

Georgia Institute of Technology
School of Literature, Media, and Communication

LMC 3508 (Fall 2014)
Formations of American Culture:
Food and Eating in Early America
T/Th 12:05-1:25pm, Skiles 314

Professor: Lauren Klein (lauren.klein@lmc.gatech.edu)
Office Hours: T/Th 11am-12pm, Skiles 359 (and by appointment)
Course Website: <http://blogs.iac.gatech.edu/food14/>

Course Prerequisites

ENGL 1102

Core Area

Humanities

Course Description

From the time of “first contact,” European explorers—and later, colonists and citizens—were alternately fascinated and repulsed by the new foods they encountered, and they wrote about them in their journals, narratives, histories, and letters. Early American writers, in turn, imbued acts of eating with new significance, as they attempted to distinguish their social, cultural, and political identities both from their European, African, and Caribbean counterparts, and from the native American cultures that abutted their own. This course will explore the ways in which ideas about food and eating were deployed in writing and in art, as well as at the table, so as to direct and reflect a range of early American concerns. We will also devote a significant portion of the course to the study of historical recipes and cookbooks. As a final project, we will work in conjunction with the University of Pennsylvania Libraries to design and implement a digital historical cookbook archive, updated and reframed for the Food Network age.

Learning Outcomes

- Students will become aware of the traditions and conventions of literature, film, and other forms of narrative art, and they will be able to analyze those traditions and conventions in specific cultural contexts; and
- They will learn to gather, organize, and express information clearly and accurately, with sensitivity to will be able to do so both by using traditional media and by tapping the potential of new digital media.
- More specifically, students will read a range of writings (and explore other art forms) from the time of first contact to the Civil War;
- They will develop an understanding of the cultural issues in play at the time, with special attention to the significance of food and eating;
- They will develop an awareness of the significance of archival materials, as well as the theoretical and technical issues related to their continued preservation; and
- They will create a thoroughly-considered digital historical recipe archive, informed by the range of content, criticism, and theory discussed in the course.

Required Course Materials

Available at Engineer's Bookstore, Barnes & Noble, and online:

Lydia Maria Child, *Hobomok*, ed. Carolyn Karcher. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1986). ISBN-13: 978-0813511641.

Additional required readings posted on the course website.

Additional research materials/expenses:

Ingredients for Cooking Assignment (see schedule for 11/6)

List of Graded Assignments

Your grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

- Participation and quizzes: 12 points
- Blogging assignments: 24 points
- Class Project:
 - Midterm project assignments: 24 points
 - Final project assignments: 36 points
- Floating points/unassigned: 4 points

When calculating final grades, I employ the following numerical conversions:

A = 90-100 B = 80-89 C = 70-79 D = 60-69 F = 0-59

This chart of grading characteristics, adapted from criteria developed by Professor Mark Sample of Davidson College, describes the general rubric I employ when evaluating student work:

GRADE	CHARACTERISTICS
A (10-12 points * multiplier)	Exceptional. The work is focused and coherently integrates examples with explanations or analysis. The work demonstrates awareness of its own limitations or implications, and it considers multiple perspectives when appropriate. The work reflects <i>in-depth</i> engagement with the topic.
B (7-9 points * multiplier)	Satisfactory. The work is reasonably focused, and explanations or analysis are mostly based on examples or other evidence. Fewer connections are made between ideas, and though new insights are offered, they are not fully developed. The work reflects <i>moderate</i> engagement with the topic.
C (4-6 points * multiplier)	Underdeveloped. The work is mostly description or summary, without consideration of alternative perspectives, and few connections are made between ideas. The work reflects <i>passing</i> engagement with the topic.
D (1-3 points * multiplier)	Limited. The work is unfocused, or simply rehashes previous comments, and displays <i>no evidence of student engagement</i> with the topic.

F (0 points)	No Credit. The work is missing or consists of one or two disconnected sentences/scenes/etc.
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Description of Graded Assignments

Reading Assignments

Because a significant learning objective of LMC 3508 is to enhance your understanding of the traditions and conventions of literature, and other art forms, you will be reading a wide range of texts—some written clearly, some more dense; some short, some long. Because these texts will inform our classroom discussions—and what you, in particular, have to contribute—it is absolutely essential that you stay on top of the reading assignments and complete them before the start of each class. Reading assignments are assessed through classroom participation, as well as the occasional quiz.

Blogging Assignments

In effort to stimulate interaction on the course blog, as well as to allow you to introduce new material into classroom discussion, we will employ an innovative format for class blogging. During the second week of the course, I will divide the class into four blogging groups. Each blogging group will rotate through the following roles (also developed by Mark Sample of Denison College):

First Readers: This is akin to the standard blog post assignment: a 200-300 word response to the week's materials. There are a number of ways to approach the "first reader" response: to consider the week's material in relation to its historical or theoretical context; to write about an aspect of the week's material that you don't understand, or that you don't agree with; to formulate an insightful question or two about the material and then attempt to answer your own question; or another line of inquiry of your own choice. First readers are responsible for posting their response to the class blog by noon on the day BEFORE the class meets.

Respondents: Students in this group build upon, disagree with, or clarify the first readers' posts; due at the start of the class meeting.

Searchers: Students in this group find and share at least one relevant online resource (broadly conceived), and are responsible for providing a short evaluation of the resource, highlighting what makes it worthwhile, unusual--or, if appropriate--problematic; due by the start of the class meeting.

The fourth group has the week off.

At the completion of each cycle (i.e. each four weeks), you will receive 0-12 points on the basis of your contributions. At the end of the semester, these points will be averaged to determine your final blogging grade.

Class Project

Over the course of the semester, you will work in small groups—and, at times, as an entire class—to complete a final project: a historical recipe archive in digital form. Your grade for this project will be determined by several components:

- Group project proposal and individual project analysis (24 points combined)
- Group final project and individual project analysis (36 points combined)

Specific information about each assignment will be distributed no later than two weeks before the due date.

Attendance, Punctuality, and Late/Skipped Assignments

You are allowed three excused absences. Beginning with the fourth absence, your overall course grade will be lowered by a half letter grade (e.g. B to B-) for each unexcused absence.

Please be respectful to your fellow students and arrive on time. If you arrive more than 15 minutes late, you will be considered absent for that class. If you absolutely must miss a class meeting, please contact me at least 24 hours in advance in order to make alternate arrangements.

All assignments are mandatory. Should you submit an assignment after the due date, your grade for that assignment will decrease by a half letter grade for each day that it is late (e.g. B becomes B-). Should you fail to submit an assignment entirely, you will receive an F on that assignment and consequently, a lower grade for the course.

ADAPTS Contact Information

Students with disabilities should self-report to ADAPTS at:

Smithgall Student Services Building, Suite 220

Phone: (404) 894-2564 / TTD: (404) 894-1664

Email: adaptsinfo@gatech.edu

<http://adapts.gatech.edu/>

Writing Support

The Georgia Tech communication center, CommLab, provides professional and peer tutors to work with you to improve your writing skills. More information, including instructions for how to set up an appointment via the website, is available here:

Clough Learning Commons

Phone: (404) 894-3805

Email: commlab@gatech.edu

<http://www.lmc.gatech.edu/writingcomm/commcenter/>

Honor Code Statement

Plagiarism is an extremely serious offense. Any evidence of plagiarism will result in an F on the assignment and possibly in the course, as well as potential disciplinary action. For more information, please refer to the definition of “academic misconduct” included in the Georgia Tech honor code, available online at:

<http://www.honor.gatech.edu/>

If you are unsure as to what constitutes plagiarism, please contact me before submitting your assignment.

Class-by-Class Schedule

Introduction

Tuesday, August 19 – Overview I

- Li Young Lee, “Persimmons”

Thursday, August 21 – Overview II

- Georges Perec, “Attempt at an Inventory”

Unit I: Eating and Identity (The Colonial Era)

Tuesday, August 26

- Michael Pollan, “Introduction” from *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*
- William Bradford, from *Of Plymouth Plantation*

Thursday, August 28

- Jeffrey Steingarten, “Why Doesn’t Everyone in China Have a Headache?”
- Mary Rowlandson, “A Narrative of the Captivity...” (start)

Tuesday, September 2

- Mary Rowlandson, “A Narrative of the Captivity...” (finish)
- Claude Levi-Strauss, “The Culinary Triangle”

Thursday, September 4

- Anne Allison, “Japanese Mothers and Obentos: The Lunch-Box as Ideological State Apparatus”
- Álvaro Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, from *The Relation...*
- LAB: Evaluation of contemporary cookbook/recipe sites

Tuesday, September 9 – **Blog Week 1**

- Richard Ligon, from *A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados*
- Mary Douglas, “Deciphering a Meal”

Thursday, September 11

- Eliza Smith, “Preface” to *The Compleat Housewife*
- James McWilliams, “Getting to the Guts of American Food”
- LAB: Evaluation of historical cookbook/recipe archives

Unit II: Culinary and Cultural Independence (The Revolutionary Era)

Tuesday, September 16 – **Blog Week 2**

- Amelia Simmons, “Introduction” to *American Cookery*
- James McWilliams, “A Culinary Declaration of Independence”

Thursday, September 18

- LAB: MEET AT ARCHIVES

Tuesday, September 23 – **Blog Week 3**

- Benjamin Franklin, from *The Autobiography*
- Carolyn Korsmeyer, from *Making Sense of Taste*

Thursday, September 25

- Olaudah Equiano, from, *The Interesting Narrative*
- Peter Farb and George Armelogo, from *Consuming Passions*
- LAB: Skype with Dr. Mitch Fraas, U. Penn Libraries

Tuesday, September 30 – **Blog Week 4**

- Edward Long, from *The History of Jamaica*
- William Bartram, from *Travels through North & South Carolina, Georgia...*
- OPTIONAL: Judith Barter and Annelise Madsen, “The Symmetry of Nature”
- LAB: Generate feature list / evaluate WP themes

Thursday, October 2 – VIRTUAL LAB DAY, PROFESSOR AT UMEA UNIVERSITY

- LAB: Begin midterm project proposal

Tuesday, October 7 – **Blog Week 5**

- James Hemings, selected recipes
- Thomas Jefferson, selected letters
- Lauren Klein, “Dinner-Table Bargains”

Unit III: Food for Thought (The Early Republic)

Thursday, October 9

- Lydia Maria Child, *Hobomok*
- Roland Barthes, “Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption”
- LAB: Project proposal work session

Tuesday, October 14 – NO CLASS FALL BREAK

Thursday, October 16

- Lydia Maria Child, *Hobomok*
- **DUE: MIDTERM PROJECT PROPOSAL AND REFLECTION ESSAY**

Tuesday, October 21

- Lydia Maria Child, *Hobomok*
- bell hooks, “Eating the Other”

Thursday, October 23

- Lydia Maria Child, “Preface” to *The American Frugal Housewife*
- Mary Randolph, “Preface” to *The Virginia Housewife*

- Michel de Certeau and Luce Girard, “The Nourishing Arts”
- LAB: Evaluate / select recipe

Tuesday, October 28 – **Blog Week 6**

- Mary Prince, *The History of Mary Prince*
- Sydney Mintz, “Time, Sugar, and Sweetness”

Unit IV: Archives and Agency (Antebellum Era)

Thursday, October 30

- Harriet Jacobs, from *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*
- Fanny Kemble, from *Journal of a Residence on a Georgia Plantation*
- OPTIONAL: Jessica Harris, “In Sorrow’s Kitchen”
- LAB: Analyze Recipe

Tuesday, November 4 – **Blog Week 7**

- Frederick Douglass, from *Narrative of the Life*
- Harriet Wilson, from *Our Nig*
- OPTIONAL: Vincent Woodward, “A Tale of Hunger Retold”

Thursday, November 6 – VIRTUAL LAB DAY, PROFESSOR AT AMERICAN STUDIES CONFERENCE

- LAB: Cook recipe

Tuesday, November 11 – **Blog Week 8**

- Nathaniel Hawthorne, from *The House of the Seven Gables*
- Harriet Beecher Stowe, from *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*
- OPTIONAL: Kyla Tompkins, “Everything ‘Cept Eat Us”

Thursday, November 13

- Walt Whitman, from “Song of Myself”
- Emily Dickinson, selected poems and recipes
- OPTIONAL: Erica Fretwell, “Emily Dickinson in Domingo”
- **DUE: Prototype recipe page w/ placeholder features/annotations**

Tuesday, November 18 – **Bonus Blog Week**

- Catherine Ward Beecher, Preface to *Treatise on Domestic Economy*
- Malinda Russell, Preface to *Domestic Cookery*
- OPTIONAL: Annelise Madsen, “Recipes for Refinement”
- OPTIONAL: Kyla Tompkins, “Consider the Recipe”

Thursday, November 20

- Sarah Josepha Hale, selections on Thanksgiving
- Abraham Lincoln, “Thanksgiving Proclamation”
- OPTIONAL: Judith Barter, “The Great American Food Feast”

Tuesday, November 25 – NO CLASS, THANKSGIVING

- **DUE: Recipe page w/ draft features/annotations**

Thursday, November 27 – NO CLASS, THANKSGIVING

Tuesday, December 2 – WPFE

- LAB: Final Project Work Session

Thursday, December 4 – WPFE

- LAB: Final Project Crit

Thursday, December 11th.

- **DUE: FINAL PROJECT AND REFLECTION ESSAY**