

Sociology 240: Sociology of Food
Tuesday & Thursday 3:05pm-4:30pm
Johnson 104

Instructor: John T. Lang

Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday, 10:00am – 11:30am

Office: Swan 220

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Course Website: <http://moodle.oxy.edu>

INTRODUCTION

This course examines the social relations surrounding the production, distribution, preparation, and consumption of food. In doing so, we will try to understand how the issues and problems of daily life reflect larger social forces, and how our understanding and actions shape the social world. This means that we will treat several major questions facing sociology today, including inequalities and identities based on national, racial/ethnic, class and gender positions; work and family; the environment; globalization and cultural change. We will explore some of the big questions about food and talk about some of the intriguing answers that sociologists have provided.

By the end of the course, you will be able critically examine and evaluate the connections between food, culture, and society.

Prerequisite: Sociology 101.

REQUIRED READING

For this class you buy one book and access the other readings on the course website. This means that this class does not cost a lot and you can access the materials for the class from nearly any computer. There are times, however, that our computers or the Internet are not as reliable as we would like. Avoid disaster. Get the readings well before the class in which they will be discussed. Definitely make sure you get the readings long before we have a test. Connectivity problems are not acceptable excuses for not being ready.

There is one required text for you to buy. It is available at the Occidental College Bookstore or online at your favorite bookseller. Feel free to buy the Kindle/eBook version if you prefer.

Johnston, Josée and Shyon Baumann. 2014. *Foodies: Democracy and Distinction in the Gourmet Foodscape, 2nd Edition*. New York City: Routledge.
Paperback.
ISBN-13: 978-1138015128

GRADING

I will base your final grade on the following:

Proposal – 5% (due 2/9)

Movie Reflection – 10% (due 2/16)

Critical Analysis #1 – 15% (due 3/14)

Critical Analysis #2 – 20% (due 4/6)

Presentation – 15% (due 4/6-4/20)

Final Paper – 35% (due 5/2)

Note: All assignments should be sent to me via email (lang@oxy.edu) as a Word (.doc or .docx only) before the start of class on their due date. Make sure your file name starts with your last name.

Attendance/Participation

I regard all absences as “excused.” As busy, responsible adults, you may sometimes find yourself unable to attend class, because of illness, family crises, etc. I do not differentiate among these reasons and expect you to be responsible for your attendance. Though you are expected to get notes from a classmate, you cannot take part in the activities and discussions in a class you miss. Therefore, absence affects your course grade as follows:

- 1-2 absences: no effect
- 3 absences: grade lowered one full letter, at the discretion of the professor
- 4 absences: grade lowered two full letters, at the discretion of the professor

Please let me know immediately if you have considerations that present a challenge to your meeting the attendance expectations. Plan in advance—and communicate before you find yourself in a jam.

COURSE GRADES

Do NOT count on a curve. I will assign letter grades for the entire course as follows:

| | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 93.0 and higher = A | 73.0 to 76.99 = C |
| 90.0 to 92.99 = A- | 70.0 to 72.99 = C- |
| 87.0 to 89.99 = B+ | 67.0 to 69.99 = D+ |
| 83.0 to 86.99 = B | 60.0 to 66.99 = D |
| 80.0 to 82.99 = B- | 59.99 and lower = F. |
| 77.0 to 79.99 = C+ | |

Letter grades in this class have the following meaning:

- A *Outstanding performance.* You have demonstrated very thorough knowledge and understanding of all the material, truly superior critical thinking, and expressed insightful and original thoughts clearly. You have completed all required assignments and they have been among the best in the class.
- B *Good performance.* You have demonstrated solid knowledge and understanding of the material and good critical thinking. You have also shown the ability to express your ideas clearly. You have completed all required assignments and they have been of good quality.
- C *Satisfactory performance.* You have demonstrated basic knowledge and understanding of the major concepts taught in the class and some critical thinking. You have completed all or most of the required assignments and they have routinely been free of significant problems.
- D *Deficient performance.* You have only acquired a limited understanding of the class material. You have failed to complete all the required assignments and they have routinely had serious problems.
- F *Failure.* You have failed to learn a sufficient proportion of the basic concepts and ideas taught in the class. You have failed to complete many required assignments and they have routinely had serious problems.

COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

I will hold you responsible for the information in this syllabus, so I expect you to read it, understand it, and ask questions about anything you don't understand.

Office Hours: I hold three official office hours each week. I also encourage you to make an appointment outside of office hours or come by my office anytime to see if I'm available. I am happy to discuss class concepts, college more generally, musings about majors, future planning, or graduate school.

Feedback: I love getting feedback on my teaching and how the class is going. I value your input and I am willing to make changes to the class according to your preferences. Please share with me any comments, suggestions, and ideas you may have, and help me make this a great class. If you would like to do so anonymously, you can type and print out a note and drop it in my mailbox in Swan Hall.

Class Demeanor: While we may find ourselves disagreeing, we must do so with respect, a commitment to hearing what others have to say, and a willingness to think and rethink our own positions. Personal insults have no place in the college classroom.

Technology in Class: Please turn off your cell phones when you come to class. Similarly, text messaging will not be tolerated in class. You are welcome to bring your laptop to class and use it to take notes, access readings we're discussing, and the like. You are not welcome to surf the web, check email, or otherwise perform non-class-related activities during class. Here's my best advice: If you aren't using it to perform a task specifically related to what we are doing in class at that very moment, put it away.

Special Accommodations/Learning Differences: Students with documented disabilities who are registered with Disability Services are required to present their accommodation letter to the instructor at the beginning of each semester or as soon as possible thereafter. Any student who experiences significant physical or mental impairments may contact Disability Services at (323) 259-2969 to learn about available services and support. More information is available at <http://www.oxy.edu/disability-services>.

Assignments: Assignments must be emailed to me before the start of class on the scheduled due date. Late assignments are docked 1 grade per day. Computer problems are not a good excuse for missing a deadline. Make sure to keep an electronic copy of everything you hand in until you receive your course grade.

Academic Integrity: As is always the case, you are responsible for your own work. If you find yourself questioning whether you have documented or cited your sources properly, it is your responsibility to come see me about these issues prior to submitting an assignment. If you are thinking about submitting work that is not your own due to pressure, frustration, perfectionism, or any other reason, please talk to me. I am here to help you resolve these issues before they become a problem for your academic career. Academic integrity violations, including plagiarism, will be taken very seriously. A description of Occidental's academic ethics policies is available in the Student Handbook and on the following webpage:

<http://www.oxy.edu/student-handbook/academic-ethics/academic-ethics>

CLASS SCHEDULE

All readings are due on the day they are listed. Although I will do my best to keep us on schedule, it is possible that we will make some adjustments during the semester. I will give as much notice - both in class and on the course website - when changes are necessary.

JANUARY

- 24 Welcome to the class
- 26 Berry, "The Pleasures of Eating"
Pollan, "Farmer in Chief"
Pollan, "Big Food Strikes Back" (<https://goo.gl/bYCslf>)
Guthman, "Can't Stomach It"

Is obesity a personal trouble or a public issue?

- 31 Saguy, *What is Wrong with Fat?*, Chapter 1 and 6

FEBRUARY

- 2 Nestle, "The Ironic Politics of Obesity"
Julier, "The Political Economy of Obesity"
Kwan, "Individual versus Corporate Responsibility"
- 7 In Class Movie: Soul Food Junkies
Soul Food Junkies Discussion Guide
Kendall, "Hot Sauce in Her Bag"

What is authentic food?

- 9 Lam, "Cuisines Mastered as Acquired Tastes"
Lam and Huang, "Is it Fair for Chefs to Cook Other Cultures' Foods?"
Heldke, "'Let's Eat Chinese!': Reflections on Cultural Food Colonialism"
- 14 Freedman and Jurafsky, "Authenticity in America: Class Distinctions in Potato Chip Advertising"
Lewis, "The Maine Lobster as Regional Icon"
Davis and Lam "Taste Matters: Authenticity" (<https://goo.gl/FISrW4>)

What does it mean to eat ethically?

- 16 Wallace, "Consider the Lobster"
- 21 Belasco, "The Stakes in Our Steaks"
Gillespie, "The Steering Question"
- 23 Fitzgerald, "A Social History of the Slaughterhouse"
LeDuff, "At a Slaughterhouse, Some Things Never Die"
Genoways, "Close to the Bone" (<https://goo.gl/1S7wGk>)

How are gender and food related?

- 28 Deutsch, "'Please Pass the Chicken Tits'"
Parasecoli, "Feeding Hard Bodies"

MARCH

- 2 Contois, "Lose Like a Man"
Ray, "Domesticating Cuisine"
- 7 No class. Spring break.
- 9 No class. Spring break.
- 14 Abbots, "The Intimacies of Industry"
Lane, "The Michelin-Starred Restaurant Sector as a Cultural Industry"

How do we evaluate our food?

- 16 Ferguson, "Michelin in America"
Johnston and Baumann, *Foodies*, Preface, Introduction
- 21 Johnston and Baumann, *Foodies*, Chapter 1 and 2
- 23 Johnston and Baumann, *Foodies*, Chapter 3 and 4
- 28 Johnston and Baumann, *Foodies*, Chapter 5
- 30 Johnston and Baumann, *Foodies*, Chapter 6 and Conclusion

APRIL

- 4 Working session; bring a draft of your critical analysis to class.
- 6 Presentations
- 11 Presentations
- 13 Presentations
- 18 Presentations
- 20 Presentations

GMO OMG WTF?

- 25 Lang, "Is there really a difference between conventional, organic, and GMO?"
Nestle, *What to Eat*, Chapter 5: "Genetically Modified, Irradiated, and Politicized"
- 27 Schurman & Munro, "Targeting Capitalism"
Lang, "Labeling to Distract"

MAY

- 2 In class reflections
Ebert, "Nil by Mouth"

I'm looking forward to a great semester!