**NB: This syllabus is provisional. Always check the course Blackboard site for up-to-date information.**

**Hist 324: Food and Drink in World History**

*Thursday – 1PM-2:50PM*

*Room: King 335*

*Prof. White*

*Rice 303*

*sam.white@oberlin.edu*

*(440)775-8337*

*Office Hours: Tu 2-4PM and Th 3-4PM, or by appointment*

**Course Goals:**

This course will explore the role of food and drink in human history from prehistory to the present. We will examine this exciting new field of study from a number of angles: biological, cultural, economic, and environmental. Our readings will range from history to sociology to anthropology to journalism. Throughout the course, we will discuss the roles that food and drink have played in all aspects of our lives from human evolution to religion, politics, commerce, class, and national identity. The class will place particular emphasis on the interaction of material and cultural factors in shaping what and how we eat. Students will develop an awareness and understanding for the place of food in history and the origins of modern diets and cuisines.

**Format:**

This will be a seminar class. I may give some brief lectures for historical background, but otherwise the class will be based on student discussion of the readings. I will hand out reading guides and discussion questions each week for the following week's class.

**Expectations:**

Like all 300-level courses, Hist 324 is a research seminar. You should do all assigned reading each week and come prepared to engage in discussion. At the same time, each of you must work to develop an independent research project (see below) and keep up with deadlines for outlines and drafts.

**Course Policies:**

*Attendance:* Attendance will be taken each class. I will overlook one or two absences, but any more than that may affect your participation grade.
**Honor Code:** All course work is governed by Oberlin’s Honor Code. If you have a question about how the Honor Code applies to a particular assignment, you should ask me in advance of the due date. Further information about the honor code may be posted along with instructions for particular assignments.

**E-mail:** I will answer short e-mails Mon-Fri 9-5. If you have any questions that require a long answer, please come by my office during office hours instead. I will give feedback on any draft or outline of your class work provided you send it in at least 48 hours before the deadline—the longer I have, the better the feedback.

**Grading:** A (90-100), B (80-89), C (70-79), D (60-69), F (below 60). Plus and minus grades for scores within two points of the next letter grade (i.e., 88 and 89 get a B+; 90 and 91 get an A-).

**Submitting Work:** All written work must be submitted by e-mail. I will mark off 8 points every 24 hours late, weekends included, no exceptions unless you can bring in a note from your class dean explaining that you could not submit the assignment. If you know in advance that you will not be available to submit work on a given day, please contact me well ahead of the deadline.

**Assignments:**

**Weekly Participation:** Participation will be 30% of your final grade, based on your attendance and class discussion. You may also earn part of their participation grade by posting written discussions and current news and journal articles relevant to the class on the course Blackboard site.

**Weekly Thoughts:** For any ten class meetings (except week 1) you will e-mail a brief (one-page or ~300-word) summary of your thoughts on the reading, including any aspects of the reading you found especially interesting and any questions you would especially like to discuss in class. (10% of final grade)

**Essay:** As your final project, you will write a substantial (12-page or 3500-word) research paper, on one of the following topics:

1) A historical explanation of a cookbook from before 1960, and how its recipes, ingredients, and cooking techniques can shed light on food and drink in world history.
2) A history of how all the ingredients and cooking styles of a particular modern meal came together, and what that assemblage can show us about food in world history.
3) An explanation of the environmental history and environmental impacts of all the ingredients of a particular meal (other than those already analyzed in the readings) and how they came together.
Detailed instructions and writing guides will be posted to the course Blackboard site. Remember that these are *history* essays, not journalism, so make sure your writing is formal and structured and that you focus on historical processes and explanations. See the course schedule below for a list of deadlines for the prospectus, outline, and rough draft.

**Final Grades:**
- Participation: 30%
- Weekly Thoughts: 10%
- Prospectus: 10%
- Outline: 10%
- Rough Draft: 10%
- Final Essay: 30%

**Reading:**
The following course books are available at the bookstore and have been ordered for reserve at the main library:

All other readings will be posted as PDFs on the course Blackboard site.

Reading assignments will vary from about 120-200 pages per week. You should read and come prepared to discuss all assigned reading every week.

**Course Schedule:**

**Week 1 (2/10): Introduction—Why Study Food?**

**Week 2 (2/17): Back to Basics - Hunting and Gathering**

Michael Pollan, The Omnivore's Dilemma (New York: Penguin, 2006), introduction and part III.

**Week 3 (2/24): Traditional Food Cultures**
Pilcher, Food in World History, chapter 1.


**Week 4 (3/3): The Columbian Exchange and Modern Cuisine**
Pilcher, Food in World History, chapters 2 and 4.


**Week 5 (3/10): Sugar and Power**
Pilcher, Food in World History, chapter 3.

**Week 6 (3/17): Drugs and the Making of the Modern World**

**Week 7 (3/24): Food, Nation, and Identity**  
Jeffrey Pilcher, *Que Vivan los Tamales: Food and the Making of Mexican Identity*  

**Essay prospectus due before you leave for spring break.**

**Week 8 – Spring Break**

**Week 9 (4/7): Eating American**  
Donna R. Gabaccia, *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans*  

**Week 10 (4/12): Food and Technology (**NB: This class will be held on Tuesday**)**  
Pilcher, *Food in World History*, chapters 6, 10, and 11.  

**Essay outline due Friday 6PM.**

**Week 11 (4/11): Fast Food and Globalization**  
Pollan, *Omnivore's Dilemma*, part I.  
Week 12 (4/28): Nutrition and Nutritionism
Michael Pollan, In Defense of Food: An Eater’s Manifesto (New York: Penguin, 2008), parts I and II.

Week 13 (5/5): Organic and Slow Food Alternatives
Pollan, Omnivore’s Dilemma, part II.
Pollan, In Defense of Food, part III.
**guest talk by Rumi Shammin, dept. of environmental studies, on a local foods project

**Essay draft due Friday 6PM.

Week 14 (5/12): Conclusion
(no new reading this week)

**Final essays due Saturday, May 21 by 11AM. Late papers will not be accepted.**