History 4261-001, The History of Food and Eating in the United States
M, W, F 12:00-12:50, Wooten Hall 214
Spring 2011

Instructor: Dr. Jennifer Jensen Wallach
Office: Wooten Hall 247
Telephone: 940-565-3395
Email: jennifer.wallach@unt.edu (Email is the best way to reach me.)
Office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 2:00-4:00 or by appointment

Course Description/ Course Goals
Anthropologists and folklorists have long considered documenting foodways to be an important part of their attempts to understand the inner workings of various cultures. More recently, historians have begun to pay serious attention to the relationship between foods and food practices and our understanding of the past. Like everything else, food has a history. Some recent studies have concentrated on the way that various food items—salt, oysters, and potatoes among others—have shaped the course of history as these items were sought after, transplanted, and consumed.

In this course, we will pay some attention to the specific histories of various food items—when and where they were produced and eaten. However, our primary emphasis will be on the relationship between food and culture. Our perspective will be interpretive as we look for meanings embedded in various food practices, using the culinary sphere as a lens for gaining a better understanding of the cultural history of vanished times and places.

The overarching theme of this course will be that of “identity.” Nineteenth century French gastronome Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin confidently declared, “Tell me what you eat, and I’ll tell you who you are.” Food practices are used to denote racial, ethnic, and regional backgrounds; class positions and aspirations; and political and religious ideologies. As we survey American food history from the colonial era through the present, we will pay particular attention to what food practices can tell us about evolving ideas about American identity.

Our examination of the history of food will inevitably also lead us to the present and to the future. Students will be encouraged to think critically about their own food practices and what their behavior tells them about their own values and individual histories. We will use our knowledge to look to the foodways of the future. What changes do we see in American consumption patterns and in attitudes towards foods over time? What challenges, dangers, and exciting promises do we see in the future of American food and eating?

Required Texts
Anne L. Bower, African American Foodways: Explorations of History and Culture
Amy Bentley, Eating for Victory: Food Rationing and the Politics of Domesticity
Hasia Diner, Hungering for America: Italian, Irish, & Jewish Foodways in the Age of Migration
James McWilliams, A Revolution in Eating: How the Quest for Food Shaped America
Michael Pollan, The Omnivore’s Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals
Laura Shapiro, Perfection Salad: Women and Cooking at the Turn of the Century

Class Format
The ethos of the class will be participatory and collaborative. I will give several lectures, but this is not a lecture class. Most class periods will be devoted to discussion of the assigned readings and the films we will review in class. The last two and a half weeks will be devoted to student presentations.
Students are expected to have come to class having completed the assigned reading and ready to participate. The success of the class will depend on the intellectual collaboration of the entire group. Please note that the reading assignments are not distributed equally throughout the term. Some days there is not reading assignment. On other days, we will have discussions covering more than a hundred pages of text. Please familiarize yourself with the syllabus, and pace yourself in order to complete the lengthy reading assignments on schedule.

**Grades and Assignments**

*Quiz #1—40 points*
*Quiz #2—40 points*
*Quiz #3—40 points*
*Discussion Questions #1—5 points*
*Discussion Questions #2—5 points*
*Discussion Questions #3—5 points*
*Discussion Questions #4—5 points*
*Discussion Questions #5—5 points*
*Discussion Questions #6—5 points*
*Cookbook Analysis Paper—50 points*
*Research paper or oral history—100 points*
*Final Exam—100 points*

**Total points:** 400

Grades:  
360-400 = A  
320-359 = B  
280-249 = C  
240-279 = D

**Quizzes**

You will take three quizzes, covering the lectures, reading assignments, and films viewed in class. In the class period before each quiz, I will give you some tips of how to best prepare for it.

**Discussion Questions**

Twelve class days will be devoted to discussing the assigned readings. You are responsible for bringing in three discussion quests on six of those days. The discussion question assignments are worth five points each. To receive full credit, your questions must be typed. They should also be thoughtful, the kind of questions that will help inspire a lively class discussion. They should also demonstrate that you completed and understood the assigned reading.

If your last name begins with the letters A-H, you are required to bring in discussion questions on the following dates: February 2, February 11, February 25, March 9, March 30, and April 11.

If your last name begins with the letters I-Z you are required to bring in discussion questions on the following dates: February 4, February 14, February 28, March 11, April 1, and April 13.

**Cookbook Analysis Paper**

You will write a 3-4 page paper analyzing a cookbook written before 1975 as a historical resource. Further guidelines for this assignment will be distributed later.

**Oral History Project or Research Paper**

Each student has a choice between conducting and transcribing an oral history interview or writing a short research paper. Whichever project you choose will be worth 100 points and thus 25% of your final grade.
Oral history option: If you pick this option, you should immediately start thinking about/ looking for someone to interview. This person might be a food professional (a chef, a restaurant owner, a waiter, etc.) or a food producer (a farmer, someone who works in a factory manufacturing or packaging a food product, etc.), or someone who is a very good cook or a very astute eater. Choose your subject carefully. You will be graded on the quality of your interview—the questions you ask, the responses you elicit, and your analysis of the process. You will also be graded on the quality of the transcription that you create. You will also be graded on the basis of your short (10 minute) in class presentation about the interview.

Research paper option: Instead of conducting an oral history interview, you may choose to write a 5-7 page research paper about one aspect of American food history. Your paper must contain both secondary and primary sources, have a readily identifiable thesis statement, and contain citations using the Chicago Manual of Style format. You will also be graded on the basis of your short (10 minute) in class presentation about your research.

Additional guidelines for each assignment will be distributed later.

Final Exam
The focus of your final exam will be material studied in class after April 11. You will also be asked to answer an essay question (or questions) that brings together material from the entire semester. Additional information will be given later.

Attendance Policy
During the bulk of the semester, I will not take attendance. Students will, however, notice a strong correlation between class attendance and performance in the course.

Because I want to create a collegial atmosphere, where we are supportive of one another, it is absolutely mandatory that all students are present during the student presentations that will take place at the end of the term. I will take attendance between April 18 and May 2, and will assign grade penalties to students who miss class on April 18, 20, 22, 25, 27, 29 or May 2. I will not penalize the first absence during that time period, but for each additional unexcused absence I will deduct 10 points from your final grade.

Late/ Missed Assignments
I will allow you to make up quizzes and discussion questions only if arrangements are made in advance and proper documentation explaining your absence is provided. Please do not ask me to make exceptions to this or any other stated policy. Out of fairness to the entire class, I must strictly adhere to the rules stated on this syllabus.

I will accept the Cookbook Analysis and Oral History/ Research Paper Assignment up to one week late with a one letter grade penalty. I will not accept the Cookbook Analysis after March 28. I will not accept the Oral History/ Research Paper Assignment after April 25.

How to Reach Me
Please always feel free to come and see me during my office hours if you have any comments, questions, or concerns. E-mail is the best way to reach me to set up an appointment or to ask a quick question.

Special Needs
Any student requiring instructional modifications due to a documented disability should make an appointment to meet with the instructor as soon as possible. An official letter documenting the disability will be expected in order to receive accommodations.

Student Evaluations
The Student Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness (SETE) is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. This short survey will be made available to you at the end of the semester, providing you a chance to
comment on how this class is taught. I am very interested in the feedback I get from students, as I work to continually improve my teaching. I consider the SETE to be an important part of your participation in this class.

**Academic Honesty**

Students are expected to strictly adhere to the UNT Student Code of Conduct, which prohibits lying, cheating, and plagiarism. Honor code violations may result in a failing grade for an assignment on the first offense. The second offense will result in failure of the course.

Please be particularly careful to avoid plagiarism—taking credit for another person’s intellectual property without giving her proper credit.

The American Historical Association’s “Statement on Professional Conduct” defines plagiarism in the following way:

“The word plagiarism derives from Latin roots: plagiarus, an abductor, and plagiare, to steal. The expropriation of another author’s work, and the presentation of it as one’s own, constitutes plagiarism and is a serious violation of the ethics of scholarship. It seriously undermines the credibility of the plagiarist, and can do irreparable harm to a historian’s career.

In addition to the harm that plagiarism does to the pursuit of truth, it can also be an offense against the literary rights of the original author and the property rights of the copyright owner... The real penalty for plagiarism is the abhorrence of the community of scholars.

Plagiarism includes more subtle abuses than simply expropriating the exact wording of another author without attribution. Plagiarism can also include the limited borrowing, without sufficient attribution, of another person’s distinctive and significant research findings or interpretations. Of course, historical knowledge is cumulative, and thus in some contexts—such as textbooks, encyclopedia articles, broad syntheses, and certain forms of public presentation—the form of attribution, and the permissible extent of dependence on prior scholarship, citation, and other forms of attribution will differ from what is expected in more limited monographs. As knowledge is disseminated to a wide public, it loses some of its personal reference. What belongs to whom becomes less distinct. But even in textbooks a historian should acknowledge the sources of recent or distinctive findings and interpretations, those not yet a part of the common understanding of the profession. Similarly, while some forms of historical work do not lend themselves to explicit attribution (e.g., films and exhibitions), every effort should be made to give due credit to scholarship informing such work.

Plagiarism, then, takes many forms. The clearest abuse is the use of another’s language without quotation marks and citation. More subtle abuses include the appropriation of concepts, data, or notes all disguised in newly crafted sentences, or reference to a borrowed work in an early note and then extensive further use without subsequent attribution. Borrowing unexamined primary source references from a secondary work without citing that work is likewise inappropriate. All such tactics reflect an unworthy disregard for the contributions of others.

No matter what the context, the best professional practice for avoiding a charge of plagiarism is always to be explicit, thorough, and generous in acknowledging one’s intellectual debts.”

(See: [http://www.historians.org/pubs/free/professionalstandards.cfm#Plagiarism](http://www.historians.org/pubs/free/professionalstandards.cfm#Plagiarism))
If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism while you are in the process of writing your final exam, see me. *Last semester I had to fail some students for plagiarism. I do not want to see that happen again.*

**Schedule**—Please note that the schedule is subject to change. Students are expected to attend class regularly and to be aware of any changes.

**Week 1: Introduction**
January 19—Introduction to the class
January 21—Lecture: The History of the Thanksgiving Holiday

**Week 2: The Historical, Social, & Political Significance of Thanksgiving**
January 24—Film: *What’s Cooking?* (109 minutes; 2000)
January 26—*What’s Cooking?* continued
January 28—Film Discussion

**Week 3: Food and the Founding**
January 31—Lecture: Early Modern Ideas about Healthful Eating
February 2—Discuss McWilliams, Intro-Chapter 4
   *A-H Discussion Questions Due
February 4—Discuss McWilliams, Chapters 5-8
   *I-Z Discussion Questions Due

**Week 4: Gender and the American Appetite**
February 7—Quiz #1
February 9—Lecture: Thinking Historically about Food, Sexuality, and Gender
February 11—Discuss Shapiro, Prologue-Chapter 4
   *A-H Discussion Questions Due

**Week 5: Foodways and Manifest Destiny**
February 14—Discuss Shapiro, Chapter 5-Conclusion
   *I-Z Discussion Questions Due
February 16—Lecture: Expanding the American Palate
February 18—Film: *Big Night* (107 minutes; 1996)

**Week 6: Foodways and Immigration**
February 21—*Big Night* continued
February 23—Film Discussion
February 25—Discuss Diner, Preface-Chapter 4
   *A-H Discussion Questions Due

**Week 7: Hungering for America**
February 28—Discuss Diner, Chapters 5-8
   *I-Z Discussion Questions Due

Cookbook Analysis Paper Guidelines Distributed
March 2—Quiz #2
March 4—No Class; Use today to work on your Cookbook Analysis Paper

**Week 8: The Patriotic Stomach**
March 7—Lecture: Food Will Win the War?: Patriotic Eating in an Historical Context
March 9—Discuss Bentley, *Eating for Victory*, Introduction-Chapter 3
   *A-H Discussion Questions Due
March 11—Discuss Bentley, *Eating for Victory*, Chapter 4-Epilogue  
Oral History/ Research Paper Guidelines Distributed  
*I-Z Discussion Questions Due*

**Week 9: Spring Break**  
March 14—No Class  
March 16—No Class  
March 18—No Class

**Week 10: Defining Soul Food**  
March 21— Film: *Soul Food* (115 minutes; 1997)  
**Cookbook Analysis Paper Due**  
March 23— *Soul Food* continued  
March 25— Film Discussion and Discussion of Bowers *African-American Foodways*, Introduction

**Week 11: African-American Foodways**  
March 28— Lecture: Black and White Culinary Encounters During the Era of Slavery  
March 30— Discuss Bowers *African-American Foodways*, Part I  
*A-H Discussion Questions Due*

April 1— Discuss Bowers *African-American Foodways*, Part I  
*I-Z Discussion Questions Due*

**Week 12: The Future of Food**  
April 4—Film: *Food, Inc.* (94 min; 2008)  
April 6—*Food, Inc.* continued  
April 8—Quiz #3

**Week 13: Conclusions**  
April 11—Film Discussion and Discuss Pollan, *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*, Part I  
*A-H Discussion Questions*

April 13—Discuss Pollan, *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*, Parts II & III  
*I-Z Discussion Questions*

April 15—Lecture: Using the Past to Understand the Future of Food

**Week 14: Student Presentations**  
April 18—Oral Histories or Research Papers Due  
Student Presentations  
April 20—Presentations  
April 22—Presentations

**Week 15: Student Presentations**  
April 25—Presentations  
April 27—Presentations  
April 29—Presentations

**Week 16: Student Presentations/ Review Session**  
May 2—Presentations  
May 4—Review Session for Final Exam

Final Exam: Wednesday, May 11, 2011; 10:30-12:30