

# **Food, Culture & Society, Soc 422**

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Mon/Thur 12:35 PM – 1:55 PM

Davison Hall Room 122 (Douglass Campus)

## **Professor Norah MacKendrick**

Davison Hall, Room 107

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**Office Hours:** Mondays or Thursdays after 2:00pm. \*Please make an appointment

## **Summary of the course**

This course draws upon a variety of perspectives to examine the social processes that shape how food is produced, prepared and consumed in the Global North. The topics and readings cover the sociology of gender, sociology of science, cultural studies, anthropology, public health and labor relations. Within each of these perspectives, we will use food as a lens to examine the complex social and economic relations that determine what we eat and how our food gets to our plate. We explore the roots of American food, and dig deeper into problems associated with the food system, such as labor injustices, unequal access to healthy food, obesity and diet-related illnesses. What ends up on our plate, as we will learn, reflects an ongoing tension between the agency of individual eaters and the power of institutions and social structures.

## **Course objectives**

In this course we will:

1. Apply a broad, sociological perspective to understand how food and eating practices are culturally produced
2. Examine how expert authority and scientific knowledge help to define how food is produced and consumed
3. Use food as a lens to study the reproduction of social inequality, the production of gender, race, and privilege
4. Synthesize multiple academic readings and promote the exchange of ideas

## **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.

## Readings

There is a substantial amount of reading to do in this course. This reading is typical for a senior sociology seminar. **You must come to class having read the material, as class time is devoted to discussion, not lectures.**

There are **two required books**, indicated with a **(T)** in the lecture schedule.

- (T) Pollan, Michael. 2008. *In Defense of Food*. New York, NY: Penguin.
- (T) Vester, Katharina. *A Taste of Power*. Berkeley: University of California Press

These are on **reserve at Douglass Library** and for sale at the Rutgers Bookstore and NJ Books (call first to see if they are in stock at NJ Books).

### Other required readings (\*):

Required readings are on Sakai in the Resources folder. These are noted with a (\*) in the lecture schedule. These readings include academic journal articles, chapters from popular books, and news articles.

## Discussions (Please Read)

For nearly every class, we will break into small discussion groups. This means you must come to class having read the material and you must be ready to talk to your classmates and participate in discussions. Very little of class time is dedicated to formal lectures. This class depends on student participation. By the end of the class, you should be comfortable discussing academic readings, debating ideas, and developing an argument and defending it.

## 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 course material

At a basic minimum, to pass this course you must do all of the assigned readings and come to class having read the material. If your work or study schedule makes it difficult to keep up with these readings and attend class, you should reconsider taking this course. Active participation and attendance are vital to learning the course material. **AUDIO, PHOTO 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 would like to improve your writing skills, I highly recommend arranging for a tutorial from the Learning Centers at Rutgers (see below).

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 problems, recovery after Hurricane Sandy), 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

All students must review Rutgers' policy on plagiarism. I take plagiarism very seriously and will follow University policy if I suspect plagiarism. Please refer to:

[http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI\\_Policy\\_9\\_01\\_2011.pdf](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_9_01_2011.pdf)

According to this 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."

From: Rutgers University Academic Integrity Policy, Effective September 1, 2011. Page 2.

## 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 during the first week of class. Note that you must also contact the Office of Disability Services:

Office of Disabilities (Main Office)  
Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145  
54 Joyce Kilmer Ave.  
Piscataway, NJ 08854

Inquiry Page: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/contact-ods/inquiry-form>

## 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 writing multiple choice exams. It is important that you make arrangements with the Learning Centers well before our test dates. See: <https://rlc.rutgers.edu>

Kreeger Learning Center  
151 College Ave, New Brunswick, NJ 08901  
(732) 932-1443

## Evaluation

There are no tests in this course, but there is still a substantial amount of work. You will work on a group project, and a major scholarly writing assignment that is due the last day of class. A good proportion of your grade also depends on your active participation in class.

**Class participation (30%):** This is a combination of attendance, demonstrating that you have *read* the material and, most importantly, are ready to *actively* participate in group and class discussions. I take this component of the course very seriously and your grade will reflect your contributions in class.

**Group Presentation (20%):** More detail to be provided in class.

**Discussion Questions (10%):** You will write two discussion questions for 10 lectures with assigned readings (i.e. 2 questions per lecture). These will be graded. You do not submit questions on film days. Plan wisely. Submit questions to the Forum on Sakai *by 4:00pm on the day before class*.

**Final Essay (First Draft) (10%):** You will submit a draft of your final essay a few weeks before the end of the semester. This is a chance to receive some feedback before the final essay is due. More detail will be provided in class. **Due date on Lecture Schedule.**

**Final Essay (30%):** A 4,500-6,000 word essay about a topic related to food, culture and society. This paper requires that you conduct a comprehensive literature review (beyond the readings we cover in class), do some preliminary background research and make an original argument. Writing style and grammar are also important. **Due May 1st.**

## **Missed Classes and Assignments**

Traffic, car problems, missed transit connections, sleeping-in, workload from other courses, internet or computer problems are **not** acceptable reasons for a late assignment, not keeping up with readings or lack of attendance. 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 also 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.

## **Grades**

The final grade is based on your total score (out of 100). 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

## LECTURE SCHEDULE

*\*\*Subject to change\*\* Check Sakai for most updated version*

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(T) Textbook (\*) Sakai

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Thu	19-Jan	<b>Introductions</b> (* Read class syllabus carefully.
Mon	23-Jan	<b>The Contemporary Food System</b> (* Foley. 2013. It's Time to Rethink America's Corn System. Scientific American. (* Stuckler D, Nestle M (2012) Big Food, Food Systems, and Global Health. <i>PLoS Med</i> 9(6): e1001242
Thu	26-Jan	<b>Nutrition in America</b> (* Biltekoff, C. "Cultural Politics of Health" in <i>Nutrition in America</i> . Duke University Press (Pp. 1-44)
Mon	30-Jan	<b>Film: <i>In Defense of Food</i></b> (* New nutrition guidelines: Overview of the debates Web: <a href="http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/">http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/</a>
Thu	2-Feb	<b>Nutritionism</b> (T) Pollan. In <i>Defense of Food: Introduction (1-17) and Part 1. The Age of Nutritionism</i> . (pp. 17-81)
Mon	6-Feb	<b>Begin planning group presentation (in-class meetings)</b>
Thu	9-Feb	(T) Pollan. In <i>Defense of Food: Part 2 &amp; 3</i> . Page 83-201
Mon	13-Feb	<b>Nutrition and social class</b> (* Antin, Tamar M. J. and Geoffrey Hunt. 2012. "Food choice as a multidimensional experience. A qualitative study with young African American women." <i>Appetite</i> 58: v856-863.
Thu	16-Feb	(* Minkoff-Zern, Laura-Anne and Megan A. Carney. 2015. "Latino Im/migrants, "Dietary Health" and Social Exclusion." <i>Food, Culture &amp; Society</i> 18:463-480.
Mon	20-Feb	<b>Food and American Culture</b> (T) Vester, K. <i>A Taste of Power</i> . Chapter 1 (Skip "An American Painters Palette," in this chapter).

Thu	23-Feb	(T) Vester, K. A. Taste of Power. Chapter 2
Mon	27-Feb	(T) Vester, K. A. Taste of Power. Chapter 3
Thu	2-Mar	Class Presentations
Mon	6-Mar	Class Presentations
Thu	9-Mar	Class Presentations
Mon/Thu	13-16 Mar	<b>Spring break</b>
Mon	20-Mar	<b>Gender and the Professional Kitchen</b> (* Harris and Guiffre. 2015. Bitchy-bitches, girly-girls and Moms. Women's perceptions of gender-appropriate leadership styles in the professional kitchen. Pp. 130-161.
Th	23-Mar	<b>Food &amp; Labor</b> Reading TBA <b>Note:</b> Last day to submit a paper outline for initial comments. (Not required and not graded). Submit via Sakai in Assignments
Mon	27-Mar	<b>Film: Food Chains</b>
Th	30-Mar	<b>Foodwork</b> (* Cairns, K. and Johnston, J. 2015. Food & Femininity [Excerpt]
Mon	3-Apr	(* Szabo, Michelle. (2014). Men nurturing through food: Challenging gender dichotomies around domestic cooking. <i>Journal of Gender Studies</i> , 23(1), 18-31.
Th	6-Apr	<b>Food, Race and Ethnicity</b> (* Marte, Lidia. 2012. "Dominican Migrant Cooking: Food Struggles, Gendered Labor, and Memory-Work in New York City." <i>Food and Foodways</i> 20(3-4):279-306
Mon	10-Apr	(* Film: <i>Off the Menu: Asian America</i> <b>Note:</b> First draft of final paper due
Th	13-Apr	(* Sen, Arijit. 2016. "Food, Place, and Memory: Bangladeshi Fish Stores on Devon Avenue, Chicago." <i>Food and Foodways</i> 24(1-2):67-88.

Mon	17-Apr	Reading or Film: TBA
Th	20-Apr	<b>Julia Child and the “Jemima Code”</b> (* Collins, K. Julia Child and the Revolution in the Kitchen (Pp. ##)
Mon	24-Apr	(* Tipton-Martin, T. Black recipes matter, too: Why I wanted to break the Jemima code. (and selected excerpts from the book)  (* Lam. 2015. Edna Lewis and the Black Roots of American Cooking. NYT.
Th	27-Apr	Documentary film (Class choice, poll to be circulated on Sakai)
Mon	1-May	<b>Final Paper Due</b>