

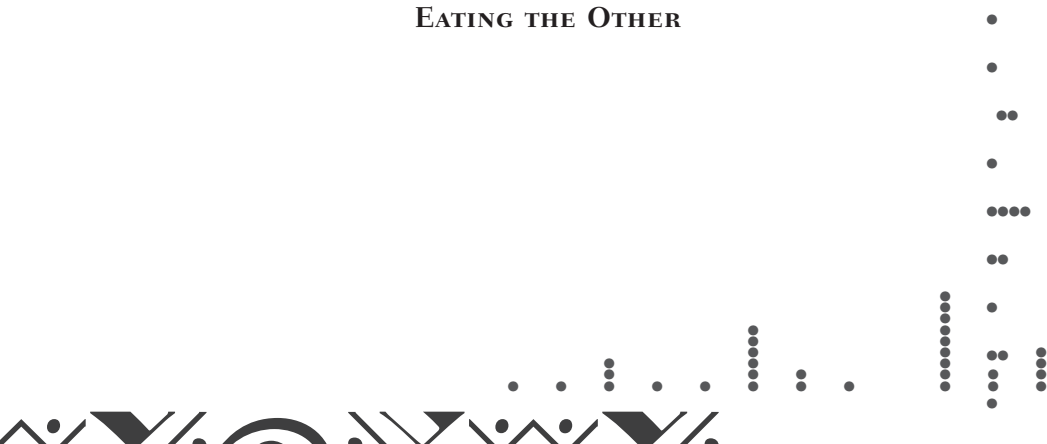
Perspectives on Teaching

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..Literary Approaches to Food Studies

EATING THE OTHER



In the syllabus that follows I outline a semester-long class that I taught at Pomona College in the fall of 2004. This course was cross-listed with the English Department and with the Program in Women's Studies, where I am jointly appointed. In the future it will also be listed as an American Studies course. I taught this class during my first semester at Pomona in response to the student interest in food studies that was shown during my job talk and campus visit the spring before. In fact the class was one of the first classes to be filled during pre-enrollment so interest was clearly very strong.

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At present my research looks at the relationship between racial and gender formation in the nineteenth-century US. In my book project "Stomaching Difference: Race, Food and the Body Politic in the Nineteenth-Century US," I demonstrate that eating has long functioned as a cultural trope for the encounter with racial and social difference in the literary and visual culture of the US. Building on this research, in this course I aim to complicate the work of structuralist anthropologists and folklorists including Mary Douglas, Roland Barthes and Levi Strauss, all of whom persuasively demonstrate that food is a communicative medium; I do so by demonstrating that food consistently disrupts written text as a sign of embodied existence, as a mark of the outer limits of language, and as a trope for written language's inability to fully represent the life of the body. This reading of food-language as signifying the constitutive outside of textuality in turn demonstrates that food and eating function as privileged sites for the representation of racial and ethnic difference in the West, where racial difference is consistently signified both through vernacular (or hyper-embodied) language and through liminally human or extra-social (lower-body) physicality. The close relationship between Western food desires and the history of colonialism and imperialism in turn serve both to underline and historically constitute these connections.

This course was meant to provide background to students more broadly interested in food studies and literature, leading up to the explosion in food culture that took place between the 1980s and the end of the century. I gave my course the title "Eating the Other" after the essay by Black feminist critic, bell hooks, who wrote:

... the commodification of difference promotes paradigms of consumption wherein whatever difference the Other inhabits is eradicated, via exchange, by a consumer cannibalism that not only displaces the Other but denies the significance of that Other's history through a process of decontextualization. (hooks 1992)

In this quote hooks points to the consumption of racial and ethnic difference as a hallmark of bourgeois identity; she also critically notes that this “consumer cannibalism” in essence devours the evidence and testimony of the history of inequality. In doing so it erases the full historical subjectivity of the subject it consumes; eating here becomes the desiring and destructive mode through which otherness is both encountered and destroyed.

The underlying narrative of this syllabus is here expressed through seven critical approaches that I want my students to bring to every text. This list is not meant to be exhaustive but rather descriptive of my own particular research and pedagogical interests. I list them here:

1. Every food discourse or representation has a relationship to a specific body politic. That is, food is a way of talking about the body, of constructing both ideal and abject social bodies. In literature this happens through the representation of consumption in literary texts as well as through implicit assumptions about the body and what fuels it. Studying food thus becomes one mode of learning medical history, particularly when studying those periods and cultures, like antebellum America or ancient Greece, in which food and medicine are often seen as the same thing.
2. Studying food in literature is one mode of studying material history. Thus it is particularly useful to pay attention to the food objects that are associated with particular social locations. In studying what kinds of food appear in literature we can trace the economic and cultural circuits that are in play during the moment of cultural production. For instance, in studying alcohol in nineteenth-century US literature we ask: how does the writer relate to widespread antebellum temperance activity? If the writer is discussing rum, a Caribbean alcohol made from plantation sugar, how might slavery form part of the novel’s political unconscious?
3. Structuralist anthropologists use language systems to explain the ways in which we make meaning through food: in their work food is described as a system of communication. Food and language are often collapsed in this body of work; for instance, food and the meal are formally compared to forms of literature, including poems. Beyond a purely social reading, this phenomenon has what we might term a physical explanation: both food and speech are experienced in the mouth. However, it is significant that both communicative systems—if we wish to read them as analogous—are sites where there is particular cross-border cultural movement: the transnational economic and cultural relationships organized around food change “domestic” languages by importing new vocabularies along with new cuisines. Thus food consistently signals to the borders of what we might term national bodies and thus to the ruptures in the borders of both

nation and body that are marked by what comes into and goes out of the mouth.

4. Reaching back to Plato's Symposium, there is a historical relationship between food, meals and philosophical discourse, but also food, meals and storytelling. Meals structure narrative and vice versa.
5. There is a history of food symbols that we find in the Old and New Testament in which eating is consistently represented as a metaphor for the taking in of knowledge or for learning. This relationship in turn sets up a parallel between words and food: words become food and "bibliophagy" is often encoded in literary texts about food.
6. Eating is also a mode through which we exceed our individuality and join with others: forms of commensality and communion join disparate individuals both to each other and to the realm of the spiritual. Food rules and covenants are thus often a way of joining the self and the community to God, either by following law or through sacrifice (pouring libations) or both.
7. There is a metaphoric of eating that represents what we might think of as a fundamental epistemological binary in our world: the division between a structuring body's "inside" and "outside." Taking the boundaries of the body as a fundamental heuristic tool, eating thus comes to be understood as an important metaphor for social and political difference.

Taking these seven points as an argumentative beginning, my goals in this course were both diachronic and synchronic: I wanted to offer both a historical perspective on food in literature and to use this history to contextualize certain issues in contemporary food culture. At the risk of sounding clichéd, I wanted to pass on my own fascination with food culture; I also wanted to defamiliarize what is often an unquestioned aspect of everyday life, thus using food studies as an exercise in critical approaches to the social and cultural world. Too often, fluency in food culture, like being "well-read" or "well-traveled," is a sign of a certain privileged bourgeois cosmopolitanism: in my course understanding food on a deeper level means also paying attention to the sometimes rather bloody and visceral issues that lurk behind an otherwise pleasant topic.

In retrospect, my own desire to problematize eating and the class relations that lurk behind consumption led to mixed responses from the class. In part, this is because of the very mixed bag of students that I had, all of whom seemed to have different desires for the course. For some, food studies clearly signaled a "fun" course (read: easy). These students were invariably disappointed with the amount of reading I gave them and in particular they got mad when I asked them to read cultural theory. I also had a contingent

of science students fulfilling breadth requirements who were new and at times very resistant to reading theory.

On the other hand, I also had a very politicized group of students coming out of women's studies who enjoyed reading theory and often dominated the conversations in which we problematized the power relations that lurk behind representations of food and eating. Those students seemed to conflict with my purely literary students who were far more interested in performing close literary readings and wanted to discuss esthetics; it is not that the latter resisted politicized readings but they did resist purely political readings.

This *olla podrida* of students made the large class somewhat difficult to please at all times, but it also often produced interesting differences of opinion; Pomona students are not shy with their opinions generally and some very productive disagreements took place. For instance, during the reading of Marya Hornbacher's anorexia novel *Wasted*, a group of students felt that Hornbacher's self-starvation was problematic in view of larger issues of global starvation. Operating from an identitarian politic, they were critical of Hornbacher's confessional narrative of suffering given her class status. Other students, some of whom later confessed to me that they themselves were former anorexics or bulimics, felt that her class status was immaterial in view of the idea that eating disorders are diseases and thus, in a sense, outside of global power narratives. Still others wanted to read bulimia and anorexia as textual issues; given Hornbacher's stated desire to "write the body into text," her manic, at times Jamesian, sentences were clearly of formal interest.

Navigating these disciplinary lobby groups proved to be interesting work during my first semester as a teacher, to say the least. At first I found disagreement in the classroom to be stressful, including political disagreements: a major lesson for me as a new teacher that semester was to trust students to deal with differences of opinion and not try to smooth them over. This included those students who came in office hours to ask me to advocate particular political positions: instead I tried to foster mutual respect without advocating particular points of view. This approach led to various fits of undergraduate grumpiness but it also called on students to be responsible for their own positions in classroom discussion.

Another point of resistance was to reading popular "women's" novels like Joanne Harris' *Chocolat* and Laura Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate*. Granted, I did assign these novels during "easy" weeks at the end of the semester, however my larger goal in assigning those texts was to ask students to problematize contemporary popular food discourses. I have found that students sometimes resist reading "popular" texts in literature classes. This, it seems to me, is very much a leftover of the history of English departments themselves, as spaces of "civility" and class indoctrination. English students

sometimes expect to read Great Works in English classes: reading popular twentieth-century novels got some of them very irritated. However, in my teaching and research I am very committed to a building upon a David Reynolds-ian approach to literary and cultural studies. I want students to consider the popular literature of a period not only because it was popular and thus a window into the interests of large swaths of population but also because doing so opens up conversations about the construction of literary canons and educational curricula. These last two novels, in all of their purple and delicious glory, are very much representative of a certain genre of “food porn” literature that emerged in the bourgeois food crazes of the last two decades of the twentieth century. Interrogating the political unconscious of this kind of literature was one of the central goals of the course. We had some really great conversations about popular fiction and its cultural work during these weeks and the easier texts also allowed some of the less confident students to speak up with more confidence.

In assigning those books and films, I also wanted students to think about the connections between older texts, like Rabelais’ *Gargantua* and Plato’s *Symposium*, to contemporary ways of thinking about eating, consumption and pleasure. Plato’s *Symposium* which takes place after a dinner has concluded, and is thus a text that segregates philosophical conversation from eating—eating being a concern of the body and philosophy a concern of the soul. However, Plato does link philosophy to wine—the entire cast of characters is, in fact, hung over during the conversation. And it is Alcibiades’ disruptive and drunken entrance into the Symposium that poses the fundamental disjunct of the text, between platonic, spiritual existence and an existence structured around the (lower, sexual, digestive) needs of the (lower, sexual, digestive) body. In fact following on Francois Jeanneret’s wonderful book *Feast of Words*, we read the first book of Rabelais’ *Gargantua* as a response to just such symposiac literature. In these terms, *Gargantua* is a text that engages the lower body in such a way as to be generative of philosophical discourse: in Rabelais one does not live a life in spite of the body, but rather, *through* the body.

Two texts that students particularly enjoyed reading were Verta Mae Grosvenor’s *Vibration Cooking* and Monique Truong’s *The Book of Salt*. The explicit themes of race and postcoloniality spoke directly to the larger class content and tied food culture to the performance and delineation of ethnic identity. The class was seriously split on John Lancaster’s *Debt to Pleasure*, given its utterly unlikeable narrator, Tarquin Winot. However Lancaster’s portrayal of gourmandism as murder led to some of the best literary readings of the semester, in which students considered the ethical stakes of esthetic criticism as a mode of delineating Bourdieuvian class *distinction*. Another interesting reading emerged in which we discussed taste as a form of solipsism and thus as an inroad into talking about the homicidal and very

unreliable narrator. If taste is a solipsistic sense, what are social standards of taste but fiction? This line of questioning proved particularly useful in light of Lancaster's former career as a restaurant critic, driving us to ask if criticism is itself a form of murder. Thus while many students initially disliked the text intensely, a surprising number of them wrote final papers on Lancaster's novel.

Another text that excited students was Morgan Spurlock's documentary *Super Size Me*. Many students in the class found Spurlock's consistent use of African American subjects as representative bodies appalling in view of the film's lack of race analysis. This, in concert with the centrality of his own (very) white body, led the class to dub the film *Super Me*. Other students found the film persuasive and important, and admired Spurlock for taking on McDonald's. I admit to setting Spurlock up a bit by scheduling the film during the same week as Hornbacher's memoir of her eating disorder, *Wasted*, but was really surprised by the intensity with which students disliked the film.

Although I suppose it could be classified as a "popular" novel, students adored Ruth Ozeki's *My Year of Meats* as a text through which to discuss globalization, gender politics and the still-open question of America's global cultural hegemony. Returning to Sidney Mintz's essay, we also spent some time discussing the question of whether there is such a thing as American cuisine, explored Ozeki's linking of sexual politics, reproduction and agribusiness, and discussed the ethics of eating meat. In the end, students were ambivalent about the novel's representation of a Japanese woman who finds 'freedom in the US, as well as the novel's sometimes surfactory treatment of racial and geographic diversity. This thematically rich, if somewhat imperfect, novel was one of the most useful texts we read all semester.

The least successful week, without doubt, was the week on postcoloniality and cannibalism. Although I found myself fascinated with Nelson Pereira Dos Santos' *How Tasty Was My Frenchman*, students found the Brazilian *Cinema Novo* esthetic uninspiring. To my surprise we also had a hard time that week tying together De Montaigne with Dos Santos and the Brazilian surrealist Retamar's manifesto. That, without a doubt, was my fault and I'll either cut that week and shift or limit the readings next time. The topic of cannibalism as I presented it in that week was too far afield from the rest of the class and it will take some paring down and focusing to make it work next time.

Students also had negative, though very engaged, responses to Peter Greenaway's *The Cook, The Thief, The Wife and Her Lover*, as well as Anthony Bourdain's *Kitchen Confidential*. Once again, both texts produced engaged and very interesting papers.

In terms of the classroom work itself, I gave short lectures and led class discussions on Tuesdays and organized students into weekly panels on

Thursdays. This is a teaching technique that I borrowed from a teacher of mine at the University of Toronto, Professor Linda Hutcheon, and it is designed to both provoke conversation and give students practice in public speaking. Each student participated in two of these panels over the course of the semester, in which they gave a one-page position paper or close reading of the text of the week. They then produced two short papers in which they took the weekly discussion into account. This took a lot of modeling and coaching: I provided a sample one-page paper with discussion questions at the beginning of the class. However I do think that this is actually quite useful as an exercise because it encourages students to work together and, more important, to speak to each other. For those students who go on to graduate school it provides an early model for later professionalization.

Finally, each panel was required to bring in a “food of the week.” During the week on cannibalism, we ate Sour Patch Kids; during the chocolate weeks I brought in ten-pound blocks of chocolate from Ghirardelli. During the week we discussed Hornbacher, students brought in gum, according to the author a favorite food of anorexics. During the week that we discussed the Terezin concentration camp cookbook, *In Memory’s Kitchen*, students brought nothing.

Syllabus

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LITERATURE AND REFERENCE BOOKS

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- Sharon Tyler Herbst, *The New Food Lover’s Companion*.
- Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*.
- Vertamae Smart-Grosvenor, *Vibration Cooking*.
- Ruth Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*.
- Marya Hornbacher, *Wasted: A Memoir of Anorexia and Bulimia*.
- Laura Esquivel, *Like Water for Chocolate*.
- Monica Truong, *Salt*.
- Anthony Bourdain, *Kitchen Confidential*.
- John Lancaster, *The Debt to Pleasure*.
- Cara De Silva, *In Memory’s Kitchen*.
- Joanne Harris, *Chocolat*.

FILMS

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- Morgan Spurlock’s *Super Size Me*.
- Eddie Murphy’s *The Nutty Professor*.

- Peter Greenaway's *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*.
- Nelson Pereira dos Santos, *How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman*.
- Lasse Hallstrom's *Chocolat*.

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WEEK ONE—INTRODUCTIONS

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Lesson one—Syllabus Introduction. Discussion: Julia Kristeva, excerpt from the *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (Kristeva 1982)

Lesson two—Claude Levi-Strauss “The Culinary Triangle”; “Raw Food” introduction to *Raw: The Cookbook* (Trotter and Klein 2004).

In week one I introduce the students to reading food literature critically and to understanding some of the theoretical underpinnings of food studies. On the first day we go through a paragraph from feminist critic Julia Kristeva's discussion of the skin of milk in her essay on abjection and the creation of the self in order to start thinking about the body as a template for constructing social relations. We begin to think through a basic metaphoric of “inside” and “outside” to understand social hierarchy and belonging, and we discuss abjection, disgust and horror as seemingly physiological responses that are intertwined with a political metaphoric of disgust.

On the second day we read the introduction to Charlie Trotter and Roxanne Klein's cookbook with Levi Strauss's “Culinary Triangle” to understand how both texts naturalize social difference through their construction of “primitive” and “developed” foodways. In the former text, particularly, we read Klein's philosophical/autobiographical piece with an eye to class and body politics: drawing on a comparison with “Eskimo” foodways, Klein argues that eating raw food essentially returns the body to an originary natural state. At the same time she uses the language of modernity to describe the effects of the raw food diet: the body becomes efficient and energized, is able to exercise more, and so forth. We use these images to begin to discuss food discourses as markers of social difference.

WEEK TWO—EATING AS METAPHOR/READING FOOD AS A TECHNIQUE OF SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION

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Lesson one—Kilgour (1990); Fussell (1993).

Lesson two—Old Testament: Genesis 1–4; 25: 19–34; 27: 1–30; selections from Leviticus. New Testament: Matthew 26: 1–29; Mark 14: 1–25

In week two we use Betty Fussell's short story to explore Maggie Kilgour's important essay on metaphors of incorporation. Building on deconstructivist,

feminist and postcolonial theory, as well as close readings of classic and early modern texts, Kilgour explores eating—that is, the incorporation of foreign elements into the body—as a metaphor through which the idea of otherness is both represented and consumed (and thus rendered fictive).

Betty Fussell's story takes up the biblical food images that we explore in the next lesson: Eve's consuming of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil; the representation of the snake as Satan, but also as forbidden food; and the presentation of various religious food laws including the Hebrew injunction not to take life, and thus not to eat blood. By embracing the abject, in particular the blood, guts and innards of the eel, the narrator of Fussell's story exploits this biblical imagery in order to politicize female labor, revealing the kitchen as a fraught domestic space.

In another part of the lesson, we read two different renditions of the last supper as a way into discussing Kilgour's notion of the communion as a metaphor for the conjoining of self with community, the sacred with the mundane.

WEEK THREE—FIRST COURSE, DIS/COURSE: HOW TO READ A MEAL

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Lesson one—Roland Barthes, “Toward A Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption” (Barthes 1997); Mary Douglas, “Deciphering A Meal” (Douglas 1997).

Lesson two—panel presentation; Steingarten (2002). Mintz (2002).

This week introduces students to the notion that the meal is a cultural text in and of itself, which can be read formally—through the differential relationships between their separate parts—and in terms of the larger narratives of national/cultural identity that surround it. Through Jeffrey Steingarten's articles we discuss food fears and the social borders that these phobias both reveal and bolster. We then discuss the notion/problematic of a national American cuisine: does it exist, what does it look like? Can a national cuisine be defined by heterogeneity, speed and industrialized food? What border does the idea of a national cuisine protect? What borders does the meal contain? What food rules do we obey?

WEEK FOUR—NONSENSE, THE VERNACULAR AND THE DISCOURSE OF THE LOWER BODY

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Lesson one—Rabelais's *Gargantua* (Book One) (Rabelais 1990).

Movie: excerpt from Eddie Murphy's performance in *The Nutty Professor*, in particular the family dinner scene.

Lesson two—panel presentation; Jeanneret (1987): Introduction and Chapter 5.

Week four explores the idea that representing the life of the body disrupts written language; in this week however we also look at the overdetermined relationship between the body, minoritarian racial identities, and vernacular language. We do so through a comparison between Rabelais' *Gargantua*, the first novel to be written in French, and a outrageously bawdy dinner scene in Eddie Murphy's production of *The Nutty Professor*. In these texts we look at the life of the lower body, at the idea that appetite is comic and base. We also explore the concept that the modern, post-Enlightenment subject is defined by a body that is contained with its own skin: a body, and thus a self, that is sealed. Those bodies that threaten to burst at the seams, that leak or are soft or that reveal orifices are thus seen as premodern, liminal or non-human social subjects, usually connected to the lower body. At the same time, these subjects' social status is undermined by their representation as *oral* or *vernacular*—speakers whose words are disrupted by their overdetermined physicality.

WEEK FIVE—FOOD AND THE ABJECT

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Lesson one—Introduction to Stallybrass and White (1986); Grosvenor; (1970); Chapter 4 of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Lesson two—panel presentation; slide show of late nineteenth-century trade card advertisements.

Week five continues the previous week's discussion with a closer look at the history of African-Americans in the food culture of the US. We examine the representation of African-American women as edible objects in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and then look at Verta Mae Grosvenor's groundbreaking cookbook as a defense and celebration of African-American foodways. In particular we look at her rescuing of otherwise abject food items such as chitterlings ("chitlins"), possum, and bear and discuss what it means to take up the social space of abjection as a liberatory, antiracist strategy.

Borrowing from my book project, we also read Chapter 4 of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* alongside postbellum trade card advertisements that depict African Americans as edible objects. Using Stallybrass and White we seek to understand the complex intermingling of desire and disgust that characterizes relations of inequality and intimacy in the US.

WEEK SIX—RACE, CANNIBALISM AND THE POSTCOLONIAL

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Lesson one—De Montaigne (1993); De Andrade (1992); Retamar (1989).

Movie: Nelson Pereira Dos Santos' *How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman*.

Thursday, October 7—panel presentation.

Week six looks at the connections between colonialism and cannibalism in the Renaissance period with the writings of De Montaigne and then discusses the revision of the trope of cannibalism as an anticolonial, nationalist symbol during the Brazilian Modernist movement. We work through different interpretations of cannibalism as a strategy for maintaining the boundaries of group identity.

Food,
Culture
&
Society

**WEEK SEVEN—MEAT, SEX AND GENDER (ETHICS, INDUSTRIALIZATION,
GLOBALIZATION)**

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Lesson one—Ozeki (1998).

Lesson two—panel presentation; “A Vegetarian Philosophy” from Singer (2000).

In week seven we debate the ethics of vegetarianism and discuss the social/species line between animal and human as constitutive of the definition of the category of “human.” We look at Ruth Ozeki’s treatment of sexual politics and globalization through the metaphors of consuming meat in an era of multinational capitalism. We continue our discussion of cuisine as constitutive of national/cultural boundaries and extend that discussion to consider the strategies of cooptation and resistance that develop when multinational corporations transcend those borders in the service of neoliberal capitalism.

WEEK EIGHT—FAT BODIES, THIN BODIES AND DISORDERLY EATERS

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Lesson one—Fall Recess.

Movie: *Super Size Me*

Lesson two—Marya Hornbacher’s *Wasted*.

Week eight explores eating as a resistance strategy in eating-disordered women by putting an autobiography of a woman who survived multiple eating disorders in conversation with Morgan Spurlock’s film *Super Size Me*. We discuss race and the body in the US, including Hornbacher’s emulation

of white, middle-class femininity and look at Spurlock's failure to address race and poverty as social problems that contribute to obesity. Finally we discuss the idea that this is a cultural moment fascinated with the plasticity of the body, with the body as one of the last frontiers to be conquered and tamed in the postmodern era.

WEEK NINE—ART, GENDER AND THE MEAL: THE RECIPISTOLARY NOVEL

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Lesson one—Laura Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate*.

Lesson two—panel presentation; Leonardi (1989).

Week nine looks at what Doris Witt has called “recipistolary fiction,” that is, at fiction that intersperses narrative with recipes. Usually marketed as women's novels, in this week we explore the semiotics of domesticity and of domestic space. Specifically, we talk about the literary possibilities inherent in the space of the kitchen, and at the ways in which different writers have represented the kitchen as a space of exploitation and repression at the same time as it is troped by the literary market as a site of sensual pleasure.

WEEK TEN—SEX, FOOD, ART AND SILENCE

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Lesson one—selection from Toklas (1954); Truong (2003).

Lesson two—panel presentation.

Continuing the discussion of the kitchen as an important literary space, in this week we look at Monique Truong's novel/response to the *Alice B. Toklas Cookbook* alongside extracts from the cookbook that discuss the chefs who traversed the Stein/Toklas household. Reversing the previous discussion of the links between food and vernacular speech, in this week we look at the literary relationship between food and silence and at the kitchen as a foreign space within the domestic sphere. Finally, we examine two very different readings of the long relationship between Alice B. Toklas and Gertrude Stein.

WEEK ELEVEN—DISGUST, MASCULINITY AND THE KITCHEN

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Lesson one—Bourdain (2000).

Movie: *The Cook, The Thief, The Wife and Her Lover*, Peter Greenaway.

Lesson two—panel presentation—Chapter 4 from Miller (1998).

Week eleven continues the investigation of the kitchen as a cultural space with a close look at two very masculine kitchens. In particular we investigate disgust as a cultural strategy through William Ian Miller's discussion of the social esthetics of disgust. How do these artists/writers negotiate gender in the kitchen through an esthetics of the abject? How does the kitchen become a space for the expression of an abject and aggressively masculine heteronormative sexuality? How do male kitchens differ from female kitchens?

WEEK TWELVE—ESTHETICISM: TASTE, CLASS, DISTINCTION

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Lesson one—Lancaster (1996).

Lesson two—panel presentation Chapter 3: “On Gastronomy” and Chapter 12: “On Gourmands” from Brillat-Savarin (1994).

Week twelve looks at criticism and food writing through two texts, one literary the other philosophical, which articulate social identity through distinction or class delineation. What is a gourmand? Is criticism (negation) an art form? What does Lancaster have to say about snobbery? How do “tastes” articulate identity? Are there modern corollaries of Brillat-Savarin's gourmand?

WEEK THIRTEEN—FOOD, HUNGER AND MEMORY

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Lesson one—Cara de Silva and the women of Terezin concentration camp. De Silva (1996).

Lesson two—Thanksgiving

Week thirteen investigates the creation, translation and reception of the Terezin cookbook. Flipping the order of things from the description of eating (the problem of explaining the senses) to the creation of art out of hunger, we examine the fragmentary nature of this book to further understand the problem of recreating/rewriting history. How did the women of Terezin articulate, defend and create group identity through food memory? Is it possible to comprehend the magnitude of those forms of hunger/suffering through these recipes?

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Lesson one—Harris (1999).

Movie: *Chocolat*.

Lesson two—panel presentation; Heldke (2003).

This last week is both a reprieve for the students as they prepare their final papers and a direct querying of the connections between bourgeois modes of food consumption, tourism and popular art. We discuss the history of chocolate as it was discovered and exported from the Americas after colonization, its connection to romance and sexuality and Harris's use of Aztec iconography to describe these cultural phenomena. Using Heldke's wonderful discussion of the relationship of food tourism to the fetishization of non-Western cultures, this last week focuses the student's attention on their own modes of consumption. Finally, Heldke's work directs students' attention to the ethics of eating in a global context.

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