

FSP 121-03: DOES WHAT WE EAT MATTER?:
THE CULTURE, POLITICS, AND SCIENCE OF FOOD

MR: 10-11:20, SCP 202

Professor: Dr. Thomas Hagedorn

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Office Hours: T:10:30-11:30; W: 11-12

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course studies the subject of food from a number of diverse viewpoints. We will begin by examining the pastoral view of agricultural virtue and the romantic viewpoint of the American farmer that existed when the United States was founded. We will look at the evolution of the agricultural industry and the difficulties faced by traditional farmers. We then examine the meaning of food and the emotional and cultural meaning behind our food choices. We will analyze the contemporary American diet, the rise of industrial agriculture and the rise of organic foods. We will study nutrition, what modern science recommends as a healthy diet, and the advantages and disadvantages of genetically modified food. We also study the existence of hunger, both in our country and globally, as well as the ethical issues raised by our food choices.

COURSE PURPOSE & LEARNING GOALS: Food is a necessary good for all people. As such, the choices we make when we buy and eat food, and the choices made by farmers and other food producers greatly shape the society we live in. The goals of this course are to have students reflect on and be aware of the impact of their food choices, both on them as individuals and on society, and alternate ways of thinking about food, its production, and its distribution. In addition to these specific content goals, this course seeks to achieve the following learning goals expected of all FSP courses:

- 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

COURSE MATERIALS: The following texts are required for the course:

1. *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*, Michael Pollan, Penguin, 2007.
2. *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*, Eric Schlosser; Harper Perennial; 2005.
3. *White Bread: A Social History of the Store-Bought Loaf*, Aaron Bobrow-Strain, Beacon Press, 2012.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: For each lecture, there will be assigned readings or viewings. Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss these assignments. There will be multiple writing assignments (to be distributed during the semester) and a final examination. Students are required to keep up with current food news in national print-based media such as the *New York Times*, the *New Yorker*,

Time, and *Wall Street Journal*. There is also a Community Engaged Learning Component to the course. Details will be announced in class.

COURSE SCHEDULE: The topics we will cover include: 1. Agrarianism and American Democracy; 2. Food and Culture; 3. Food Fads and History in American Food.; 4. Food Bill and American Food Policy; 5. Organic Food, Locavores, and Industrial Agribusiness; 6. Nutrition and Healthy Food; 7. Obesity Crisis; 8. Global Food Policy; 9. Genetically Modified Organisms; 10. Ethics of Food Choices. Additional topics will be added based upon student's interests.

There will be regular writing assignments and a final examination. There will be debates and oral presentations based on the topics in the course. Precise dates will be announced in class. We will also have three Community Engaged Learning events as part of the class. These activities will include work on TCNJ's demonstration garden and a visit to Fernbrook Farms.

GRADING: The course grade will be calculated using the following weighting: Final Examination: 30%, Writing Assignments: 30%, Class Participation/Discussions: 25%; Debates/Oral Presentations: 15%. The professor reserves the right to alter this weighting as needed to accommodate course changes.

ATTENDANCE: Every student is expected to participate in this course through regular attendance at lecture. Students who must miss a class due to participation in any official college activity should notify me in advance. If you are ill and miss a class you are responsible for getting the notes and missed work as soon as possible. If you are ill and unable to attend an exam a makeup can be arranged only if you call my office or email me before the start of the exam, and if you get a doctor's note.

THE WRITING CENTER: This course is writing intensive, and you will have to do several writing assignments and a paper. The Writing Center provides assistance to students with courses that include writing assignments. Information is available at <http://www.tcnj.edu/~tutoring/humanities/index.html>.

EMAIL: Students are responsible for checking their email and the information contained in email messages. I will normally respond to emails within a day. If a response is not received, students should follow-up in person at the next class.

CLASSROOM CULTURE: To ensure our classroom is conducive to learning and everyone is focused on the material being discussed, please make sure cell-phones are turned off during class. Students observed using electronic devices in class (for other than class purposes) will lose points on their final course grade.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY: Academic dishonesty is any attempt by the student to gain academic advantage through dishonest means, to submit, as his or her own, work which has not been done by him/her or to give improper aid to another student in the completion of an assignment. Such dishonesty would include, but is not limited to: submitting as his/her own a project, paper, report, test, or speech copied from, partially copied, or paraphrased from the work of another (whether the source is printed, under copyright, or in manuscript form). Credit must be given for words quoted or paraphrased. The rules apply to any academic dishonesty, whether the work is graded or ungraded, group or individual, written or oral. TCNJ's academic integrity policy is available on the web: <http://www.tcnj.edu/~academic/policy/integrity.html>.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA) POLICY

Any student who has a documented disability and is in need of academic accommodations should notify the professor of this course and contact the Office of Differing Abilities Services (609-771-2571). Accommodations are individualized and in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1992. TCNJ's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) policy is available on the web: <http://www.tcnj.edu/~affirm/ada.html>.