

COURSE SYLLABUS 2013

NATURE ON YOUR PLATE: CONNECTING YOUR FOOD CHOICES TO THE NATURAL WORLD

COURSE NUMBER: FSP121-19

PROFESSOR: DR. LEEANN THORNTON

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OFFICE HOURS: TUESDAY AND THURSDAY 3-4:30, OR BY APPOINTMENT

COURSE MEETING: TUESDAY/FRIDAY 10-11:20 AM, SCP116

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Humans have actively shaped natural resources to meet our needs for food, pleasure and comfort. Technological advances, particularly in the US, have allowed a few people to harvest food for many. That means that most Americans are far removed from the connection between nature and the food we eat. This course will explore the barriers between nature and your plate and the consequences of our industrialized food system. We will start with explorations of specific foods that most Americans eat to discover their connections to the natural world and how individual food choices make a difference. The course will build toward a broader discussion of our moral responsibility to take care of the natural world. We will read books and articles, watch documentaries, and discuss the complexities of our food choices. The course is a Community Engaged Learning (CEL) course and satisfies the 8-hour service-learning requirement.

As the cornerstone of the College's Liberal Learning Program, First Seminar is designed to provide all first-year students with an intellectually exciting and challenging experience taught by faculty mentors in a living-learning environment. Each seminar is designed around a topic selected for its special interest by an individual professor. Students are encouraged to use the First Seminar to deepen their current interests or to explore new academic opportunities. Each seminar is limited to 18 students, is writing intensive, and demands the active participation of all students. Limited to first-year students; does not fulfill major requirements. 1 course unit

COURSE MATERIALS

Required reading (every student should have these books):

In Defense of Food by Michael Pollan

Tomorrow's Table by PC Ronald and RW Adamchak

Bringing it to the Table by Wendell Berry

Selected essays (professor will provide selections):

Small Wonder by Barbara Kingsolver

Closing the Food Gap by Mark Winne

Each student is expected to regularly check CANVAS for handouts and information.

Each student is expected to bring a bound notebook (eg. spiral three-subject) to each class for free-writing and notes. This notebook will be checked at mid-term and final for assessment of your class preparation.

COURSE PURPOSE & LEARNING GOALS

The focus of this course will be in helping students connect their food choices to the natural world within the framework of the First Seminar Program. Food is very personal, but each student should develop a well-supported opinion on why food is important to humanity, where food comes from, and what it means to be part of the natural world.

LEARNING GOALS

Your learning in this course will be accomplished via a diverse collection of experiences that will encourage you to think independently about food and nature. You will:

- connect specific foods to nature by understanding where they come from both from the present-day food production perspective and from the longer perspective of domestication
- grapple with the multiple meanings of a “natural” food
- compare food production practices such as local farming, big and small-scale organic, and industrialized production
- develop and articulate your opinions through writing, speaking, and reading, and
- refine and develop your critical reading and thinking skills through close examination of texts.

OVERALL FSP LEARNING GOALS

- to foster intellectual curiosity in the students;
- to introduce students to college-level assignments and college-level expectations in terms of writing, reading, research, and oral presentations;
- to improve the students’ ability to think critically about their world, their culture, and their own beliefs;
- to foster a student culture of intellectual engagement outside the classroom;
- to encourage students to take greater responsibility for their own learning;
- to introduce students to the concept of a well-rounded education based on a breadth of knowledge that goes beyond their immediate professional or academic field; and
- to accomplish the appropriate Liberal Learning domain goals and any appropriate interdisciplinary concentration goals for the course.

LEARNING EXPECTATIONS

As students in this class, I expect you to:

- 1) Read this syllabus carefully and thoroughly. You are responsible for all the information contained in it for as long as you are enrolled in this class.
- 2) Come to class having prepared the readings for the day. If necessary, I will resort to pop quizzes to enforce this expectation.
- 3) Attend class. Two unexcused absences are allowed; more than that will jeopardize your standing in the course. Persistent tardiness will also affect your grade. Please communicate with me if you know you will miss a class so we can make arrangements to make up missed work.
- 4) Participate in class actively in a way that is constructive and respectful for everyone present.
- 5) Complete all work for the course, as outlined in the Grading and Assignments sections below.
- 6) Check your email and CANVAS regularly for course information.

As course instructor, you can expect me to:

- 1) Uphold all aspects of this syllabus, unless all students are informed of any changes to it in class or via email and/or CANVAS announcements. I reserve the right to change any aspect of this syllabus.
- 2) Come to class having prepared that session's materials.
- 3) Direct class activities and discussion in a way that is respectful to all participants and includes as many students and views as possible.
- 4) Return work in a timely manner with constructive comments and a justification for the grade assigned.
- 5) Respond to emails within two days and hold regular office hours to help you with the course (see above).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

Please see the CANVAS assignment page for more detailed information on requirements and grading.

Your final grade will be based on your cumulative percentage of the following points.

Reflection papers (3x10)	30	
Topic exploration paper	10	
Research proposal	20	
Research paper, round 1	20	
Research paper, round 2	40	**This paper is the “final exam” for the course.
Peer review process	10	
Oral presentation	10	
Participation	30	
Reading/discussion notebook	20	
Entrance and exit papers	10	
Total:	200	

Final letter grades will be distributed by percentage (A: 90-100%, B: 80-89%, C: 70-79%, D: 60-69%, below 60% is failing). + and – grades within each letter will be determined based on overall class distribution within each letter.

Important: you must complete all assignments to pass this class. Even if you opt to take the class Pass/Fail, you must submit all assignments or you will not receive a grade. There are many opportunities for improvement, so there is no “extra credit”.

COURSE CONDUCT

This course is a seminar, which means that you must come to class prepared to discuss what you have read, discovered, or written. I seek to create a community of critical readers who share ideas honestly and respectfully AND a community of writers who share their work with one another for constructive feedback. Expect to disagree and to learn from different opinions.

All work done outside of class (formal essays and brief assignments) should be submitted double-spaced and formatted for 8.5" x 11" pages, using 1" margins left and right, top and bottom. You should use 12-point Times New Roman font, and number pages after the first. Each assignment should be headed with your name and the assignment name, and the title of your assignment. All formal essays must have titles. On the date listed on the syllabus for each assignment, a copy is due on CANVAS before class. Do not email assignments to the professor.

Preparation: You are expected to *actively* read all of the material for each class. That means more than mechanically looking at each page. You should have your reading/discussion notebook on hand to take notes, write down questions or responses to the reading, or write down what you look up to help you understand. If you cannot figure out what the author means by looking it up, ask your classmates, and make sure to bring it up in class. Your notebook is to keep everything in one place so that you can refer back to it when writing your papers and in subsequent discussions.

Absences: In exceptional circumstances, such as illness or emergency, please contact me immediately. Such notification does not necessarily guarantee that absences will be excused; I may also ask for documentation of the circumstances. Other than in exceptional circumstances, you should be present *and* attentive in class. Your participation grade will decrease 5% for each unexcused absence.

Late work: Unless the circumstances are exceptional (see "absences," above) and documented, each paper will be marked down 10% for each day it is late. If a day of religious observation or special family celebration (e.g., out-of-town wedding) interferes with an assignment, I will be glad to discuss a different due date if given advance notice. Note that TCNJ's attendance policy states that "the student has the responsibility to initiate arrangements for makeup work," while the absence policy states that "[s]tudents have the responsibility of notifying the instructors in advance of expected absences."

Technology in the classroom: To encourage participation and class discussion most effectively, and to limit disruptions, **turn off (not on vibrate, silent, or airplane mode, but off) all cell phones** during class sessions. **Do not text in class.** It is rude, inappropriate, tells me you're not participating, and shows disrespect to me and your classmates. If you want to chat with your friends during the 80 minutes we're in class, leave the classroom and don't come back. I reserve the right to forbid the use of laptops in class. They physically get in between students, you will be tempted to do non-course related activities during class, and they distract from what's going on in the classroom. Please come to class prepared to discuss without relying on your laptop. Jot notes on the reading in your notebook to help you remember key points.

SELECTED TCNJ POLICIES

Please familiarize yourself with the following policies that are designed to provide a respectful and fair learning environment in each class at TCNJ.

TCNJ's attendance policy is available on the web:

<http://policies.tcnj.edu/policies/digest.php?docId=8162>

TCNJ's academic integrity policy is available on the web:

<http://policies.tcnj.edu/policies/digest.php?docId=7642>

TCNJ's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) policy is available on the web:

<http://policies.tcnj.edu/policies/digest.php?docId=8082>

Your course information is private; see the student privacy rights on the web:

<http://recreg.pages.tcnj.edu/student-privacy-rights/>

COURSE SCHEDULE

Carefully plan ahead for reading and writing assignments.

Note: for the W. Berry reading assignments, you must read the entire essay that starts on the indicated page number.

DATE	TOPIC	DUE this day
Section 1: <i>Where does food come from?</i>		
Aug 27	Introductions; CEL; why is food important?	
Aug 30	Field trip to Trenton Farmer's Market	Entrance paper
Sept 3	<i>No class, follow Monday schedule</i>	
Sept 6	Academic integrity, Corn uses and origin	Farmer's Market Reflection M. Pollan on Corn (Canvas)
Sept 10	Knowing your food	W. Berry, <i>Introduction</i> <i>In Defense of Food</i> , Introduction
Sept 13	<i>In Defense of Food</i>	Section I, chapters 1-5
Sept 17	Planting your own garden, TCNJ field work	Topic Exploration Paper
Sept 20	<i>In Defense of Food</i>	Section I, chapters 6-10
Sept 24	Urban farming	M. Winne (Canvas)
Sept 27	Field trip to a community garden	Research proposal
Oct 1	Family farming	W. Berry, p. 31 and p. 227
Oct 4	The Western Diet, <i>In Defense of Food</i>	Section II, chapters 1-2
Oct 8	The Western Diet, <i>In Defense of Food</i>	Section II, chapter 3
Oct 11	Potatoes and soil	W. Berry, p. 87 CEL (option 1, Oct 12)
Oct 15	<i>In Defense of Food</i>	Section III, chapters 1-2
Oct 18	<i>In Defense of Food</i>	Section III, chapters 3-4 CEL (option 2, Oct 19)
Section 2: <i>What does it mean to be natural?</i>		
Oct 22	TCNJ garden harvest	Define Natural (Canvas)
Oct 25	Exploring nature in printed expression (<i>Orion</i>)	Reflection paper on CEL
Oct 29	<i>No class, enjoy fall break</i>	
Nov 1	Connecting farming to nature	B. Kingsolver (Canvas) W. Berry, p. 149
Nov 5	Connecting farming to nature	W. Berry, p. 119
Nov 8	Writing workshop	Research Paper, Round 1
Nov 12	<i>Tomorrow's Table</i>	Chapters 1-3
Nov 15	<i>Tomorrow's Table</i>	Chapters 4-7
Nov 19	<i>Tomorrow's Table</i>	Chapters 8-11
Nov 22	Meals, <i>Tomorrow's Table</i>	Ch. 12, and W. Berry (Canvas)
Nov 26	Field trip to local grocer for food research	Reflection Paper on <i>Orion</i> Ex.
Nov 29	<i>No class, enjoy Thanksgiving</i>	
Dec 3	How is change going to come	M. Pollan (Canvas)
Dec 6	Class food research	Oral Presentations
Dec 13	<i>Exam week</i>	Research Paper, Round 2