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## ENGL 151-05, First Year Writing Seminar: The Politics and Poetics of Food, Spring 2012

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FYWS 151/CRN 22330

The Politics and Poetics of Food

Prof. Judith Haas

MWF 9:00-9:50

Palmer 203



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. Topics of course readings and research will include the following: food, taste and pleasure; food and identity, the politics of hunger; food and the environment.

### Required Texts (available at the Rhodes College Bookstore)

Pollan, *In Defense of Food* (Penguin)

Hacker, *A Writer's Reference*

### Electronic Texts (available on the course moodle site)

Adichie, "Real Food"

Berry, "The Pleasures of Eating"

Bittman, from *opinionator*

Brillat-Savarin, excerpts from *The Physiology of Taste*

Desai, "Up on the Roof"

Foer, from *Eating Animals*

Freedman, "A New History of Cuisine"

Hardin, "Lifeboat Ethics"

Gabaccia, "Who Are We?"

George and Paige, from *Food for Beginners*

Gopnik, "How Does Taste Happen?"

Gottlieb and Joshi, selected chapters from *Food Justice*

Lappé and Collins, "Why Can't People Feed Themselves?"

Lewis, "What Is Southern?"

Shteyngart, "Sixty-Nine Cents"

Stern, "Lean Vegetables"

Trillin, "No Daily Specials"

Winne, from *Closing the Food Gap*



### Course goals:

- Introduce you to some of the important concepts, terms, and arguments relating to the study of food.
- Give you the opportunity to reflect upon your own relationship to food and get inspired by the connections between food and the world.
- Develop the skills of critical thinking and invention.
- Develop the skills necessary to become an effective writer and researcher.

### Requirements:

- Paper #1( 3-5 pages) 15%
- Paper #2 (3-5 pages) 15%
- Paper #3 (4-6 pages) 20%
- Paper #4 (research paper, 8-10 pages) 25%
- 2 Informal investigative papers (500 words each) 10%
- Attendance and participation 10%
- Moodle Posts 05%

### My Office Hours: MW 2-3, and by appointment

**Drafts, Revision, Workshop:** Every formal paper will go through (at least) two stages. You will turn in a complete first draft. We will spend two days work-shopping 4-6 of those drafts in class. You will have another week to revise your first draft and hand in the final version. Substantial revision is absolutely required. Final drafts turned in without undergoing the revision process will receive a failing grade.

**Guidelines for class discussion:** Class discussion, at its best, is a conversation. Having a conversation with a room full of people is a tricky thing, and it requires that everyone be deliberate and thoughtful about how they engage with each other and with the material. For the most part, the same qualities that make people good conversationalists are the ones that make for a good discussion. Discussion is a group effort, not a platform for individual grandstanding. It goes without saying that responses to your classmates should be civil and respectful. Disagreements are absolutely welcome – and crucial for a lively discussion--but they must be presented respectfully. Sarcasm is strictly forbidden.

Qualities that make for a bad conversation include the following: showing off, interrupting others, talking about topics that no one else knows about, telling lengthy personal stories, digressing from your point, not knowing when to stop talking, giving one or two-word answers, looking bored or disengaged. There will be times when I call on people to answer a specific question or provide a comment. If you don't have a response at that particular moment, you may choose to pass – everyone has a moment of brain freeze now and then. However, if you pass all the time, then this will have a detrimental effect on your participation grade.

### Participation Evaluation:

**A:** You attend every class prepared. You appear alert and engaged. You make significant contributions to discussion by asking productive questions. You listen to, and respond to the comments of your peers. You make clear and insightful connections to the course readings and important concepts. You are able to bring the conversation to a higher level of sophistication. At the same time, you do not let your own brilliance carry you away so that others don't have a chance to get a word in edgewise.

**B:** You attend every class prepared. You appear alert and engaged. You may not always understand the material, but you come in with questions, you do your best to answer questions, you bring up aspects of the reading that are interesting or difficult, you listen to and respond to comments of your peers. You demonstrate that you have done the reading and that you are a responsible citizen of the class.

C: You may look like you are bored and disengaged. You may have a problem with arriving on time. You rarely have any questions. When called on, you almost always pass. When you do contribute, it may not be clear how your contribution relates to the material of the class. OR, you participate a lot, but your comments are superficial or irrelevant or they derail the conversation, suggesting that you haven't really done the reading and that you are not particularly listening to others in the class.

D: Like "C" but more so. Perhaps compounded with incivility, sullenness, or sleeping.

F: What are you doing in this class?

**Food investigations (Informal writing):** During the course of the semester you will do **two** food-related investigations and write up a description of your experience in **about 500 words**. Out of the three topics below, you may choose between **either #1 or #2**. **However, #3 is required.**

- **Topic One:** cook a meal for a friend (or friends) from scratch. Write up a description/explanation/analysis of your experience of cooking, serving, and eating this meal.
- **Topic Two:** have a meal off-campus and experience a cuisine that is unfamiliar and challenging to your palate. Write up a description/analysis of your experience.
- **Topic Three(required):** investigate a local (Memphis) food-related group or organization. For example: the Cooper-Young Farmers' Market, UrbanFarms, Project Greenfork, Souper Contact, Slow Food Memphis, Food Not Bombs, the Church Health Center, Grow Memphis, Memphis Beekeepers Association, Gardens to Groceries, etc. These are some suggestions, but I encourage you to propose other possibilities. Whatever option you choose, **you must make contact with at least one person you've never met before and have a conversation that lasts at least 15 minutes.**

**Moodle posts:** In addition to doing the reading assigned for each class, I will ask you to post a comment on the course moodle site in relation to the reading for that week (see schedule for specific days). Moodle posts are due by 12:01am of the class day for which they are assigned. You may choose to post a comment/observation or question about the reading itself, or you may choose to respond to or extend a comment by one of your peers. The length of the post may vary from 3 sentences to a paragraph. For each designated class session, one student will sign up to be in charge of carefully reviewing the postings, and choosing a jumping off point for discussion.

**Attendance/Absence Policy:** You can miss up to three class meetings *for any reason* without risking your grade. It is up to you to choose the best use of these "free" absences, and, of course, you may choose not to miss any classes at all. Except for cases of real emergency or truly extraordinary events (i.e. you are being hospitalized for the rest of the semester), *I do not wish to know the reason for your absence.*

If you choose to make use of one or all three of these absences, I will assume that you are using them prudently. Further absences will affect your grade in the following way (based on a 4.0 grading scale):

- 4 absences will result in a deduction of .2 from your final grade;
- 5 absences will result in a .3 deduction from your final grade;
- 6 absences will result in a .6 deduction from your final grade
- 7 absences will result in a full point (1 full letter grade) deduction from your final grade
- 8 absences will result in an "F" for the course, no matter what your starting grade was

## Other policies:

- Always bring the day's reading to class. If the reading is from Moodle, it is your responsibility to ensure that you have access to a printer to print it out. Failing to bring the reading to class will count as an absence.
- It is your responsibility to keep hard and electronic copies of all your written work. In the event that an assignment gets lost on its way to me, I will expect you to be able to produce a copy right away.
- The schedule of assignments below is tentative and subject to change if the pace of the class requires it. All changes to the schedule will be announced in class. It is your responsibility to stay informed about any changes.
- Unless you have a documented disability that requires it—and you get permission from me--laptops may not be used in class.
- Make sure all electronic devices are turned off when you get to class.
- You are expected to arrive on time and stay for the entirety of the class. Arriving late or getting up in the middle of class to leave is distracting and disrespectful.
- Coffee and other caffeinated beverages are always welcome in class (decaf is okay, but what's the point?). If you can't survive without a snack, it's okay to bring one, *as long as it's not distracting*.
- **Email etiquette:** I am happy to answer quick questions over email as my time permits, but you need to make sure that you have used your own resources (like the syllabus or the college web page) first. *If there is something you need to discuss or negotiate, you need to do it in person or, failing that, over the phone.* 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. **I reserve the right to ignore emails that transgress these rules of etiquette.**
- **Email etiquette continued:** You should compose and revise your emails with care and consideration for your audience. Is it a good idea to send an email message filled with misspellings and mechanical errors to your professor? No, it is not.
- **I do not accept work that has been previously (or simultaneously) handed in for another class. Such work will receive a failing grade.**
- Citation and Documentation: The documentation style required for this class is MLA (Modern Language Association).
- Intellectual Honesty and Plagiarism: failure to adequately document a source of any kind, whether or not intentional, constitutes plagiarism. Cases of suspected plagiarism will be referred to the Honor Council, and the student, if convicted, will receive a grade of F in the course in addition to any sanctions assigned by the Honor Council. For a reminder of how to recognize and avoid plagiarism, see the Rhodes Writing Center website:  
[http://www.rhodes.edu/writingcenter/group\\_b/plagiarism.html](http://www.rhodes.edu/writingcenter/group_b/plagiarism.html)

Resources for writing papers and documenting sources:

"A Guide to Effective Paper Writing" (distributed to all Rhodes students), also available on-line:

<http://www.rhodes.edu/9076.asp>

The Writing Center (Barret Library) <http://www.rhodes.edu/4680.asp>