

FOOD: WHAT IS IT? (FALL 2008)

MONT-106C-01 – Class Number 8508 ♦ 501 Smith Hall ♦ T-Th 6:30-7:45pm

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Course Description

There certainly is a lot of stuff out there for us to eat. But what is it, really? On an airplane, it is customary to be asked whether we want meat or fish. At a supermarket they call it salmon. At a fine restaurant or specialty store, we might ask for a Scottish Farmed Salmon. A nutritionist could suggest us to eat omega-3 oils. It's all the same stuff, one might think, but it goes under different labels. To what extent do labels tell the truth about food? And, is there a truth to be told about the taste of food? During the course, we will examine different ways to conceive the identity of a food as found in ordinary language, laws and regulations, science, and aesthetics.

Structure and Course Requirements:

Readings and Participation: You will be expected to complete the assigned readings before the class for which they are assigned, to bring the texts under discussion with you to class, and to come to class prepared to discuss them.

Attendance: You are expected to attend each class. If you will be absent, please e-mail me in advance (aborghin@holycross.edu). The only grounds for which absences will be excused are religious holidays, family crises, or illness; absences due to the last two reasons must be explained by a note from a dean or a doctor. For each class, I keep track of students who are late. Accumulating several late arrivals will incur in a grade reduction of one third of a grade. If you have scheduling conflicts, please come see me.

Journal Assignment: During the semester, you will keep a journal for the class. This should be a way for you to keep track of the flow and progress of your thoughts during the course, and a key source for your term papers. The journal should feature *no less* than two entries (of reasonable length) per week. I will collect journals two times during the semester and provide substantial feedback. Journal entries should be divided in two categories:

- (i) *Study remarks* (SR): this category will include remarks that come to you from the study of the assigned readings; it will typically contain a summary of the materials as well as questions (the latter are particularly relevant and should be then employed during class discussion).
- (ii) *Wisdom pills* (WP): these will be your most original thoughts and questions, some of which may come out of class discussion.

Journals will be evaluated according to the following scale:

- Excellent ⇒ 15 points;
- Good ⇒ 12 points;
- Fair ⇒ 10 points;
- Poor ⇒ 7 points.

Comprehensive Meditation: At the end of the semester, you will write a comprehensive meditation, no less than five pages long. The piece will highlight and connect your most noteworthy thoughts during the course, thus summing up your most valuable class achievements.

Project: There will be three projects during the course and each student should be involved in one of them. The aim of a project is to create apposite labels for one of the food courts on campus. Each project will create labels of a different sort. Project 1 will create labels addressing the taste; Project 2 will create labels addressing the kinds and nutritional facts; Project 3 will create labels addressing health-related issues. The deadlines for the projects are: 10.02 (T); 11.4 (T); 12.2 (T). Each student should have a different role in the project, for which s/he is responsible.

Papers: two papers, 1200 to 1600 words each. The first paper is due in class on Tuesday, October 7; the second paper is due in class on Tuesday, December 9. Papers should be typed in Times New Roman, size 12 font, double-spaced, and all the page margins should measure one inch. Paper topics will be distributed one week to ten days in advance.

Grade Breakdown:

Journal: 15%

Comprehensive Meditation: 10%

Paper I: 20%

Paper II: 20%

Project: 20%

Class and Cluster Events Participation: 15%

Please be advised: In order to pass the class you are required to do *all* the coursework (e.g. completing one out of two papers will result in failing the class). Late papers incur in a penalty of one third of a letter grade per day (e.g. from A to A-). Finally, plagiarism, cheating, and collusion, in any form, will not be tolerated, in accordance with the *Student Handbook*.

Office Hours:

My office hours are T-Th from 4 to 6pm in 519 Smith Hall. I am also on campus at other times, and you can make an appointment to see me by e-mail (aborghin@holycross.edu). Please don't hesitate to get in touch with me about any aspect of the course.

Tentative Schedule:

Week 1

9.4 (T) Introduction

SECTION I: TRUTH

Week 2

9.9 (T) *Truth About Oneself*
➤ Ignatius, *A Pilgrim's Journey*, 1555

9.11 (Th) *Truth for Philosophers*
➤ Michael Lynch, *True To Life. Why Truth Matters*, excerpts

Week 3

9.16 (T) Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, 1930, Chapters 1-4

9.17 (W) Cluster panel discussion on *Civilization and Its Discontents*, 7:30pm

9.18 (Th) Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, 1930, Chapters 5-8

SECTION II: EXPERTS AND SENSATIONS

Week 4

9.23 (T) *On taste*
➤ Cornell Division of Nutritional Sciences, "What is Taste?" (Moodle)
➤ David Hume, "Of The Standard of Taste", 1757:
<http://www.csulb.edu/~jvancamp/361r15.html>

PAPER #1 TOPICS DISTRIBUTED

9.25 (Th) (Class held on 10.01, time and location TBA)

Week 5

9.30 (T) *On experts*
➤ Elin McCoy, *The Emperor of Wine*, 2005, Chapter 5: 113-157 (E-res)

10.01 (W) *Authenticity*
➤ Peter Kivi, *Authenticities: Philosophical Reflections on Musical Performance*, 1995, Chapter (E-res) (Class meets at 6:30pm in 501 Smith)

10.2 (Th)

Authenticity
➤ Lisa Heldke, *Exotic Appetites*, 2003, Chapter 2: 23-44 (E-res)
➤ *Case Study*: Gravner

[PROJECT 1 DEADLINE]

Week 6

- 10.7 (T) Edward Jones, *The Known World*, 2003
 PAPER #1 DUE
- 10.8 (W) Ed Jones: cluster conversation with the author, 7:30pm, Wheeler
- 10.9 (Th) Edward Jones, *The Known World*, 2003

Week 7

- 10.14 (T) ACADEMIC HOLIDAY

SECTION III: NUTRITIONISM: NATURAL KINDS AND LABELS

- 10.16 (Th) *On science*
- Karl Popper, “Science: Conjectures and Refutations”, 1953
<http://faculty.washington.edu/lynnhank/Popper.doc>
 - Imré Lakatos, “Science and Pseudoscience”, 1973
<http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/lakatos/scienceAndPseudoscienceTranscript.htm>
- 10.18 (S) *Baking Muffins*, 3-6am, on campus

Week 8

- 10.21 (T) *Nutritionism and Science*
- Marion Nestle, *What to Eat*, 2006: 1-16 (E-res)
- ⇒ FOLLOWING CLASS: Screening of *Mondovino*
- 10.23 (Th) *Natural Kinds?*
- Peter Singer and Jim Mason, *The Way We Eat*, 2006: 92-135 (E-res)

Week 9

- 10.28 (T) *Natural Kinds?*
- Samuel Fromartz, *Organic, Inc.*, 2006: 1-31 (E-res)
- 10.30 (Th) *Ingredients*
- Marion Nestle, *What to Eat*, 2006: 274-281 (E-res)
 - *Case Study*: Antonietta Gatti’s study of nanoparticles in food
http://www.arpa.emr.it/cms3/documenti/_cerca_eventi/2006/atti/Gatti.pdf

Week 10

11.4 (T)

Nutritional facts➤ Marion Nestle, *What to Eat*, 2006: 296-304 (E-res)**[PROJECT 2 DEADLINE]**⇒ FOLLOWING CLASS: Screening of *The Future of Food***SECTION IV: NUTRITIONISM: BEYOND THE LABELS**

11.6 (Th)

Food Politics➤ Marion Nestle, *Food Politics*, 2002: 1-29 (E-res)**Week 11**

11.11 (T)

Natural Foods➤ Michael Pollan, *In Defense of Food*, 2008: 1-40 (E-res)

11.13 (Th)

Healthy Foods➤ Michael Pollan, *In Defense of Food*, 2008: 40-81 (E-res)

⇒ FOLLOWING CLASS:

Shakespeare, *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, directed by E. Isser: 8pm, Fenwick Theatre**Week 12**

11.18 (T)

Practicum

6:15-7pm: Prof. Ziegler on BMFA visit

7-8pm: food tasting and reflections with Marty Dudek (Kimball dining director)

11.19 (W)

Cluster visit to the BMFA, 5:45pm, in front of Hogan

11.20 (Th)

The Corn-Soy Oligopoly➤ Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, 2006: 1-56 (E-res)⇒ FOLLOWING CLASS: Screening of *King Corn***Week 13**

11.25 (T)

The Corn-Soy Oligopoly➤ Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, 2006: 56-119 (E-res)**PAPER #2 TOPICS DISTRIBUTED**

11.27 (Th)

THANKSGIVING, ACADEMIC HOLIDAY

Week 14

12.2 (T)

Emerson

➤ Selections

[PROJECT 3 DEADLINE]

12.4 (Th)

Thoreau

➤ Selections

Week 14

12.9 (T)

Conclusions

PAPER #2 DUE

12.14 (S)

COMPREHENSIVE MEDITATION DUE