

First Term Seminar: Good Food

Read this syllabus carefully, and reread it periodically thru the semester. You are responsible for the information contained in it I will not always tell you when something is due; I will expect you to find it in the syllabus and take charge of it.

Professor

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Writing Associate

[Fill in]

Texts

The Everyday Writer, Andrea Lunsford

Reading packet

These are both available in the bookstore. In addition to these readings, you will find some of your readings on the internet, and will receive some as photocopies in class. PLEASE pay careful attention to where a reading is located, so that you are always able to prepare for class. **Bring your text to class every day;** we will do a lot of textual work in class.

About this Course

What do we mean when we say homemade soup is good? That organically-grown vegetables are good? That *authentic* Thai food is good? That *any* food is good, so long as there's enough of it? How many ways can food be "good"—and what does "good" mean in all these contexts?

This course takes you on a philosophical exploration of good food—of the different senses the term "good" can take, when it gets applied to food. The examples above illustrate some of these senses—aesthetic, ecological, cultural, and ethical. During the semester, we'll dip into each of these senses of good, and will also explore other senses you uncover along the way.

In the course of our explorations, we'll encounter some of the central questions that *philosophers* have asked about the concept of good more generally. For instance, are there objective criteria for goodness? Can you be wrong about whether something is good? What makes someone an authority on good? Can something be good in one sense (say, the aesthetic), and bad in another (the ethical)? What do we do when different senses of good collide? (How do we decide what to eat, for instance, when ethical and moral senses of what's good come in conflict with each other?) Is one sense of good more important than all others?

In this class, we'll use our own experiences, our own investigations, and texts by a variety of writers, to try to understand some of the many ways food is good. In the process, we'll also come to learn some things about the nature of good more generally—a concept that philosophers have been pondering for centuries.

Class will be conducted seminar style, which means that we will spend most of our time in group discussion, rather than in lecture. Some days, we'll operate like a research group in which group members will regularly report the results of their research at roundtable discussions. On others, we'll focus on digesting and critiquing the text for the day.

About the First Term Seminar Program

First Term Seminars at Gustavus have four separate and very ambitious goals. They are:

1. To give you some introduction to a particular field of study. Typically, the subject matter of an FTS is more specialized than what you would find in a standard “Introduction to Discipline X” course. In this course, for instance, you'll learn something about the discipline of philosophy, and also something about the field of food studies. But I won't cover all the material you would find in an introductory course in either of those fields. We'll be much freer to wander where our interests develop.
2. To help you develop a set of academic skills useful to you in the rest of your college career—indeed, in the rest of your life. They include effective writing, effective speaking, critical thinking and reflection about values.
3. To provide you with academic advising during your first semester in college.
4. To introduce you to college life. Your FTS is the place you can learn about academic expectations, college resources, extracurricular activities, etc.

Assignments

Here's a list of the *types* of assignments you will be doing this semester. For a list of the due dates for assignments, look below in the reading schedule.

- **Informal Writings (IW's):** You will write many kinds of informal pieces: brief in-class writings, short essays written outside of class in response to an issue that comes up in class, summary reports on the research you've done, and critical evaluations of each other's formal papers. The goal of informal writing is to get you into the habit of formulating and clarifying ideas (your own and others') by writing them down. Informal writing is not unthinking writing—it's simply writing in which you don't have to worry as much about your spelling, punctuation and other mechanics. Some of the informal writings are already listed in the work plan, but additional ones may be assigned at any time. So, if you miss class, make sure you find out whether an informal writing has been assigned. I will accept no late work.
- **Formal Papers (FP's):** You will write four formal papers. The goal of formal papers is to give you practice crafting and polishing your ideas in a final, presentable format. Everything “counts” in a formal paper, from the spelling and syntax to the quality and organization of your ideas. I will give you specific paper assignments at least a week in advance of their due dates. We will spend a full class period talking about how to tackle the first assignment, and somewhat less time for each subsequent assignment. An important part of the writing process is the REwriting process. Thus, for each paper you write, you will submit a FULL first draft to one of your classmates, who will read and evaluate it and return it to you **in time for you to incorporate their suggestions before you turn in your final draft.**
- **Oral work (OW):** Many activities in the class will be designed to develop your abilities to formulate ideas while you are speaking. We will especially work on the kind of speaking that you must do in a discussion class, since that is the kind of speaking most of you will do most of the time during college (and afterwards). You'll get lots of opportunities to think on your feet; to follow up someone else's line of thinking in a discussion; to ask questions to clarify what someone is talking about; to articulate a disagreement with an author or a classmate. Much of your oral work will be spontaneous and informal, but there will also be more specific, formal assignments, including being in charge of opening the discussion of a text, and presenting the results of your research in a roundtable discussion.

- **Food:** How could a course on food be complete, without actual food? I invite you to bring food to share with the class, that also connects to the things we are talking about in class. Be prepared to talk about it in class. Bringing food and talking about it will bring you a bit of extra credit. You may bring food to talk about twice during the semester. (But you don't have to do so at all.)

Plan of Work

This work plan outlines the topic we will address in each segment of the course, along with a thumbnail sketch of the reading and writing assignments you will complete during that segment. (Detailed explanations of assignments will come later.) Assignments listed include informal writings (**IW**), formal papers (**FP**), and oral work (**OW**).

Each segment of the course will explore one way in which food can be good: aesthetic, cultural, environmental, and ethical. Each segment is constructed as a kind of mini research project, beginning with our defining an issue, and including both individual research on the issue and a group analysis and discussion of texts that address that issue. You will be functioning not simply as a reader of others' theories, but as a researcher/investigator in your own right.

A. Introduction: the terms of our discussion (9/3-9/15)

In this first portion of the course, you will identify, and develop preliminary definitions of, some of the central terms and concepts that we will use in our subsequent investigations of good food—concepts from both food studies and philosophy. You'll begin to familiarize yourself with the resources available in the library and on the Internet, as you build up preliminary definitions of these concepts, and exchange your findings with your classmates.

1. Texts

- Your classmates' informal writings
- Library reference materials and online reference sources

2. Oral/Written Assignments

- IW: A "good food" story from your own life. **Due 9/3**
- IW: An analysis of some of the concepts that one classmate uses in her good food story. **Due 9/5**
- FP#1: a polished version of your good food story. **Due 9/9**
- OW: A roundtable discussion about the results of your research. **9/10 and 9/12**
- IW: A write-up of your research on the terms and concepts we'll use in the class. **Due 9/12**
- Other: You will have an appointment with our class's Writing Associate, after you've gotten back your first formal paper. You'll talk with her about my evaluation of your paper, and set strategies for how you want to improve your writing this term.

B. Good food *tastes* good: cuisine (high and low), and aesthetic standards (9/17-10/8)

Good taste is probably the most familiar form of goodness food possesses. In this segment of the course, we'll explore some of the ways that food is aesthetically good, in the process encountering the distinction between "high" and "low" cuisine. Inspired by *your* good food stories from segment A, we will read first person accounts of delicious food, written by food

critics, “foodies”, and other eaters, both expert and amateur. We’ll also read theoretical writings that analyze the role of the food critic as an aesthetic judge.

1. Texts

- Calvin Trillin
 - “Hometown Boy”
 - “Stalking the Barbecued Mutton”
 - “Mao and Me”
- Elizabeth Romer, excerpts from *The Tuscan Year*
 - “May”
 - “August”
- Brillat-Savarin, excerpts: “Aphorisms of the Professor” (online at <http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/b/b85p/part2.html>); “Dialogue Between the Author and his Friend” (online at <http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/b/b85p/part3.html>)
Meditation 13 (online at <http://etext.library.adelaide.edu.au/b/b85p/part18.html>)
- David Hume, “The Standard of Taste” (online at <http://www.mnstate.edu/gracyk/courses/phil%20of%20art/hume%20on%20taste.htm>)
- Jean Francois Revel, from *Culture and Cuisine*: “The Two Sources of Cuisine”
- Sidney Mintz, “Cuisine: High, Low and Not at All”

2. Oral/Written Assignments

- IW: Watch for intermittent assignments!
- OP: Each class member will be responsible for introducing discussion questions for one of the readings in this segment
- FP#2: A summary explanation of one of Hume’s or Revel’s arguments. **Due 10/10**

C. Good food is *authentic*: culture and cuisine (10/10-10/24):

In this segment of the course, we’ll study a cultural meaning of goodness—authenticity. Using the understanding of cuisine that we developed in segment B, we will explore some of the ways that ethnic and regional cuisines are praised and prized for their authenticity. We’ll utilize both first person accounts, and theoretical analyses of the concept, in our efforts to understand why many people argue that good food must be authentic. You’ll investigate the meaning of authenticity with respect to one particular ethnic or regional cuisine.

1. Texts

- Doris Friedensohn, “Chapulines, Mole and Posole”
- Calvin Trillin
 - “Hong Kong Dream”
 - “Divining the Mysteries of the East”
- John Thorne, “Knowing Beans”
- Raymond Sokolov, “Revolution Now!”
- Donna Gabaccia, “What Do We Eat” and “Who Are We?”
- (Lisa Heldke, excerpts from *Exotic Appetites*)

2. Oral/Written Assignments

- IW: Working in groups, research how “authenticity” is characterized for a certain ethnic cuisine. Consider the matter from the perspective of various groups, including restaurateurs, scholars, food critics, and other relevant “eaters.” **Due 10/22**
- OW: A roundtable discussion of your findings on authenticity. **10/22 and 10/24**
- FP #3: A theoretical analysis of the meaning of authenticity. **Due 10/27**

D. Good food is *ecologically sustainable*: bioregionalism and sustainable agriculture (10/29-11/19)

This segment of the course explores the claim that we live in a global food system, a system that is harmful both to humans and to the rest of the natural world. You’ll do research to determine the degree to which you think this claim is true, and we’ll read the proposals of theorists who believe it is true and who want to develop alternatives to the global food system. Good food, they argue, must be sustainably produced.

1. Texts

- Alix Kates Shulman, excerpt from *Drinking the Rain*
- Jack Kloppenberg, et al., “Coming Into the Foodshed
- “The Globalization of Food: How Americans Feel About Food Sources, Who They Trust, Food Security, Genetic Modification, Food Labeling and the Environment” online at <http://sa.ncsu.edu/global-food>
- Wendell Berry,
 - “The Pleasures of Eating”
 - “Farming and the Global Economy” [Not in the packet; I have copies of these to distribute to you]
- Wes Jackson
 - “Stewards of the Land”
 - “Meeting the Expectations of the Land” [Not in the packet; I have copies of these to distribute to you]
- Excerpts from *For Hunger Proof Cities*:
 - Hamm and Barron, “Developing an Integrated, Sustainable Urban Food System”
 - Perkins, “Public Policy and the Transition to Locally Based Food Networks”

2. Oral/Written Assignments

- IW: A write-up of web research collecting evidence for and against the claims that: 1) we live in a global food system and 2) that system is harmful to humans and to the environment. **Due 10/31**
- OW: Class presentations on the web research project. **10/29 and 10/31**
- IW: A follow-up assessment of the global food system claim, in light of evidence from classmates. **Due 11/11**

E. Good food is *any food*: ethics and hunger (11/21-12/12)

This segment of the course considers the social and ethical issue of hunger—the fact that, for many people in the world, *any* food is good food. We’ll begin the segment by conducting brief investigations into the nature of hunger in various locations across the globe. Then

we'll examine ways people have proposed to address the problem of world hunger, as well as some ways theorists have analyzed the particular problem of hunger in the United States.

1. Texts

- Garrett Hardin: "Lifeboat Ethics" (online at <http://www.etsu.edu/philos/classes/hhl/lifeboat.ethics.pdf>)
- Andre and Velasquez: "World Hunger: A Moral Response" (online at <http://www.scu.edu/ethics/publications/iie/v5n1/hunger.html>)
- Francis Moore Lappe and Joseph Collins: "Why Can't People Feed Themselves?" "Question: Don't U.S. food aid programs...?" and "12 myths about hunger" (online at <http://www.foodfirst.org/pubs/backgrdrs/1998/s98v5n3.html>)
- Janet Poppendieck, excerpts from *Sweet Charity?*
- Riches, "Reaffirming the Right to Food in Canada"
- Additional source on food insecurity/security in the U.S.

2. Assignments

- IW: Library and internet research to create a "snapshot" of hunger in various countries **Due 11/25**
- OW: A roundtable discussion of the state of world hunger. **11/24 and 11/25**
- FP#4: A theoretically-grounded plan of action an individual might take to address hunger. **Due 12/16**

Date	To Prepare for Class	To Do In Class	To Hand In During Class
A. Introduction: the terms of our discussion (9/3-9/16)			
9/3	Write your good food tale	Telling good food tales: reading from your writings	IW Your “good food” story: 2 copies
9/5	Write your analysis of your classmate’s tale	Telling good food tales: finishing readings	IW: Analysis of classmate’s tale
9/8	TBA (To Be Announced)	College 101: Barbara Fister, Library	TBA
9/9	Initiate research independently	Library day	FP #1 Good food story
9/10	Prepare presentation for roundtable discussion	OW Roundtable discussion: food concepts research	
9/12	Investigate follow-up questions	OW Roundtable discussion: food concepts research	IW Research write-up: food concepts
9/15	TBA	Summing up day Gathering our conceptual resources for the course	
9/16	Prepare three questions about nutrition	College 101 Day: June Kloubec, Health and Exercise Science Department: “Nutrition and Good Food”	IW Your questions about good nutrition
B. Good food tastes good: cuisine and aesthetic standards (9/17-10/8)			
9/17	Read Trillin, “Hometown,” “Stalking,” “Mao”	OW Discussion, including student-led questions	
9/19	Read Romer	OW Discussion, including student-led questions	
9/22	Read Brillat-Savarin (online) Prepare three reflective question about the dining service	OW Discussion, including student-led questions	IW Your reflective questions about the dining service

9/23		College 101 Day: Steve Kjellgren, Dining Service: “Good Food in the Caf: How and Why”	
9/24	Read Hume	OW Discussion, including student-led questions	
9/26	Reread Hume	OW Discussion, including student-led questions	
9/29	Read Revel	OW Discussion, including student-led questions	
9/30		College 101 Day: Peer Assistants	
10/1	Reread Revel	OW Discussion, including student-led questions	
10/3	Read Mintz	OW Discussion, including student-led questions	
10/6	Reread Mintz	OW Discussion, including student-led questions	
10/7		Nobel Conference	
10/8		Nobel Conference	
C. Good food is <i>authentic</i>: culture and cuisine (10/10-10/24)			
10/10			FP #2 Argument summary
10/13	Read Trillin or Thorne	OW Discussion, including student summaries	
10/14	Read Friedensohn	OW Discussion, including student-led questions	
10/15	Read Sokolov	OW Discussion, including student-led questions	
10/17	Reading Period		
10/20	Reading Period		
10/21	Read Gabaccia	OW Discussion, including	

		student-led questions	
10/22	Write up presentation for roundtable	OW Roundtable on authenticity	IW Group research on authenticity
10/24	Investigate follow-up questions	OW Roundtable on authenticity	
D. Good food is <i>ecologically sustainable</i> (10/27-11/19)			
10/27	Read Kloppenber, first [how many pages to get their claim about global food system?]	Discussion Introducing the global food system	FP #3 Authenticity theory
10/28		College 101 Day: Carolyn O'Grady on how to read	
10/29	Read "The Globalization of Food," online at http://sa.ncsu.edu/global-food [decide if this is the place]	Library Day: Gathering evidence re: the global food system	
10/31	Write up presentation for roundtable	OW Roundtable on global food system	IW Global food system research
11/3	Investigate follow-up questions	OW Roundtable on global food system	
11/4		College 101 Day	
11/5	Read Shulman	OW Discussion, including student-led questions	
11/7	Read Berry [decide which]	OW Discussion, including student-led questions	
11/10	Read Jackson [decide which]	OW Discussion, including student-led questions	
11/11		College 101 Day	IW Follow-up response to roundtable findings
11/12	Read Kloppenberg, et al., entire piece		

11/14	Read Hamm/Barron, and Perkins		
11/17	[flex day?]		
11/18		College 101 Day	
11/19	Read		
E. Good food is <i>any</i> food: ethics and hunger (11/21-12/12)			
11/21	Read Hardin	OW Discussion, including student-led questions	
11/24		OW Roundtable on hunger	
11/25		OW Roundtable on hunger	IW A hunger “snapshot”
11/26		NO class: Drive safely!	
11/28	Thanksgiving Recess		
12/1	Read Andre and Velasquez	OW Discussion, including student-led questions	
12/2		College 101 Day	
12/3			
12/5	Read Lappe and Collins	OW Discussion, including student-led questions	
12/8	Read Poppendieck	OW Discussion, including student-led questions	
12/9		College 101 Day	
12/10	Read Riches	OW Discussion, including student-led questions	
12/12	[flex day]		
Final period	Reflect on semester	Summary discussion	
12/16			FP #4 A theoretically grounded hunger plan of action