

The Politics and Pleasures of Food

Eng 151-10, Spring 2008

CRN: 28136

Barret 216

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This is a course in critical thinking and writing that focuses on the topic of food. While food is a basic requirement for life, it is also an area of pleasure, recreation, and social and cultural meaning. People signal who they are and where they are from through what they choose to eat and what they refuse. The choice of what to eat, furthermore, has political, ethical, economic, social, physiological, and environmental implications. The readings for this course range in topic from the pleasure of eating to the ethics of eating animals to the politics of fast food, slow food, and the global food chain. We will be attentive to the different disciplinary angles one can take on food (e.g. anthropological, economic, environmental . . .) as well as the different forms and genres writers use (e.g. restaurant reviews, memoirs, manifestoes . . .) The aim of this course is two-fold: to teach you how to produce college-level writing and to get you to think about food in a completely new way. Note: a certain amount of eating will be required for research purposes.

One of the assumptions of this class is that good writing requires critical thinking--the ability to open up and explore a concept or topic and show its complexity. Until you can start to see the complexity of something, you will feel that you have nothing to say and thus nothing to write. Part of the everyday work of this class will be coming up with good questions that help you open up and deepen a topic. Thinking critically also means taking nothing for granted, questioning assumptions, and shaking up apparent truths. Both in your oral work in class and in your writing, I will be asking you to be conscious of what unquestioned truths and assumptions you hold and to do your best to challenge them.

Required Texts: (available at Rhodes College bookstore)

Diana Hacker, *A Writer's Reference*

Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma*

John Trimble, *Writing With Style*

Coursepack: to be purchased from the instructor

Graded Work

Essay 1 (3-5 pages)	15%
Essay 2 (4-5 pages)	20%
Essay 3 (4-6 pages)	20%
Essay 4 (8-10 pages)	25%
Final exam	10%
Participation (includes presentations quizzes and informal writing)	10%

Policies

Portfolios: You will keep all the work (including drafts and informal writing) for this class in a portfolio (any kind of folder with pockets). Every time you hand in the *final* version of a paper, you will hand in the entire portfolio.

Informal Writing: First drafts and informal writing will receive grades of Credit/No Credit and will be figured in your grade for class participation. Failure to complete informal writing assignments will result in a deduction from your final grade.

Formal Writing: All formal papers must be in standard college format: typed (11 or 12 point), double-spaced, with **standard (1") margins**. I prefer a standard font like **Times or Arial**. You will write four papers for this course. For each of these papers you will be required to hand in a first draft which you will then revise. Only your final draft will be graded, but *it will not be considered complete without a first draft*. **You must hand in your rough draft along with all final drafts**. Late final revisions will be marked down one third of a grade for each day past due. If I need to return a paper to you for proof-reading, it will be considered late until I get it back. Papers more than a few days late will not be accepted at all. If you fail to turn in any paper entirely, you will not be able to pass the class.

Revision is the sine qua non of any writing class. It is *not* the same as editing and proof-reading. Every formal written assignment for this class will require that you return to your first draft and make substantial, in-depth changes. More on this as we proceed.

Workshop: every formal paper will be work-shopped in class by your peers. Be prepared to share your writing as well as your critical faculties.

Submit *only* hard copies of final drafts and *always* keep a spare hard copy of your paper in case your computer crashes. You are responsible for making sure your work is adequately backed up. Make sure you give yourself adequate time to accommodate last-minute technical difficulties.

Discussion: This course is a seminar and requires the active and engaged participation of every member of the class. Make sure you read each day's reading carefully and come to class with questions or comments to bring to the discussion. While I encourage you to choose your own moment to enter a discussion, if you haven't contributed in a while, be prepared to be called on. Be aware that on some days I will go around the room and ask everyone to contribute a question or comment. It is acceptable to occasionally pass on responding to a question, but if you do so habitually, your grade will suffer. A good discussion requires some very basic but crucial elements. Everyone needs to have done the reading and to come in **with at least one question or idea they would like to discuss**. More often than not, it is the most basic, simple questions that produce the most fruitful discussions. Another basic but crucial requirement for a good discussion is that if you are speaking, you need to speak clearly and loudly enough so that everyone in the room can hear. **No mumbling!** If you do not have the floor, then it is your duty to **listen carefully**.

There will undoubtedly be disagreement in the class over different ideas presented in the class. I encourage you to air your disagreements both with the readings and with each other; however, this

absolutely must be done with **respect and civility** and the recognition that there are people in the room who have had very different experiences from your own.

I am aware that some people are extremely comfortable talking in class and others are not. I will do my very best to make the atmosphere in the class conducive for participation. If you tend to be reticent you will need to make an extra effort to participate; however, in the same measure, if you are someone who is comfortable talking in groups, you will need to make an extra effort to monitor yourself so that you do not end up dominating discussion. In discussion, as in writing, I value quality over quantity. It is my job to facilitate discussion and make sure everyone who wishes to speak gets a chance. Thus, there may be times when I need to ask you to wrap up your point right away or limit you to making one point, if there are others waiting to respond.

Check your email daily. At times I may need to make announcements about assignments over email.

Conferences: You are required to meet with me in conference **at least once** during the course of the semester to discuss your draft. Make sure you come to the conference prepared. That means you need to have reread your draft recently enough to discuss it intelligently. Also, make sure you bring a copy of the draft with you. You are also welcome to come to my office hours outside of the required visit. If you come to discuss ideas, make sure you have carefully reread the assignment and the assigned text and that you have questions to discuss.

Attendance: Much of the work of this course will take place in the classroom, in discussion, workshop, and writing exercises. You are allowed two absences without an effect on your grade. Three absences will affect your grade, and **six absences is grounds for failing the course**. If you do miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out what you may have missed from a trustworthy classmate and to **confirm the assignment for the next class**. The syllabus is a tentative schedule, and assignments will be added or changed as needed.

Lateness: If you are repeatedly late or unprepared for class, you will be counted as absent.

Course materials: unless otherwise instructed, you must come to class with the day's reading, as well as pen and paper.

Email etiquette: Email is a very useful invention that, in many ways, saves time. However, it also has some undesirable effects. I am happy to answer simple questions over email, but you need to make sure that you have used your own resources (like the syllabus or the college web page) first. Email is not the appropriate medium for negotiating any kind of special request. This must be done in person. In order to prevent email from interrupting my own work, I generally set aside one part of the day to responding to it rather than monitoring it throughout the day.

Plagiarism: The bulk of the work in this course requires writing. Failure to adequately document a source of any kind, whether or not intentional, constitutes plagiarism and must be dealt with by the Rhodes Honor Council. This course will address issues of intellectual honesty and you will be learning how to recognize and avoid plagiarism. One resource on avoiding plagiarism is the Rhodes Writing Center website: http://www.rhodes.edu/writingcenter/group_b/plagiarism.html

****All work for this class must be done in compliance with the Rhodes Honor Code.****

Food Journal: as part of your informal writing, you will be keeping a food journal. At least once a week you will make an entry about a food-related experience.

Presentations: everyone will sign up to give a brief (5-minute) presentation on a current (in the last year) news item related to food.

First, go to the Rhodes library homepage, click on “research sources” and then “on-line databases.” Do an on-line search on lexis-nexis, National Newspaper Index, or another database that includes newspapers and news magazines (explore as many as possible just to get a sense of what they contain). You are looking for news items in national newspapers and magazines of record, like (but not necessarily limited to) the following:

New York Times
 Los Angeles Times
 Washington Post
 Wall Street Journal
 The Times of London
 The Irish Times
 The Guardian

Most newspapers have an on-line version, as well, which you can explore individually.

I will ask you to **avoid** the more popular sources like the following: *USA Today*, *Time Magazine*, *Newsweek*. Also, **avoid** the on-line versions of network and cable news shows like CNN.com and Foxnews.com.

If you have a particular topic you wish to look up, go ahead and search for it, keeping in mind that different search terms might produce different results. If you’re not sure, just start by using a very general search term (like “food” or “cooking” or “meat”) and see what comes up. Spend some time browsing what is out there before deciding on an article.

Once you decide on an article, email the link to me. Then **write a one-paragraph summary** of the article, to be handed in to me on the day you give your presentation. Include on that page the **properly formatted citation** of the article, using MLA style (see Hacker). You will briefly describe the article to the class (5 minutes or less).

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Schedule of assignments (subject to revision as needed)

Th 1/10 Introductions; sign up for presentations; purchase coursepack

Telling your story through food: How do people use food as a marker of who they are and where they come from? How does food help evoke and anchor memories?

Tu 1/15 **Coursepack:** Reichl, “The Queen of Mold”, Trillin, “Table Morals”
 Chapter 1 of Trimble

Th 1/17 **Coursepack:** Antrim, “A Man in the Kitchen”; Adichie, “Real Food”; Henriquez, “Lunch”; Shteyngart, “Sixty-nine Cents”; Reynolds “A Marriage of Contrasting Traditions”
Trimble Chap. 2

Tu 1/22 Draft #1 Due; workshop in class;

Aesthetics, taste, and identity: How do we decide what to eat? What is the difference between food that tastes good and food that is in “good taste”? What is “authentic” food? What criteria do we use to judge food? What does what we eat say about who we are?

Th 1/24 Pollan, chap. 16, “The Omnivore’s Dilemma”; Brillat Savarin excerpts: “Aphorisms of the Professor” and “On the Pleasures of the Table”
(<http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/b/brillat/savarin/b85p/index.html>)

Tu 1/29 **Coursepack:** David Sedaris, “Tasteless”; Zoe Tribur, “Taste
Paper #1 Due

Th 1/31 **Coursepack:** Mintz, “Cuisine: High, Low, and Not at All”;
Trimble, Chap 9

Tu 2/05 Jane and Michael Stern road food review;
Gourmet magazine restaurant review (handouts) [analysis exercise]
Trimble chap. 3 and 4

Th 2/7 [library visit] come to class with potential research topic

Tu 2/12 Draft of Paper #2 due; workshop

Modernization, and the Global Food Chain: how did we go from growing our food to purchasing it at a supermarket? How has modernization of food production affected the way we eat, what we eat, and how we conceive of ourselves and others?

Th 2/14 Michael Pollan, Introduction, chapter 1 and 2 of *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*

Tu 2/19 **Final draft of paper #2 due;** [library visit]

Th 2/21 **coursepack:** Wendell Berry, “The Pleasures of Eating”
Pollan, chaps 10-11

Morality, Ethics, and Politics: How does food become associated with right and wrong?

Tu 2/26 **coursepack:** Stacey, “Seeds of Self-Denial”

Th 2/28 Pollan, “The Ethics of Eating Animals” chap 17; Buford “Red, White, and Bleu”

Tu 3/04 Spring Break

Th 3/06 Spring Break

Tu 3/11 **Draft of Paper #3**; Workshop

Th 3/13 **coursepack**: Wallace, “Consider the Lobster”;

Tu 3/18 **Paper #3 Due**; brainstorm research questions

Th 3/20 Easter Break

Hunger and Ethics: what kind of obligations do the well-fed have toward the hungry?

Tu 3/25 Garrett Hardin, “Lifeboat Ethics” (On-line); Andre and Velasquez, “World Hunger: A Moral Response” (on-line)

Th 3/27 Lappé and Collins, “Why Can’t People Feed Themselves?” (on-line)
***Research question due**

Tu 4/01 TBA

Th 4/03 TBA

Tu 4/08 TBA

Th 4/10 TBA

Tu 4/15 **Draft of Research paper due**; Workshop

Th 4/17 Workshop cont’d

Tu 4/22 Research presentations

Th 4/24 Research presentations cont’d
Final Research paper due

Final Exam: Mon. 4/28, 1pm