The University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology  
ANT 346: The Anthropology of Food 

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Course Objectives

From a relatively obscure research area in the early eighties to a major focus of social scientific research by the start of the next decade, food studies has exploded in recent years to become one of the most popular and respected areas in the academy. A full-fledged paradigm in the natural and social sciences, food studies intersects virtually every discipline in the modern university integrating information about the nutritional quality and value of food with the study of its function in social systems, the historical evolution of particular culinary types or traditions and issues ranging from global poverty, hunger and development to the crisis of agriculture and world ecology. Kick started by Sidney Mintz with his landmark study *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*, the anthropology of food has been at the forefront of this proliferation of studies, elaborating many of the key concepts of the paradigm. Investigations have treated subjects as diverse as patterns of consumption, habits and taste, cultivation systems, mode of trade or exchange and the logics, rituals and social movements associated with food. In this course, we will make use of a variety of theoretical perspectives, e.g. value and commodity chains, food regimes, phenomenology of taste, etc. to make sense of the global food system and arrive at an appreciation of the role of the discipline of anthropology in its study. We will examine the methods and concepts used by ethnographic researchers to study food as well as a mix of case studies to grasp the trends in the literature as well as the potential limitations of these approaches. The course is divided into two sections. The first section will equip us with the analytical tools to study the features of the modern world food economy and the circuits of exchange and production that make up its contours and the second section will give us inspiration for our own research, offering us an array of studies focusing on specific food types and their cultural significance for various groups around the world.

**Evaluation:**  
Participation 10%  
Exam 30%  
Response Papers 30%  
Final Essay 30%

**Readings:** All course readings available as PDF documents on Portal or through the University Library System.

**Introduction:** “We Are What We Eat” vs. “There’s No Accounting for Taste”
Part 1: Concepts and Debates

Lecture 1: The Anthropology of Food (May 11th)


Lecture 2: Taste (May 13th)


(University Closed for Victoria Day)

Lecture 3: The Commodity and Value (May 20th)


Lecture 4: Food Regimes and Famine (May 25th)


Lecture 5: Fast and Slow Food (May 27th)


Lecture 6: Food Sovereignty (June 1st)


Midterm Exam (June 3rd)

Part 2: Case Studies

Lecture 7: Sugar (June 8th)


Lecture 8: Coffee (June 10th)


Lecture 9: Corn (June 12th)


Lecture 10: Chicken (June 17th)


Kathleen Schwartzman 2013 The Chicken Trail: Following Workers, Migrants and Businesses into the New World Order. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. Selected Chapters
Lecture 11: Bananas (June 22\textsuperscript{nd})(Final Day for Response Papers/Essay/Make-Up Exams)


Accessibility:

Students in need of academic accommodation should register with Student Accessibility Services and present the relevant documentation to me at the start of the course. Requests for extensions, make-ups or other accommodations without proper documentation cannot be considered.

Academic Integrity:

The Student Code of Conduct defines academic offences in detail and in legal style terms. In general, however, an academic offense is some form of cheating or an attempt to gain academic advantage through dishonest means. Examples of offences for which you can be penalized include (but are not limited to):

1. Possessing any unauthorized aid or device during a test or exam (e.g. cell phone)
2. Using any unauthorized aids on an exam or test (e.g. cheat sheets, etc.)
3. Plagiarism—representing someone else’s work as your own
4. Falsifying documents or grades
5. Purchasing an essay
6. Submitting someone else’s work as your own
7. Submitting the same essay or report in more than one course (without permission)
8. Looking at someone else’s answers or allowing someone to look at your answers during a test or exam, or at a finished assignment.
9. Impersonating another person at an exam or test, or having someone else impersonate you.
10. Making up sources or facts for an essay or report.
11. Abusing the petition system

(Consult the academic integrity statement above and information regarding student rights and responsibilities at the website for the office of the Vice-Provost for student affairs.)

A Word on Plagiarism:
It is important that a student gives credit for any words, ideas, information or images derived from other sources integrated into his or her work. Acknowledgement of a source should consist of complete, accurate and specific references. Verbatim quotes must include quotation marks and paraphrasing equally requires citation. Specific examples of plagiarism include:

Using words, ideas, or images from another source (including internet); whether in quotation marks or not, without giving credit to that source in a bibliographic citation;

Using facts, statistics, or other supporting materials that are not common knowledge without acknowledgment of the source.

Using essays written by others—from the internet or other sources—and rephrasing or rewriting all or part of the document to make it appear as an original essay.

Co-writing a paper with another student (without permission, for an individual project, etc.) and creating two versions of the paper.

**Participation:**

The participation mark is not merely awarded based on your presence in the classroom. It requires attentiveness and/or active participation. The student who chooses to play games on his or her cellphone during class is not being respectful of the instructor or his or her classmates and will not receive marks.

**Response Papers:**

Over the course of the semester I expect you to write at least 3 response papers for me. The papers should be no more than two pages in length and cover the essential aspects of the readings for the week. This is an opportunity for you to demonstrate your knowledge of the text as well as to offer some critical commentary on it. I want you to describe the article, its main thesis or arguments, and the information used to support these arguments. As well, I would like you to try to take a position of your own in relation to the article. This does not have to be a fully formed thesis statement, but I would like you to offer some kind of evaluation. I require hard copies. Email submissions will not be accepted.

**Final Essay Guidelines:**

This course requires you to write a final essay. The essays may cover a wide range of topics, i.e. any of the subheadings from the syllabus or a topic of your own choosing. You can write about a particular type of food, a food culture or an aspect of the food system that interests you. You can write about the diversification or homogenization of taste; the waxing and waning of culinary traditions, styles or fads; the history of a type of cuisine, or anything that ties in the themes of the course with your own interests. The essay should be no more than 8 pages in length (double-spaced), but no less than 6. It also requires bibliographic citation—both in-class and out of class sources—as well as the author name and the year of each source. Any direct use of the author’s words must be placed in quotations with the page number in citation. I will not accept emailed submissions.