Hist 206: Food and Drink in History

Tu, Th 8:35-9:50
Room: King 237

Prof. White
Rice 303
(440)775-8337
sam.white@oberlin.edu

Office Hours: Wednesdays 10am-12pm or by appointment

Course Goals:
This course explores food and drink from prehistory to the present. We will explore 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 readings span a range of disciplines, including history, anthropology, biology, and sociology. The class will place particular emphasis on the interaction of material and cultural factors. Students will develop an awareness and understanding of the place of food in history and the origins of modern diets and cuisines.

Format:
This will be a lecture-discussion class, with an emphasis on student participation. You are expected to complete all assigned reading and come prepared for discussion.

Course Policies:
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.

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 (e.g., 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:
Participation: Participation will be 20% 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. Students who have not participated throughout the semester cannot earn their participation grade by posting articles in the last two weeks of class.

Quizzes: There will be four brief in-class quizzes with short-answer questions testing factual material, for 5% of your grade each (20% total). At each quiz, you may bring in up to two single-sided pages of notes. Everything in this outline must be entirely of your own creation: Any reproductions from any handouts, web sites, books, or classmates will be a violation of the honor code. The outline may be hand-written or typed (minimum 10-pt font). Writing an outline is one of the best ways of reviewing material. However, it is probably not in your best interest to try to fit as much as possible onto the page, because you will not have the time to find it all during the quiz.

Reading Questions: For at least ten different classes in ten different weeks, students should e-mail me at least 3 interesting observations, questions, or ideas for discussion on the class reading by the night before that class meets. Submissions should demonstrate that you have closely read and understood the reading. Students who consistently send in useful questions and discussion ideas will receive an A for this assignment, which makes up 10% of your final grade.

Essay: You will have two essay assignments of 1,500 words (~5 pages) apiece, each worth 20% of your final grade. You will choose from a list of topics, which will emphasize comparisons of cuisines, technologies, commodities, and iconic foods. Detailed instructions and writing guides will be posted to the course Blackboard page.

Final Exam: There will be a take-home final of short essay questions covering broad themes throughout the course, worth 10% of your final grade.

Final Grades:
Participation: 20%
Quizzes: 20%
Reading Questions: 10%
Essay 1: 20%
Essay 2: 20%
Final Exam: 10%

Reading:
The following course book will be available at the bookstore and has 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 60-120 pages per week. You should read and come prepared to discuss the assigned reading in each class.
Course Schedule:

**Week 1 – Beginnings**
2/5: Introduction
2/7: Evolution

**Week 2 – Prehistory**
2/12: Cooking and Gender
2/14: Ritual and Taboo

**Week 3 – Classical Cuisines**
2/19: Classical Mediterranean and Islamic
2/21: Medieval Europe and Imperial China
**First quiz in class 2/21**

**Week 4 – Columbian Exchange**
2/26: America
2/28: Europe and Asia

**Week 5 – Commerce and Drugs**
3/5: Sugar

3/7: Alcohol and Caffeine


**Week 6 – Modernization**

3/12: Europe


3/14: Japan


**Second quiz in class 3/14**

**Week 7 – Industrialization**

3/19: Industrial Processing and Production


3/21: Exchange, Commodification, and Freshness


**First essay due Friday 3/22 by 5pm.**

**Week 8 – Spring Break**

**Week 9 – High and Low Cuisine**

4/2: *Haute Cuisine*


4/4: The Restaurant

*Film in class:* Jiro Dreams of Sushi (2011)

**Week 10 – Nation and Identity**

4/9: Nationalism

**Third quiz in class 4/11**

**Week 11 – Eating American**

4/16: Making the American Diet


4/18: A National Eating Disorder?


**Week 12 – Globalization and Fast Food**


4/25: Fast Food and Global Culture


**Week 13 – New Technologies**

4/30: Chemicals, GM, and Organic


5/2: Modernist Cuisine

*Reading:* Nature special section on taste, June 2012.

**Fourth quiz in class 5/2**

**Week 14 – Conclusion**

5/7: Food and Art

*No Reading – Guided visit to the Alan Memorial Art Museum*

**Second essay due Wednesday 5/8 by 5pm.**

5/9: The Future


*Reading period 5/12-5/14*

*Final exam schedules will be posted on the OC registrar web page.*