SOC 291
Sociology of Food and Eating
01:920:291:01

M/ Th 12:35 -1:55pm
Art History Hall (ARH) 200

Professor Norah MacKendrick
Davison Hall, Room 107
26 Nichol Avenue
Email: norah.mackendrick@rutgers.edu

Office Hours: Mondays 2:30 – 3:30pm

Course Description:
How can food and eating be sociological? This course draws upon a variety of perspectives to examine the social processes that shape how food is produced, prepared and consumed in the United States. We start the course by focusing on the environmental and political dynamics that characterize both global and U.S. food systems. We then turn toward the subjects of farm labor, hunger and food security, the politics of nutrition advice, and the rise of alternative food movements. Following this, we draw from theories on the sociology of the body to understand how dieting is gendered. We then look at the intersection of gender, race and social class with regard to foodwork. We end the course with a focus on food media and emerging food trends.

The topics and readings cover diverse areas, including environmental sociology, political sociology, social inequality, sociology of science, gender, and cultural sociology. Within each of these perspectives, food is used as a lens to examine the complex social, economic and cultural relations that determine what we eat. In this course we will consider how problems in the food system, including environmental degradation, labor injustices, and unequal access to healthy food are social problems that reflect an ongoing tension between the agency of individual eaters and the power of institutions and social structures.

Learning Objectives
In this course, students will learn to:

1. Apply a broad, sociological perspective to understand how food and eating practices are defined as social problems and culturally produced
2. Use food as a lens to study the reproduction of social inequality, the production of gender, race, and privilege
3. Examine how expert authority and scientific knowledge help to define how food is produced and consumed
4. Apply a sociology of food perspective to their own eating habits, food environments and food cultures.

**Contacting me**

My office hours are listed above. If you are not able to make these hours, please contact me and we can arrange to meet at another time. The best way to reach me is by email. I check email throughout the week (not on weekends), and I will do my best to respond within 24 hours.

**For all email messages, you must have “soc of food” at the start of your subject heading or I may not open your message. This is very important. If you emailed me and did not receive a response, double-check that your message contained the right subject heading.**

**Keeping up with class material**

Active participation and attendance are vital to learning the course material. I post lecture slides on Sakai, but your own notes from the lectures, documentaries and assigned readings are most important to learning the material. AUDIO OR VIDEO RECORDING OF THE LECTURES IS NOT PERMITTED. Students with a documented disability must seek special permission from me to record lectures.

If you miss multiple classes because of medical issues or personal problems, contact your Dean of Students. http://deanofstudents.rutgers.edu/. This office can help you manage these issues and stay on top of your schoolwork. If you are struggling to keep up with material in this course because of factors outside of your control (e.g. illness, financial aid, personal problems), I can direct you to services at the University that can assist you.

**Student conduct**

I expect students to be on time for class and to stay for the duration of the lecture. The classroom should be a place for the free exchange of ideas, and students should act with mutual respect and use common courtesy. I hope for, and indeed encourage, debate among students. I welcome thoughtful discussion and critical thinking; but discourteous remarks will not be tolerated, and disruptive students will be asked to leave. Students are expected to follow the Code of Student Conduct, which can be found here: http://policies.rutgers.edu/PDF/Section10/10.2.11-current.pdf.

**Academic integrity and Plagiarism**

I take cheating on tests and plagiarism very seriously. I refer all suspected cases of cheating and plagiarism to the Office of Judicial Affairs.

All students must review Rutgers’ policy on cheating and plagiarism. Please refer to: http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_9_01_2011.pdf

According to Rutgers policy, “Plagiarism is the use of another person’s words, ideas, or results without giving that person appropriate credit. To avoid plagiarism, every direct quotation must
be identified by quotation marks or appropriate indentation and both direct quotation and paraphrasing must be cited properly according to the accepted format for the particular discipline or as required by the instructor in a course.

Some common examples of plagiarism are:

- Copying word for word (i.e. quoting directly) from an oral, printed, or electronic source without proper attribution.
- Paraphrasing without proper attribution, i.e., presenting in one’s own words another person’s written words or ideas as if they were one’s own.
- Submitting a purchased or downloaded term paper or other materials to satisfy a course requirement.
- Incorporating into one’s work graphs, drawings, photographs, diagrams, tables, spreadsheets, computer programs, or other nontextual material from other sources without proper attribution.”


**Laptops, tablets and phones:**

I respect that students use electronic devices to read material and take notes. These devices are permitted in the classroom as long as they are not disruptive. Using laptops and phones for other purposes (e.g. watching videos, looking at photos, online shopping, checking Facebook, texting etc.) constitutes a distraction. **If I believe your conduct to be disruptive or distracting, I will ask you to turn off your device and may ask you to leave the class.**

**Disabilities**

To discuss academic accommodations for a documented disability, please contact me as soon as possible. Note that you must also contact the Office of Disability Services:

Kreeger Learning Center  
151 College Avenue, Suite 123  
**E-mail Address:** dsoffice@rci.rutgers.edu  
**Phone:** (732) 932-2848

**Academic Support**

Learning center programs are highly recommended for any student who is looking to improve their grades and enhance their learning. The Learning Centers at Rutgers can provide support, guidance and assistance for all aspects of your coursework, including note-taking and writing multiple-choice exams. **See:** [http://rlc.rutgers.edu/index.shtml](http://rlc.rutgers.edu/index.shtml). Do not delay in contacting the Learning Center if you suspect that you have difficulty taking notes or writing multiple-choice exams.
Grades

The final grade is based on your total score (out of 100) calculated from all exams and assignments. A final letter grade will be allocated as follows:

A   90-100
B+  85-89
B   80-84
C+  75-79
C   70-74
D   60-69
F   59 or less

Course requirements

(1) Food Journal Exercise (10%)

This is a written assignment requiring you to deconstruct and analyze a recent meal using key concepts from the readings and class lectures. More detail will be provided closer to the due date.

(2) Tests (90%) 

All tests are multiple-choice, non-cumulative and cover material from the readings, lectures and films shown in class. Bring a pencil and eraser.

   Test 1 (30%): October 6th (Monday) 
   Test 2 (30%): November 6th (Monday) 
   Test 3 (30%): December 16th, 12pm to 3:00pm

Missed Tests & Assignments

Traffic, missed transit connections, sleeping-in, making a mistake about the day, time or location of the exam, workload from other courses, internet or computer problems are not acceptable reasons for a late assignment or missed exam. Problems with Sakai (e.g. a document did not upload properly, was not in the proper format, a turnitin.com score was not produced) is not an acceptable excuse for a late assignment. Contact the Sakai help desk if you encounter any technical problems uploading a document or need help learning how to use Sakai. Contact me if you see errors or missing items on the Sakai site.

In the case of severe weather, where the University is closed or major roadways and transit networks are closed, class will be cancelled and, if possible, tests will be rescheduled.
Make-up tests will be arranged only for students facing extenuating circumstances (valid supporting documentation is always required). If you know in advance that you will not be able to write a test, you must notify me well in advance and provide supporting documentation. If you miss a test, you must notify me immediately. Students who fail to notify me within 24 hours will not be permitted write a make-up test.

**Required Readings:**


(2) All other assigned articles and book chapters are electronically available through Sakai and are indicated by this symbol (*) in the lecture schedule.

As you look through the syllabus, note that some days have a lot of assigned reading, while other days have no readings. You should be prepared to do all of the assigned readings and understand the material. I also expect that you have read (or at least carefully skimmed) the readings before you come to class.

**Documentary Films:**

We will watch several documentaries in this class. The film will be followed by a class discussion, and material from the film and our discussion will be included on all tests and exams. It is important that you attend these classes and participate in the discussions.

***The lecture schedule is subject to change. I may occasionally change the assigned readings and switch the order of lecture topics. I will always announce these changes in class and post an updated syllabus on Sakai.***

**Lecture schedule**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Th</td>
<td>4-Sep</td>
<td><strong>Introduction to the course</strong></td>
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<td>Film and Discussion: <em>King Corn</em></td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>15-Sep</td>
<td>Discussion of Pollan, continued…</td>
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<td>Film: Feeding New York</td>
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Convenience and Commodity Chains


Hunger: Global Perspectives
(*) Paarlberg, R. (2010) Food Politics: what everyone needs to know. New York, Oxford University Press. [Chapter 1,4 and 5.]

Film and Discussion: Seeds of Hunger

Labor Issues in the food system

Lecture & Review

Test 1 (30%). Bring a pencil and an eraser.

Food Inequalities

Film and Discussion: A Place at the Table


The rise of the alternative food movement
Pollan, M. Chapter 9. Big Organic

Film and discussion: Fresh

Critical perspectives on nutrition advice
**Food and the Body: Dieting and “health”**


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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<td>M 3-Nov</td>
<td>Lecture &amp; Review</td>
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**Test 2 (30%). Bring a pencil and an eraser.**

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<th>Date</th>
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| Th 6-Nov | Food and civic politics: race, class and power in L.A.  
Film & Discussion: *The Garden* |


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<th>Date</th>
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| M 10-Nov | Food and civic politics: race, class and power in L.A.  
Film & Discussion: *The Garden* |

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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| Th 13-Nov | Gender, race and class  
*Sociology*, 42(4), 653-671. |

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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</table>
| M 17-Nov | Gender, race and class  
*Sociology*, 42(4), 653-671. |

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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| Th 20-Nov | Gender, race and class  

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| M 24-Nov | Gourmet Food Culture and “Foodies”  

**TUES 25-Nov**  
**Make up class Day**  
Food Diary Assignment Due  
[NO CLASS]

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Th 27-Nov</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Recess—No Class</td>
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| M 1-Dec | Food in Popular Culture: Televised Media  

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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</table>
| Th 4-Dec | Food in Popular Culture: Televised Media  

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>M 8-Dec</td>
<td>Course Wrap-up and Review class</td>
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**Tues 16-Dec**  
**Test 3 (30%): 12 noon to 3pm**