

History of Science/Medical History 919
Graduate Seminar Food Politics: History, Science, and Politics of Diet and Nutrition
MSC 1406, Mon. 9:55- 11:55 am.
Spring 2009

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Food Politics: History, Science and Politics of Diet and Nutrition

Greetings. This graduate seminar focuses on the recent and renewed interest in food, its production, distribution, marketing and consumption. From farm to fork, from meat to mung bean, paleoagriculture to genetically modified foods, the foods people have eaten and continue to eat reflect assumptions about culture, morality, nutrition and health. From the vantage point of medical history and history of science, this seminar considers the development of ideas about food safety, the creation of nutritional guidelines, and the myriad ways that science and medicine have influenced food consumption and dietary regulation.

The requirements for the course include regular attendance and informed participation in the seminar meetings. Each person in class needs to shoulder responsibility as an active participant and learner. By 9 pm each Sunday evening, each person will also be responsible for submitting a one-to-two-page response to the week's readings by e-mail. During the course of the semester you may skip any two responses. These written responses are intended to raise interpretative questions and themes linked to the major focus of the course, to spur discussion, and to inspire prospective research projects.

There are two additional writing assignments: a book or film review (as though intended for a scholarly journal) and a conference length paper (10-12 pages) on a topic of your choice in the domain of food politics and based on some *original* findings or materials.

Books (available at the University Bookstore and on reserve in the office of Medical History and Bioethics)

Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*

Chris Feudtner, *Bittersweet: Diabetes, Insulin, and the Transformation of Illness*

Warren Belasco, *Meals to Come: a History of the Future of Food*

E. Melanie DuPuis, *Nature's Perfect Food: How Milk Became America's Drink*

Marion Nestle, *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition, and Health, Revised and Expanded Edition (California Studies in Food and Culture)*

Laura Shapiro, *Perfection Salad: Women and Cooking at the Turn of the Century*

Gary Taubes, *Good Calories, Bad Calories: Challenging the Conventional Wisdom on Diet, Weight Control, and Disease*

Jeffrey Pilcher, *Que Vivan las Tamales: Food and the Making of Mexican Identity*

Michael Pollan, *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto*

Class Schedule, Topics, and Readings

January 26 Introductory Meeting

February 2 **Original Thin**

Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*

February 9 **Back to the Future in Food Studies**

Warren Belasco, *Meals to Come: a History of the Future of Food*

February 16 **Heavy Drinking**

E. Melanie DuPuis, *Nature's Perfect Food: How Milk Became America's Drink*

February 23 **Science in the Kitchen**

Laura Shapiro, *Perfection Salad: Women and Cooking at the Turn of the Century*

Nick Cullather, "The Foreign Policy of the Calorie," *American Historical Review*, 112, 2007, 337-364.

March 2 **South of the Border; East and West**

Jeffrey Pilcher, *Que Vivan las Tamales: Food and the Making of Mexican Identity*

Jordan Sand, "A Short History of MSG: Good Science, Bad Science, and Taste Cultures," *Gastronomica*, 5, 2005, 38-49.

K. J. Cwiertka, "Popularising a Military Diet in Wartime and Postwar Japan," *Asian Anthropology* 1, 2002, 1-30.

March 9 **Diet and Disease**

Chris Feudtner, *Bittersweet: Diabetes, Insulin, and the Transformation of Illness*

March 16 Spring Break

March 23 **What if it's all been a great FAT lie?**

Gary Taubes, *Good Calories, Bad Calories: Challenging the Conventional Wisdom on Diet, Weight Control, and Disease*

March 30 **Fat Lies and Low Fat**

Good Calories, Bad Calories redux

Ann La Berge, "How the Ideology of Low Fat Conquered America," *Journal of the History of Medicine* 2008 63(2):139-177

April 6 **The Politics of Food**

Marion Nestle, *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition, and Health, Revised and Expanded Edition (California Studies in Food and Culture)*

April 13 **Personal and political**

Michael Pollan, In *Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto*

April 20 no class

April 27 **Paper Presentations**

May 4 **Paper Presentations**