

# Food and Culture

Department of Sociology/Anthropology  
Concordia University  
Fall 2019

**Professor: Erik Chevrier**  
**Office Hours: By Request**  
**Day/Time: Monday – 8:30 - 10:45 PM**  
**Classroom – H-561**

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Food is an important part of cultural studies. It is central to many cultural rituals, like feasts and festivals; it has been a catalyst for global resistance to capitalism, like in the food sovereignty movement; it is embedded with a variety of beliefs and customs, like religious diets (i.e. Kosher and Halal); it is a uniting force for the development of a social economy, like in the development of food cooperatives; it has also been a central theme in countless cultural texts, films and literature; most importantly, it is what keeps people alive.

In this course, we explore themes related to food and culture. We focus on the political economy of food by examining how food is produced, transformed, distributed, consumed, and how food waste is managed in different areas of the world. We take a critical perspective to analyze multinational food corporations, like Bayer, by looking at the consequences of large scale industrialized farming, monoculture, and the privatization of genetics. These consequences include, the use of GMOs and the loss of biodiversity; reliance on fossil fuels and its contribution to climate change; use of glyphosate and the accompanying health effects; seed patents and loss of food sovereignty; use of natural resources and the depletion of water and food supplies; among others.

We also explore what certain cultures are doing to prevent these negative consequences. We look at the slow food movement coming out of Italy and Ireland as a way of re-localizing food production, processing and consumption – aka. the farm to plate movement; we examine the food sovereignty movement coming out of Mexico at La Via Campesina assembly in 1996 – which is now being popularized globally; we learn about the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network and their initiative to reclaim food sovereignty, food justice and eliminate food insecurity; we also look at sustainable production, like seed saving, indigenous practices, permaculture, rooftop gardening, and organic farming. Moreover, we read about and discuss a variety of beliefs and customs regarding food by addressing the differences in cultural symbolism of plants and animals in different parts of the world.

In this course, we partake in the ‘practice’ of food. Students cook a meal related to their cultural heritage to share with the class. They write about and discuss the cultural significance, meaning and symbolism of the food that they prepared for the class. They also perform research about the supply chain of the ingredients and environmental footprint, as well as the labour, gender, class, and racial relations that went into preparing the food. Students also take turns preparing food items for the class so we all have a snack while we learn. Student partake in other forms of food production – they will grow a plant from seed and must care for it until the class is complete.

An important focus of this course is community engagement. Students participate with local food projects in and around Concordia University. Students perform an action-based research project by creating a new food organization, participating with and enhancing a current food project, and/or conducting research about university food systems. Students can even create content for the Concordia Student-Run Food Group Research project:

[www.concordiafoodgroups.ca](http://www.concordiafoodgroups.ca)

## **Course Materials and Text:**

Students are expected to complete **ALL** the designated readings and watch **ALL** of the assigned videos **BEFORE EACH CLASS**. Students are also expected to attend **ALL** classes, and participate in class discussions. You will be given a quiz to evaluate whether you completed and understood the readings three times during the course. Please see the assignments section below for a more detailed explanation of these quizzes.

The **required readings** for this course is contained in a course-pack available at the library bookstore.

The power-point **lecture notes** will be posted on the course site on a weekly basis before each class.

**Recommended readings:** (Available at the Coop Bookstore – [www.co-opbookstore.ca](http://www.co-opbookstore.ca))

Di Giovine, M. A., Brulotte, R. L (2014), *Edible Identities: Food as Cultural Heritage*, Ashgate

Holt-Giminez, E. (2017) *A Foodie's Guide to Capitalism: Understanding the Political Economy of What We Eat*, Monthly Review Press, Food First Books.

URLs and other electronic sources may be posted on the course website from time to time. Please visit the course website to get this material. These are only for interest and are not required.

## **Course Format**

This course consists of a variety of pedagogical styles including lectures, discussions, guest speakers, and community service learning. Students are expected to read the required text and/or watch the assigned movie before coming to class. In class, students engage with each other through interactive activities, discussions and by talking with people who work with food – production, transformation, distribution, and waste management. At times, the class participates in fieldtrips on and off campus. Students will be notified in advance by e-mail and in class prior to these events.

Students also take turns preparing food items for the class so that we have snacks as we learn. Students work out a schedule in the first weeks of the course. This counts towards your participation grade along with other activities discussed below.

## **Course Evaluation**

<b>Assignments</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Grade Weight</b>
Participation	Ongoing	10
Action Research Project Proposal	October 21	15
Action Research Project	December 3	30
Food Blog	November 25	15
Recipe and Blog	October 7	15
Reading Response	3 Randomly Chosen Classes	(2/3 worth 7.5 Points Each) 15
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

**Participation:** The participation grade is based on attendance, involvement in discussions, participation in classroom activities and supplemental tasks (i.e. you will grow a plant from seed and will inform classmates about your experience with the plant). As an assignment, students will cook a meal to share with the class. Students can bring food on more than one occasion to improve their participation grade.

**Action Research Project:** The objective of this assignment is to give students hands on experience learning about transformative food movements. Students will perform an action-based research project by creating a food project and/or participating with an already existing community food initiative at Concordia University or in the community at large. Students may participate in a group project and submit the report as a group. Students will be evaluated based on the depth of their involvement with the project, clearly reporting the project, and an oral presentation of the project. Students are encouraged to contribute to the Concordia Food Groups Research Project ([www.concordiafoodgroups.ca](http://www.concordiafoodgroups.ca)).

**Action Research Project Proposal:** Students will write a proposal for the action research project they want to partake in. Students may participate in a group project and submit the proposal as a group. Students must (1) identify a food group to participate with or a food project to create, (2) outline a specific timeline for the project, (3) summarize their role in the project, (4) describe how you intend to write their final report, (5) link the topic to class readings and other food issues.

**Blog Posts:** Students will write a blog posts of about 600 words and will be encouraged to publish them on the [www.concordiafoodgroups.ca](http://www.concordiafoodgroups.ca) website.

For the first blog post students can (1) attend a food related conference organized by a community group or participate in an ‘action’ related to food and write about the conference/action, (2) interview a community group and make the findings available (3) produce a brief research report (with five sources) about a food related topic that is approved by me (Erik Chevrier).

For the second blog post, students must prepare at least one meal to bring and share with the class. Students will write a blog about the cultural relevance of the food item, i.e. the practices, attitudes, and beliefs as well as the networks and institutions surrounding the production, distribution, and consumption of the food item they prepared. They will also include the recipe.

Blog posts must critically analyze the topic in a clear, concise, informative, and interesting manner and should link the topic/conference/interview to the class readings. The blog must address an appropriate audience and make sure the information is conveyed to this audience based on their level of knowledge of the subject matter. Students with video production skills can produce a video instead of a blog, however this must also be approved by me (Erik Chevrier).

**Reading Responses:** Students will be asked three times (randomly), at the beginning of class, to summarize the chapter that was assigned for that class. The objective of this assignment is to make sure students are reading the required material. Students may use one page of hand-written notes to help them write their summaries. Material written via computer will NOT be allowed. Students will also NOT be allowed to look at the readings. Two of the three best responses will be counted. The summaries should (1) identify the central claim(s) or thesis(es) of the text articulated in the student’s own words, (2) identify the supporting evidence for the claim(s) and the key concepts introduced, (3) relate the text to other examples that support or contradict the central claim or thesis, (4) other, more detailed questions will also be included.

### **Letter Grade Equivalency**

Your numerical grades will be converted to letter grades as follows:

A+	(93 – 100%)	B+	(77 – 79.9%)	C+	(67 – 69.9%)	D+	(57– 59.9%)
A	(85 – 92.9%)	B	(73 – 76.9%)	C	(63 – 66.9%)	D	(53 – 56.9%)
A-	(80 – 84.9%)	B-	(70 – 72.9%)	C-	(60 – 62.9%)	D-	(50 – 52.9%)
F	< 50%						

## **Lecture Schedule: Themes and Required Readings**

This is a **TENTATIVE** schedule and is subject to change. Be sure to consult the course website regularly to be aware of any changes.

Course schedule, Topics and Required readings:

### **September 9 – Introduction**

### **September 16 – Food and Culture**

Koc, M., Sumner, J., Winson, A. (2012) **Critical Perspectives in Food Studies**, Oxford.  
Chapter 4 – Johnson, J., Cappeliez, You Are What You Eat: Enjoying (and Transforming) Food Culture, pp. 49 – 64.

Levkoe, C., Brady, J., and Anderson, C. (2016) Towards and Interdisciplinary Food Studies: Working the Boundaries. In *Conversations in Food Studies*, Anderson, C. R., Brady, J., Levkoe, C. eds, University of Manitoba Press.

### **September 23 – Foundations of Food and Culture**

Couninham, C., Van Estrik, P. (2013) **Food and Culture**; A Reader, Routledge.  
Chapter 1 – Mead, M. (1971) Why do we overeat? Pp. 19 – 22  
Chapter 2 – Barthes, R. (1961) Towards a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption, pp. 23 – 30  
Chapter 3 - Bourdieu, P. (1979) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, pp. 31 – 40  
Chapter 4 – Levi-Strauss, C. (1966) The Culinary Triangle, pp. 40 - 47

### **September 30 – Foundations of Food and Culture**

Couninham, C., Van Estrik, P. (2013) **Food and Culture**; A Reader, Routledge.  
Chapter 5 – Douglas, M. (1966) The Abominations of Leviticus, pp. 48 – 58  
Chapter 6 – Harris, M. (1985) The Abominable Pig, pp. 59 – 71  
Chapter 7 – Goody, J. (1982) *Industrial Food: Towards the Development of a World Cuisine*, pp. 72 – 90  
Chapter 8 – Mintz, S. W. (1979) Time, Sugar and Sweetness, pp. 91 - 103

### **October 7 – Food and Cultural Identity**

#### ***DUE – Recipe Blog***

Readings – One chapter from:

Di Giovine, M. A., Brulotte, R. L (2014), *Edible Identities: Food as Cultural Heritage*, Ashgate

## **October 21 – Political Economy of Food and Culture**

### ***DUE – Action Research Project Proposal***

Shiva, V. (2015) **Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability and Peace**, North Atlantic Books.  
Chapter 1 – Living Economies, pp. 11 – 64.

Wittman, H., Desmarais, A. A., & Wiebe, N. (2011) **Food Sovereignty in Canada: Creating Just and Sustainable Food Systems**, Fernwood Publishing.  
Chapter 2 – Qualman, D. (2011) Advancing Agriculture by Destroying Farms? The State of Agriculture in Canada, pp. 20 – 42.

Recommended Reading:

Holt-Gimenez, E. (2017) **A Foodie's Guide to Capitalism: Understanding the Political Economy of What We Eat**, Monthly Review Press, New York.  
Chapter 1 – How our Capitalist Food System Came to Be (pp. 23 – 56)

## **October 28 – Food Sovereignty**

Patel, R. (2009) **Food Sovereignty**, Journal of Peasant Studies, 36, 3, pp. 663 – 706.

Wittman, H. (2011) **Food Sovereignty: A New Rights Framework for Food and Nature?** Environment and Society: Advances in Research 2, pp. 87 – 105.

Alkon, A. H., & Agyeman, J. (2011) **Cultivating Food Justice: Race, Class and Sustainability**, MIT Press.  
Chapter 14 – Holt-Gimenez, E. (2011) Food Security, Food Sovereignty or Food Justice: Crises, Food Movements and Regime Change, pp. 309 – 330.

## **November 4 – GMOs, Biodiversity, Privatization of Genetics**

Shiva, V. (2016) **Seed Sovereignty, Food Security**, North Atlantic Books.  
Introduction – Shiva, V. (2011) Seed Sovereignty, Food Security, pp. vii – xxi  
Chapter 5 – Ho., Mae-Wan, The New Genetics and Dangers of GMOs, pp. 105 – 128.

Read the reports from the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network  
<https://cban.ca/publications/reports/>

Recommended Readings:

Holt-Gimenez, E. (2017) **A Foodie's Guide to Capitalism: Understanding the Political Economy of What We Eat**, Monthly Review Press, New York.  
Chapter 2 – Food, A Special Commodity (pp. 57 – 82)

Holt-Gimenez, E. (2017) **A Foodie's Guide to Capitalism: Understanding the Political Economy of What We Eat**, Monthly Review Press, New York.  
Chapter 3 – Land and Property (pp. 83 – 114)

## **November 11 – A Global Food Culture: International Trade Regulations**

Smythe, E. (2014) **Globalization and Food Sovereignty: Global and Local Change in the New Politics of Food**, University of Toronto Press.

Chapter 2 – The Territory of Self-Determination: Social Reproduction, Agro-Ecology, and the Role of the State, pp. 289 – 318.

Chapter 10 – Food Sovereignty, Trade Rules, and the Struggle to Know the Origins of Food, pp. 289 – 318.

## **November 18 – Race, Class, Feminism, Food and Culture**

White, M. M., (2011) **D-Town Farm: An African American Resistance to Food Insecurity and the Transformation of Detroit**, Environmental Practice, 13, 4

Koc, M., Sumner, J., Winson, A. (2017) **Critical Perspectives in Food Studies**, Oxford.

Chapter 6 – Brady, J., Power, E., Szabo, M., Gingras, J. pp. 81 – 94.

Recommended Reading:

Holt-Giminez, E. (2017) **A Foodie's Guide to Capitalism: Understanding the Political Economy of What We Eat**, Monthly Review Press, Food First Books.

Chapter 5 – Power and Privilege in the Food System: Gender, Race and Class. Pp. 143 – 173.

## **November 25 – Food, Health, and Culture**

### ***DUE – Food Blog***

Koc, M., Sumner, J., Winson, A. (2012) **Critical Perspectives in Food Studies**, Oxford.

Chapter 9 – Constructing Healthy Eating/Constructing Self, pp. 136 – 151.

Anderson, C. R., Brady, J., & Levoke, C. (2016) **Conversations in Food Studies**, University of Manitoba Press.

Chapter 7 – Martin, W., Mundel, E., and Rideout, K., (2016) **Finding Balance: Food Safety, Food Security, and Public Health**, pp. 170 – 192.

\*\*\*Watch Cooked, Michael Pollan

## **December 2 – Food and Indigenous Cultures**

### **Report Back About Group Project**

Shiva, V. (2016) **Seed Sovereignty, Food Security**, North Atlantic Books.

Chapter 13 – Foote, S. (2016) **Reviving Native Sioux Agricultural Systems**, pp. 209 – 214.

Chapter 14 – LaDuke, W. (2016) **In Praise of the Leadership of Indigenous Women**, pp. 215 – 235.

Wittman, H., Desmarais, A. A., & Wiebe, N. (2011) **Food Sovereignty in Canada: Creating Just and Sustainable Food Systems**, Fernwood Publishing.

Chapter 6 – Morrison, D. (2011) **Indigenous Food Sovereignty: A Model for Social Learning**, pp. 97 – 113.

## **December 3 – DUE – Action Research Project Report**

### **Late assignment policy:**

Unless you are given permission in advance, late assignments **will not be accepted** without adequate documentation of medical or personal emergencies.

### **Handing in Assignments:**

All assignments **MUST** be submitted in hard copy at the beginning of class on the due date. Any assignment submitted electronically will be subject to a reduction of 10% of the value of the assignment.

### **A list of Student Services and Useful Resources**

Counselling and Psychological Services: <http://concordia.ca/students/counselling-life-skills>

Concordia Library Citation and Style Guides: <http://library.concordia.ca/help/howto/citations>

Student Success Centre: <http://concordia.ca/students/success>

Health Services: <http://concordia.ca/students/health>

Financial Aid and Awards: <http://concordia.ca/offices/faao>

HOJO (Off Campus Housing and Job Bank): <http://csu.qc.ca/hojo>

Academic Integrity: <http://concordia.ca/students/academic-integrity>

Access Centre for Students with Disabilities: <http://concordia.ca/offices/acsd>

CSU Advocacy Centre: <http://csu.qc.ca/advocacy>

Dean of Students Office: <http://concordia.ca/offices/dean-students>

International Students Office: <http://concordia.ca/students/international>

Student Hub: <http://concordia.ca/students>

Sexual Assault Resource Centre: <http://concordia.ca/students/sexual-assault.html>

Indigenous Directions: <http://concordia.ca/about/indigenous.html>

### **University Rights and Responsibilities**

**Academic Integrity:** “The Academic Code of Conduct sets out for students, instructors and administrators both the process and the expectations involved when a charge of academic misconduct occurs. The regulations are presented within the context of an academic community which seeks to support student learning at Concordia University.” (From Article 1 of the Academic Code of Conduct). Full text:

<http://www.concordia.ca/students/academic-integrity/offences.html>

**Plagiarism:** The most common offense under the Academic Code of Conduct is plagiarism, which the Code defines as “the presentation of the work of another person as one’s own or without proper

acknowledgement.” This includes material copied word for word from books, journals, Internet sites, professor’s course notes, etc. It refers to material that is paraphrased but closely resembles the original source. It also includes for example the work of a fellow student, an answer on a quiz, data for a lab report, a paper or assignment completed by another student. It might be a paper purchased from any source. Plagiarism does not refer to words alone –it can refer to copying images, graphs, tables and ideas. “Presentation” is not limited to written work. It includes oral presentations, computer assignment and artistic works. Finally, if you translate the work of another person into any other language and do not cite the source, this is also plagiarism. **In Simple Words: Do not copy, paraphrase or translate anything from anywhere without saying where you obtained it!** Source: Academic Integrity Website: <http://concordia.ca/students/academic-integrity>

**Disabilities:** The University’s commitment to providing equal educational opportunities to all students includes students with disabilities. To demonstrate full respect for the academic capacities and potential of students with disabilities, the University seeks to remove attitudinal and physical barriers that may hinder or prevent qualified students with disabilities from participating fully in University life. Please see the instructor during the first class if you feel you require assistance. For more information please visit <http://concordia.ca/offices/acsd>

**Safe Space Classroom:** Concordia classrooms are considered ‘safe space classrooms’. In order to create a climate for open and honest dialogue and to encourage the broadest range of viewpoints, it is important for class participants to treat each other with respect. Name-calling, accusations, verbal attacks, sarcasm, and other negative exchanges are counter-productive to successful teaching and learning. The purpose of class discussions is to generate greater understanding about different topics. The expression of the broadest range of ideas, including dissenting views, helps to accomplish this goal. However, in expressing viewpoints, students should try to raise questions and comments in ways that will promote learning, rather than defensiveness and feelings of conflict in other students. Thus, questions and comments should be asked or stated in such a way that will promote greater insight into the awareness of topics as opposed to anger and conflict. The purpose of dialogue and discussion is not to reach a consensus, nor to convince each other of different viewpoints. Rather, the purpose of dialogue in the classroom is to reach higher levels of learning by examining different viewpoints and opinions with respect and civility.

*I acknowledge that Concordia University is located on unceded Indigenous lands. The Kanien’kehá:ka Nation is recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters on which we gather today. Tiohtiá:ke/Montreal is historically known as a gathering place for many First Nations. Today, it is home to a diverse population of Indigenous and other peoples. We respect the continued connections with the past, present and future in our ongoing relationships with Indigenous and other peoples within the Montreal community. (Indigenous Directions Leadership Group, Feb. 16, 2017)*