

SOC 232
Sociology of Food and Eating
01:920:232:01
F20



M/W 2:15-3:35pm
On Canvas and Zoom

Professor Norah MacKendrick

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Office Hours: TBA

Notes for Fall 2020:

- This is an online course. There is no in-person instruction.
- The course platform is Canvas.
- You must participate in one “live” discussion group per week during scheduled class time on Wednesdays. If you absolutely cannot do this, you must notify me by September 2nd.
- There are no exams in this course. There are regular quizzes and two written assignments.
- Be prepared to read a lot every week and participate online.

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 U.S. food systems from farm to fork. We then turn toward the subjects of how to change the food system. This section covers concentration in the food system, farm labor, hunger and food security, the politics of nutrition advice, and the rise of alternative food movements.

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.

Diversity statement

The Rutgers Sociology Department strives to create an environment that supports and affirms diversity in all manifestations, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, social class, disability status, region/country of origin, and political orientation. We also celebrate diversity of theoretical and methodological perspectives among our faculty and students and seek to create an atmosphere of respect and mutual dialogue. We have zero tolerance for violations of these principles and have clear and respectful procedures for responding to such grievances.

Contacting me

I will hold weekly office hours (via Zoom/WebEx or phone). I check email throughout the week (not on weekends), and I will do my best to respond within 24 hours. To be sure your email gets through to me, please use the mail function in Canvas. If not, be sure to 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 in discussion groups is vital to learning the course material. Readings and lecture slides will be available on **Canvas**.

If you miss multiple discussion groups or deadlines 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 discussion groups and to stay online for the duration of the group. I expect students to log on to the Canvas course site regularly. Discussion groups (both live and using threaded discussions) 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 the session. Students are expected to follow the Code of Student Conduct, which can be found here: <https://slwordpress.rutgers.edu/studentconduct/wp-content/uploads/sites/46/2017/05/UCSC2016.pdf>

Academic integrity and Plagiarism

I take cheating very seriously. I refer all suspected cases of cheating and plagiarism to the Rutgers Office of Student Conduct.

All students must review the Rutgers University Academic Integrity Policy. Refer to: https://slwordpress.rutgers.edu/academicintegrity/wp-content/uploads/sites/41/2014/11/AI_Policy_2013.pdf.

Technology

If you have trouble at any point in the semester getting access to a laptop or internet service, please notify me ASAP. We will use Canvas as the course platform. For live group discussions, you have the option to use video, but audio is required. For students with documented disabilities, I can work with you to ensure you are able to participate in a way that corresponds to your needs and abilities.

Getting the Help You Need

If you are facing housing insecurity, food insecurity, personal problems, or need access to medical, counseling or psychological services, there are resources to help you. Most these services can be found by consulting the [Dean of Students](http://deanofstudents.rutgers.edu/)¹ web page. Note that the [Rutgers Student Food Pantry](http://ruoffcampus.rutgers.edu/food/)² (RSFP) is open to all students and provides non-perishable food and personal care products to members of the Rutgers community. For information about medical services and counseling look [here](#). If you have been affected by violence, contact the [Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance](http://vpva.rutgers.edu/)³ and at 848-932-1181.

If you are a student parent, are pregnant, or have significant caregiving responsibilities for a child or relative, please notify me at the beginning of the semester, so I am aware of your situation. If I'm notified in advance, we can make arrangements for you if you need to miss

¹<http://deanofstudents.rutgers.edu/>

² <http://ruoffcampus.rutgers.edu/food/>

³ <http://vpva.rutgers.edu/>

discussion group days. For student parents, consider connecting with the group [Rutgers Students with Children](#).⁴

If you are falling behind in your schoolwork because of physical or mental health issues, housing or food insecurity, or overwhelming family or personal responsibilities, you should notify your Dean of Students as soon as possible. If these problems are affecting your performance in the class, you need to notify me as soon as possible so we can make arrangements. Do not wait until you receive a poor grade. I can help, but you must give me time to work with you.

Disabilities

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where they are officially enrolled. Refer to: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/applying-for-services>

If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a **Letter of Accommodations**. **Please share this letter with me as soon as possible, and discuss the accommodations with me as early as possible.**

Learning Centers

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 notetaking and writing multiple-choice exams. See: <https://rlc.rutgers.edu/> 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 course requirements. I do not grade on a curve. 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

⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/studentswithchildren/>

Course requirements

(1) Foodscape activity (15%)

This is a written and visual assignment requiring you to take photos of spaces or places where you usually procure food and reflecting on how your diet and habits might have changed with the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a 1,000-word essay. More details will be provided on Canvas.

(2) Discussion-Based Learning Activities (50%)

Every week, you'll participate in an online 'live' small discussion group on Zoom. We'll begin the session with an overview of what to do. You'll then be assigned to breakout rooms where you'll discuss a set of questions with a group of 5-8 other classmates. Each group must complete a google doc worksheet and share it with the instructor.

Additionally, you'll participate in occasional discussion threads on Canvas.

If you think you'll miss more than one live discussion groups, let me know ASAP.

(3) Food Journal Assignment (15%)

This is a written assignment requiring you to reflect on a recent meal using ideas from the course. Details will be provided in class and on Canvas.

(4) Online quizzes (20%)

These are short 10-minute quizzes to ensure that you are reading the class material and staying up to date with lectures and other course materials. Quizzes must be completed by 8pm every Tuesday.

Missed discussion groups, quizzes and assignments

If you miss a quiz or discussion thread on Canvas, submit late assignments, or are absent from more than one live discussion group, you will lose points. However, I understand that technological problems happen, and that life can get in the way (in 2020 especially!). If you run into problems staying on top of your course work you must let me know as soon as you can. I'm understanding, but I ask for honesty and timely communication.

Required Readings:

There are two required books in addition to other readings available online.

(1) Warner, Melanie. 2013. *Pandora's Lunchbox. How Processed Food Took Over the American Meal*. New York: Scribner. Available at the Barnes & Noble Rutgers Bookstore. You can also easily find affordable used copies at online vendors. I've put in a request for this book to be placed on Reserve at Douglass Library. Check the library web site to see if it is in.

(2) Jayaraman, S., and K. De Master. 2020. *Bite Back: People Taking on Corporate Food and Winning*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press. I've put in a request for this book to be placed on Reserve at Douglass Library. Check the library web site to see if it is in.

(3) All other assigned articles and book chapters are indicated by (*) in the syllabus. These are electronically available on our class Canvas site.

You should be prepared to do all of the assigned readings and understand the material before the weekly discussion group.

Course Schedule:

Subject to change. Changes announced on Canvas

Date		Activity
Module 1: Introductions		
Wed	2-Sep	1. Watch the two introductory videos 2. Read the syllabus 3. Complete the syllabus quiz by 11:00pm on Tuesday Sep 8.
Mon	7-Sep	Labor Day. No class.
Tuesday	8-Sep	*Note change in designation of class days* 1. Participate in our first live Zoom discussion group: Introductions and troubleshooting technological glitches
Module 2: American Agriculture Materials: Documentary, lecture slides and selected chapters of <i>Bite Back</i>		
Wed	9-Sep	1. Watch "King Corn (Original Version)." Bullfrog Films, 2007. https://video.alexanderstreet.com/watch/king-corn-original-version 2. Post a discussion question to the accompanying King Corn Discussion thread
Mon	14-Sep	1. Read / Listen to Lecture: "Overview of American Agriculture." 2. Complete the quiz
Wed	16-Sep	Live Zoom discussion group: Overview of American Agriculture
Mon	21-Sep	1. Read SEEDS from <i>Bite Back</i> . (Whole section) 2. Complete the quiz
Wed	23-Sep	Live Zoom discussion group: SEEDS

Mon	28-Sep	1. Read PESTICIDES from Bite Back. (Whole section) 2. Complete the quiz
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Wed	30-Sep	Live Zoom discussion group: PESTICIDES
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Module 3: Confronting Processed Food

Materials: *Pandora's Lunchbox*

Mon	5-Oct	1. Read Warner "Pandora's Lunchbox" Intro-Chpt 3 2. Complete the quiz
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Wed	7-Oct	Live Zoom discussion group: Pandora's Lunchbox" Intro-Chpt 3
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Mon	12-Oct	1. Read Warner "Pandora's Lunchbox". Chapters 4 & 5 2. Complete the quiz
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Wed	14-Oct	Live Zoom discussion group: Pandora's Lunchbox" Chapters 4 & 5
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Mon	19-Oct	1. Read Warner "Pandora's Lunchbox". Chapters 6 & 10 2. Complete the quiz
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Wed	21-Oct	Live Zoom discussion group: Pandora's Lunchbox" Chapters 6 & 10
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Mon	26-Oct	Foodscape Assignment Due [no lecture or activities scheduled]
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Module 4: Changing the Food System

Materials: *Bite Back: People Taking on Corporate Food and Winning*

Wed	28-Oct	1. Read LABOR from Bite Back (whole section) 2. Complete the quiz
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Mon	2-Nov	1. Watch: 2. Post a comment on the discussion thread
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Wed	4-Nov	Live Zoom discussion group: LABOR
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Mon	9-Nov	1. Read HEALTH from Bite Back (whole section) 2. Complete the quiz
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Wed	11-Nov	Live Zoom discussion group: HEALTH
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Mon	16-Nov	1. Read HUNGER from Bite Back (whole section) 2. Complete the quiz
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Wed	18-Nov	Live Zoom discussion group: HUNGER
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Mon	23-Nov	1. Watch: Documentary TBA 2. Post a comment on the discussion thread
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Wed 25-Nov NO CLASS. Happy Thanksgiving!

Module 5: Food in Everyday Life
Materials: Readings posted on Canvas

Mon	30-Nov	1. Read: Beagan, B., Chapman, G. E., D'Sylva, A., & Bassett, B. R. 2008. It's just easier for me to do it': Rationalizing the family division of foodwork. (*) 2. Post a reflection on foodwork in your own family or household.
Wed	2-Dec	1. Read: Contois. E. 2017. "Lose Like a Man": Gender and the Constraints of Self-Making in Weight Watchers Online. (*) 2. Post a photo and comment about a dieting video or product
Mon	7-Dec	Live Zoom Discussion Group: Gender, food trends, and dieting
Wed	9-Dec	Last day of class: Food Journal Due [On Canvas]