and demonstrate intellectual mastery of culinary issues, which are related to culture and society studies. If you have questions regarding sources, do not hesitate to consult me. I hope that each of you will take advantage of office hours. I am delighted and eager to discuss your topics and research questions and I look forward to meeting you and coming to know you during course of the semester.

**Course Schedule and Bibliography**

**Week 1 - Introduction, Meanings of Food and Eating**

**Week 2 - Social Conditions of Cooking and Eating**

**Week 3 – Food and Identity: Ethnicity**

**Week 4 - Food and Identity: Nationalism**

**View + Discussion:**
"Make Hummus Not War". Directed by: Trevor Graham.

**Short Paper Assignment – Instructions will be provided by the lecturer.**

**Week 5 – Food and Identity: Class**

**Week 6 – Food and Identity: Gender**


**Week 7 - Food and Memory**


View: clip from “Ratatouille”. Directed by: Brad Bird.

**Week 8 – Food and Power**


**Week 9 – Industrializing the Food Supply**


View: clip from “Food Inc”. Directed by: Robert Kenner.

**Week 10 – Globalization of Food**


**Short Paper Assignment – Instructions will be provided by the lecturer.**

**Week 11 - Food Security and Hunger: Local and Global**

**Week 12 – Alternative and Ethical Eating**


**Week 13 – Feast: Potluck, instruction for final research paper.**
Bring to class a food item of significance to you. Be prepared to speak briefly about your offering to our feast.