Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Faculty of Arts and Science

Sociology/Anthropology 252: Food and Culture

General Information

Term: *Fall 2026*
Credits: *3*
Class time: *Thursday: 5:45 PM - 8:15 PM*
Classroom: *H 561 SGW*

Instructor Information

Name: *Erik Chevrier, Ph.D.*
Website: *https://erikchevrier.ca/course/food-and-culture-fall-2026*
E-mail: *foodandculture@erikchevrier.ca*
Office Hours: *Thursday: 4:00 PM – 5:30 PM (by request)*
Office Location: *H-1125-30*

Territorial Acknowledgement

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) This course focuses on food and culture from decolonial, social justice perspectives. Students are encouraged to read the Red Paper on Land Back by the Yellowhead Institute.

Course Description from Concordia Calendar

This course introduces the study of food from a cultural perspective. Themes may include a) archaeology of food production (domestication of plants and animals); b) class, cuisine, and the development of taste; c) food symbolism; and d) the political economy of food and hunger.

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Course Description from Professor Erik

Food is an integral part of cultural studies. It is central to cultural rituals like feasts and festivals. It has catalyzed global resistance to capitalism, as seen in the food sovereignty movement. Food is embedded in beliefs and customs, such as religious diets like Kosher and Halal, and serves as a uniting force in the development of social economies, exemplified by food cooperatives. It has also been a central theme in countless cultural texts, films, and literature. Food helps us understand ourselves and the cultures we are part of; most importantly, it sustains us.

In this course, we will explore key themes related to food and culture, including meaning and practice, representation and identity, global and local food production, and food movements. A critical focus will be on diverse food economies: how it is produced, transformed, distributed, and consumed, as well as how food waste is managed in different parts of the world. We will analyze the role of multinational corporations like Bayer, examining the impacts of large-scale industrialized farming, monoculture, and the privatization of genetic resources. These practices have significant consequences, such as the use of GMOs and the resulting loss of biodiversity, reliance on fossil fuels and contributions to climate change, the health risks of glyphosate use, seed patents and the erosion of food sovereignty, and the depletion of water and food supplies.

We will also examine how various cultures and communities resist these negative outcomes. For example, we will explore the slow food movement in Italy and Ireland as a model for re-localizing food production, processing, and consumption (the "farm-to-plate" movement). We will study the food sovereignty movement, which gained prominence at the La Via Campesina assembly in Mexico in 1996 and has since spread globally. The Detroit Black Community Food Security Network will serve as a case study for reclaiming food sovereignty and food justice while combating food insecurity. Other topics include environmentally sustainable and socially equitable food practices, such as seed saving, Indigenous agricultural techniques, permaculture, rooftop gardening, and organic farming. Additionally, we will investigate how cultural beliefs and symbolism influence attitudes toward plants and animals in different parts of the world.

This course emphasizes experiential learning and the “practice” of food. Students will engage in hands-on activities related to food production, transformation, and waste management, fostering deeper connections to the subject matter. They will write about and discuss the cultural significance, meanings, and symbolism of these practices, using critical self-reflection and autoethnography to examine their roles within industrial and alternative food systems.

A major focus of the course is strengthening local food systems through community-campus engagement. Students will collaborate with community food initiatives to learn from those working to improve foodscapes at both micro and macro levels. Beyond critiquing the global food system, students will engage in action research to propose and implement practical improvements locally—and, if desired, internationally through online collaborations. They will explore ways to reduce food insecurity, advocate for food justice, and build food-sovereign communities.

Throughout the course, students will critically reflect on their participation in local and global food systems. They will also be encouraged to undertake action-research projects aimed at creating ethical interventions to improve campus and community foodscapes. These projects will focus on themes such as social justice, sustainability, food sovereignty, agroecology, and decolonial perspectives.

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Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, the students will:

- **Critically analyze food systems** by examining the intersections of food, culture, and power structures in shaping food production, distribution, and consumption.
- **Explore the cultural significance of food** in rituals, community building, and identity formation, highlighting its symbolic and social meanings.
- **Assess the impact of food movements** by analyzing global initiatives like food sovereignty and community food security in response to industrial food systems.
- **Engage in experiential learning** through hands-on activities in food production, transformation, and waste management to connect theory with practice.
- **Investigate food sovereignty and justice** by exploring how local communities resist corporate food systems and build equitable, (strong) sustainable food practices.
- **Connect global and local food issues** by analyzing multinational food systems and local efforts to create sustainable and just food systems.
- **Develop action research skills** by engaging in projects that address local food justice issues and collaborate with community organizations for practical solutions.
- **Critically reflect on personal food practices** and their broader social, cultural, and political contexts through written and spoken assignments.
- **Recognize viable alternatives to industrial food systems** by exploring agroecology, CSA programs, and participatory food systems that challenge industrial food practices.
- **Articulate critiques of global food systems** by examining the impacts of monocultures, food deserts, and environmental degradation.
- **Identify causes and consequences of food-related social and ecological problems** and propose solutions such as local food initiatives and food sovereignty.
- **Understand a plurality of food system approaches** and their ability to address environmental degradation, food injustice, and social impact.
- **Communicate the history and philosophies of food movements** by linking past and present food movements to struggles for food sovereignty and environmental justice.
- **Use diverse food system tools and language** to critically analyze contemporary issues like food waste, hunger, and corporatization.
- **Apply diverse food system approaches** to create ethical food practices that promote sustainability, health, and justice.
- **Move towards transformative food practices** by exploring food sovereignty, local systems, and decolonizing food systems.
- **Incorporate social justice and decolonial perspectives** in understanding food systems, including indigenous food sovereignty and dismantling inequalities.
- **Perform action research** to explore food sovereignty and system transformations from cultural and ecological perspectives.
- **Re-embed food systems into society and the biosphere** by exploring models like permaculture and regenerative agriculture that reconnect food systems with the land and communities.
- **Identify planetary boundaries and ecological crises** in food production and consumption, ensuring ecological sustainability in food systems.
- **Comprehend degrowth perspectives** in food systems, questioning the need for continuous growth and advocating for reduced food waste and overconsumption.

- **Understand doughnut economics** in relation to food systems, balancing social equity and environmental sustainability within planetary limits.
- **Identify multiple forms of value in food systems** and compare conflicting values such as nutritional, cultural, ecological, and economic factors in food production and consumption

Instructional Method

This course will be conducted in person, fostering a collaborative and interactive learning environment. Each class will begin with a concise presentation and discussion led by Professor Erik, who will introduce key themes, share practical examples, and provide critical perspectives on weekly topics that go beyond the assigned readings.

Students are expected to complete the required readings before class and actively participate in discussions and hands-on activities. The course assignments are thoughtfully designed to:

- Cultivate critical perspectives on the intersections of food and culture.
- Encourage experiential learning through meaningful engagement with local food organizations.
- Empower students to explore and co-create pathways for campus-community food sovereignty and food justice through action research.

By combining theoretical insights with real-world applications, this course invites students to critically examine food systems and contribute to transformative change in their communities.

Required Course Materials

Students are required to complete the weekly readings before attending class. To ensure the workload is manageable, some weeks with heavier reading assignments will involve smaller reading groups, where Professor Erik will assign different chapters or sections to each group. This approach allows for a comprehensive discussion while making the readings more accessible. All required readings have been reserved as e-copies through the Concordia Library for online access.

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Course Schedule, Class Topics and Readings			
Date	Food Theme	Topics	Readings Due (please complete the readings before class)
Sept 10	Seeds	Introduction to Course	No Readings
Sept 17	Plant Care	Introduction to Food and Culture	Counihan, C., Van Esterik, P, Julier, A. (2019) Food and Culture: A Reader, 4th edition, Routledge. Introduction – Continuing the Salience of Food and Culture Borghini, A. and Piras, N. (2020) "Food and Foods. Toward a Definition ", *Rivista Italiana di Filosofia del Linguaggio*. Recommended Reading: Johnson, R. (1986-87) What is Cultural Studies Anyways? Social Text, Duke University Press, No. 16 (Winter, 1986-1987), pp. 38-80
Sept 24	Soil/Compost	Food Meaning and Practice	Counihan, C., Van Esterik, P, Julier, A. (2019) Food and Culture: A Reader, 4th edition, Routledge. Chapter 1 – Towards a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption Chapter 2 – The Culinary Triangle Chapter 3 – Deciphering a Meal
Oct 1	Mycology	Food Meaning and Practice	Counihan, C., Van Esterik, P, Julier, A. (2019) Food and Culture: A Reader, 4th edition, Routledge. Chapter 6 – Cooking Skills, the Senses, and Memory: The Fate of Practical Knowledge Chapter 7 – Race, Place and Taste: Making Identities Through Sensory Experience in Equator Chapter 8 – The Raw and the Rotten: Punk Cuisine
Oct 8	Urban Farming	CultivAction Loyola Farm Tour	Kimmerer, R. W. (2024) The Serviceberry: Abundance and Reciprocity in the Natural World, Scribner.

Oct 22	Microgreens	Edible Identities	Counihan, C., Van Esterik, P, Julier, A. (2019) Food and Culture: A Reader, 4th edition, Routledge. Chapter 9 – Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste Chapter 10 – The Nourishing Arts Chapter 11 – Towards Queering Food Studies: Foodways, Heteronormativity and Hungry Women in Chicana Lesbian Writing
Oct 29	Mycology	Edible Identities	Counihan, C., Van Esterik, P, Julier, A. (2019) Food and Culture: A Reader, 4th edition, Routledge. Chapter 12 – A Way Outa No Way: Eating Problems Among African-American, Latina, and White Women Chapter 13 – 'Mexicans' Food Voice and Differential Consciousness in the San Louis Valley of Colorado. Chapter 14 – I Haven't Eaten If I don't Have My Soup and Fufu: Cultural Preservation Through Food and Foodways Among Ghanaian Migrants in the United States
Nov 5	Fermentation	Campus-Community Food Culture	Cultivating Food Sovereign Campuses Transformative Food Literacy: Empowering Students to Rewrite Campus Food System Narratives
Nov 12	Sourdough	Food Movements	Holt-Giménez, E. (2017) A Foodie's Guide to Capitalism: Understanding the Political Economy of What We Eat, Monthly Review Press. Chapter 1 – How Our Capitalist Food System Came to Be Chapter 2 – Food, A Special Commodify
Nov 19	Food Hubs and Coops	Food Movements	Holt-Giménez, E. (2017) A Foodie's Guide to Capitalism: Understanding the Political Economy of What We Eat, Monthly Review Press. Chapter 3 – Land and Property Chapter 4 – Capitalism, Food and Agriculture

Nov 26	Cooking	Food Movements: Visit CultivAction Farm	Holt-Giménez, E. (2017) A Foodie's Guide to Capitalism: Understanding the Political Economy of What We Eat, Monthly Review Press. Chapter 5 – Power and Privilege in the Food System: Gender, Race, and Class Chapter 6 – Food, Capitalism, Crises and Solutions
Dec 3	World Cuisine	Taste Around the World Farewell Feast	Holt-Giménez, E. (2017) A Foodie's Guide to Capitalism: Understanding the Political Economy of What We Eat, Monthly Review Press. Conclusion: Changing Everything: Food, Capitalism, and the Challenges of Our Time

Evaluation

Participation: The participation grade is based on attendance, involvement in discussions, engagement in classroom activities and completion of supplemental tasks. Students are expected to attend the course regularly and actively participate in discussions, demonstrating that they have completed and understood the assigned weekly readings.

Cultural Significance of a Food Blog/Essay (600-1000 words): Students will create a recipe and prepare a meal to bring and share at the **Taste Around the World Farewell Feast** on December 3rd.

The blog must critically analyze the cultural relevance of the food item they prepare, exploring cultural practices, beliefs, attitudes, and the networks and institutions involved in its production, distribution, and consumption. Students will provide a recipe for the dish they prepare and reflect on the significance of the food within specific cultural contexts. sources.

The blog must be written in a clear, concise, and engaging manner, addressing an appropriate audience with a basic understanding of food systems and cultural studies. Although the format is a blog, the content must be based on research rather than personal opinion. To achieve an A grade, the blog must include references to at least six course readings. Students with production skills may choose to create a video or podcast instead of a blog; however, this alternative must be approved by Professor Erik beforehand.

Edible Identities Blog/Essay (600-1000 words): Students will explore the relationship between food and identity, both collective and personal. The blog post should critically examine how food is intertwined with the formation and expression of identity, considering how specific foods or eating practices reflect personal, familial, or cultural connections. Additionally, students should analyze how food represents broader social, political, or historical contexts. Reflecting on how food has influenced or shaped their own identity, students are encouraged to explore how food serves as a form of personal or collective representation.

Although you may draw from personal experience, your analysis must be grounded in research, not speculation. Explore how food carries symbolic meanings tied to personal experiences, and support your insights with evidence from course readings and credible sources. Make sure to connect your observations to key themes discussed in the course. The blog should be well-written, concise, and engaging, aimed at an audience with a basic understanding of food studies and cultural identity. To earn an A grade, the blog must include references to at least six course readings. Students with video or podcast production skills may opt to create a multimedia project instead of a blog, but prior approval from Professor Erik is required.

Community-Campus Engagement (Autoethnography 500-800 words): This assignment allows students to gain hands-on experience by getting involved with a campus or community food organization for six hours. Through this engagement, students will gain insight into the practical efforts of those working to create ethical economies and advocate for social justice. After their involvement, students will write an autoethnography reflecting on their personal experiences and critically analyzing their role within the community initiative.

The autoethnography should explore how their experience relates to broader themes such as food systems, social justice, and community-building, connecting their work to the course material, including *A Foodie's Guide to Capitalism* and other relevant, reliable, and credible articles. Students should reflect on how food contributes to fostering sustainable and equitable communities.

Evaluation will be based on the depth of each student's engagement, the quality of their reflection in the autoethnography, and the clarity of their contributions to the project. Students will also present an oral summary of their role, focusing on their individual contributions and how their engagement links to the broader themes of the course.

Course Assignments

Name of Assignment	Due Date	% of final grade
Participation	**Ongoing**	**15**
Cultural Significance of a Food Blog/Essay	**October 8**	**30**
Edible Identities Blog/Essay	**November 12**	**30**
Community-Campus Engagement	**December 3**	**25**

Grading System

Table 1: Grading System

A+	95 – 100	**B+**	80 – 84.9	**C+**	67 – 69.9	**D+**	57 – 59.9	**F**	0 – 49
A	90 – 94.9	**B**	75 – 79.9	**C**	63 – 66.9	**D**	53 – 56.9	**NR**	No report
A-	85 – 89.9	**B-**	70 – 74.9	**C-**	60 – 62.9	**D-**	50 – 52.9		

Extraordinary Circumstances

In the event of extraordinary circumstances and pursuant to the Academic Regulations, the University may modify the delivery, content, structure, forum, location and/or evaluation scheme. In the event of such extraordinary circumstances, students will be informed of the changes.

Class Cancellation

Classes are officially considered cancelled if an instructor is 15 minutes late for a 50-minute class, 20 minutes late for a 75-minute class, or 30 minutes late for longer classes.

Intellectual Property

Content belonging to instructors shared in online courses, including, but not limited to, online lectures, course notes, and video recordings of classes remain the intellectual property of the faculty member. It may not be distributed, published or broadcast, in whole or in part, without the express permission of the faculty member. Students are also forbidden to use their own means of recording any elements of an online class or lecture without express permission of the instructor. Any unauthorized sharing of course content may constitute a breach of the Academic Code of Conduct and/or the Code of Rights and Responsibilities. As specified in the Policy on Intellectual Property, the University does not claim any ownership of or interest in any student IP. All university members retain copyright over their work.

Behaviour

All individuals participating in courses are expected to be professional and constructive throughout the course, including in their communications.

Concordia students are subject to the Code of Rights and Responsibilities which applies both when students are physically and virtually engaged in any University activity, including classes, seminars, meetings, etc. Students engaged in University activities must respect this Code when engaging with any members of the Concordia community, including faculty, staff, and students, whether such interactions are verbal or in writing, face to face or online/virtual. Failing to comply with the Code may result in charges and sanctions, as outlined in the Code.

Late Assignment and Submission Policy

Unless you are given permission in advance, late assignments will not be accepted without adequate documentation of medical or personal emergencies. All assignments must be submitted in hard copy

on the due date. Assignments that are received electronically will have 30% deducted from the grade of the assignment.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity means that every student must be honest and accurate in their work. The Academic Code of Conduct includes rules and regulations students must follow. Unacceptable practices include the following

- Copy from ANYWHERE without saying from where it came.
- Omit quotation marks for direct quotations.
- Let another student copy your work and then submit it as his/her own.
- Hand in the same assignment in more than one class without permission.
- Have unauthorized material in an exam, such as cheat sheets, or crib notes. YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE CAUGHT USING THEM - JUST HAVING THEM WILL GET YOU INTO TROUBLE!
- Copy from someone else's exam.
- Communicate with another student during an exam by talking or using some form of signals.
- Add or remove pages from an examination booklet or take the booklet out of an exam room.
- Get hold of or steal an exam or assignment answers or questions.
- Write a test or exam for someone else or have someone write it for you.
- Hand in false documents such as medical notes, transcript or record.
- Falsify data or research results.

PLAGIARISM: The most common offense under the Academic Code of Conduct (see link below) is plagiarism, which the Code defines as "**the presentation of the work of another person as one's own or without proper acknowledgement**."

> This could be material copied word for word from books, journals, internet sites, professor's course notes, etc. It could be material that is paraphrased but closely resembles the original source. It could be the work of a fellow student, such as an answer on a quiz, data for a lab report, or a paper or assignment completed by another student. It could be a paper purchased through one of the many available sources. Plagiarism does not refer to words alone. It can also refer to copying images, graphs, tables, and ideas. Plagiarism is not limited to written work. It also applies to oral presentations, computer assignments and artistic works. Finally, if you translate the work of another person into French or English and do not cite the source, this is also plagiarism. In simple words: DO NOT COPY, PARAPHRASE OR TRANSLATE ANYTHING FROM ANYWHERE WITHOUT SAYING FROM WHERE YOU OBTAINED IT!

Take care to inform yourself of the rules, regulations and expectations for academic integrity.

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Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) raises significant social, ethical, and environmental concerns. These include its energy and resource use, environmental impacts, privacy and surveillance risks, bias and misinformation, the appropriation of intellectual and creative labour, growing concentrations of technological and economic power, and the potential for AI to contribute to existing inequalities in wealth and access to resources. Its use also raises important questions about how knowledge is produced, whose knowledge is represented, and who benefits from these technologies.

These questions are particularly relevant to this course because urban agroecology asks us to think critically about ecological sustainability, resource use, labour, knowledge, economic relationships, and food sovereignty. We will therefore approach AI as a technology that can be useful in some contexts while also considering its broader social, ecological, economic, and epistemological consequences.

AI may be used as a supportive tool, but it must not replace students' own research, thinking, analysis, interpretation, or writing. Students may not use AI to generate an assignment or substantive sections of an assignment, conduct analysis in place of their own analysis, generate personal or autoethnographic reflections, invent sources or citations, fabricate experiences or observations, or present AI-generated work as their own.

Students are responsible for the accuracy, integrity, and quality of everything they submit, including work developed with the assistance of AI.

Every submitted assignment must end with a brief statement indicating whether AI was used and, if so, how it was used. For example: "I used [tool] to help organize my notes and identify grammatical errors." If no AI was used, students should state: "I did not use generative AI in preparing this assignment."

Students must not upload private or identifying information about community organizations, volunteers, staff, community members, or other people they encounter through their experiential learning activities to generative AI systems. The experiential learning assignment is an opportunity to reflect critically on students' own participation and learning, not to collect or analyze information about the people or organizations with whom they volunteer.

If students are unsure whether a particular use of AI is appropriate, they should ask the instructor before using it.

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List of Student Services

Academic Code of Conduct
Academic Integrity
Access Centre for Students with Disabilities (ACSD)
Advocacy and Support Services
Campus Services
Conduct on Campus
Counselling & Psychological Services
Dean of Students Office
Financial Aid & Awards Office
HOJO (Off Campus Housing & Jobs)
International Students' Office
Library Services
Library Citation and Style Guides
Ombuds Office
Otsenhákta Student Centre
Safety and Security
Sexual Assault Resource Centre
Student Academic Services
Student Health Services
Student Hub
Student Success Center