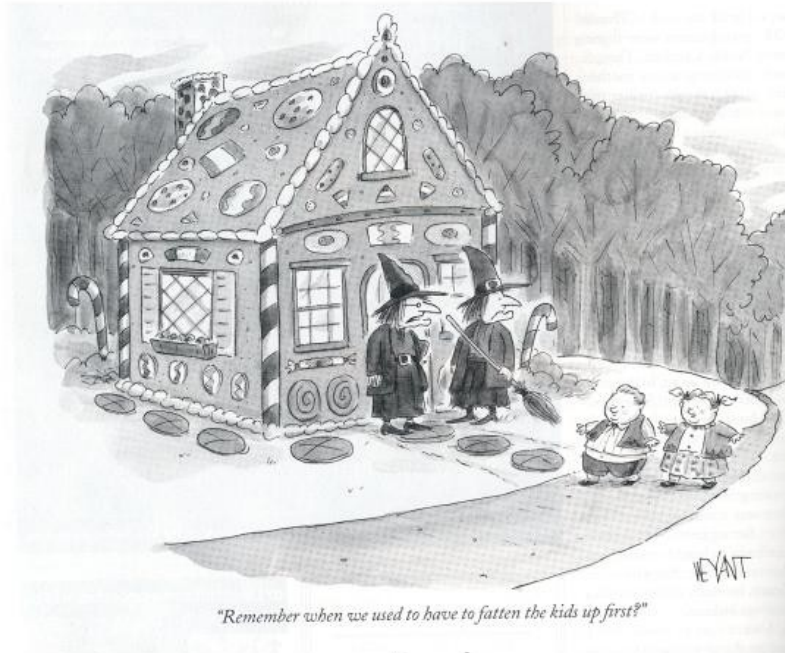


# **Fat and Thin: A History of American Bodies**

HSHM230b/HIST 125b



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Monday, Wednesday 1:30 to 2:20

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America is currently experiencing an “epidemic” of obesity. In the last two decades, the number of Americans identified as overweight or obese has ballooned. (Even American pets are apparently dangerously overweight!) At the same time, an increasing number of Americans—men, women, teenagers, and children as young as six—report that they are dieting to lose weight. This course considers the search for the healthy body in the United States over the past two centuries. It explores changes in the American diet that resulted from technologies of food production. It also examines the changing medical understanding of the healthy body, including the history of diets and eating disorders, the discovery of vitamins, the development of weight charts, the medicalization of obesity and the availability of surgical solutions. Topics include food faddism, the moral dimensions of diet, and the cultural norms of the slender and fat body—male and female.

*Required Readings* (Available at Book Haven; on reserve in Cross Campus Library)

Joan J. Brumberg, Fasting Girls  
 Philip J. Hiltz, Protecting America's Health: The FDA, Business, and One Hundred Years of Regulation  
 Harvey Levenstein, Paradox of Plenty: A Social History of Eating in Modern America  
 Eric Schlosser, Fast Food Nation  
 Upton Sinclair, The Jungle

Reader (Available at York Copy Center, and on reserve at Cross-Campus Library)

*Schedule of Lectures*

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|-------------------|-------|---|
| January 12        | I.    | Introduction  |
| January 14        | II.   | Coming to America   |
| January 16        | III.  | Feeding the Slaves  |
| <b>January 19</b> |       | <b>Martin Luther King Holiday--Monday classes do not meet</b> |
| January 21        | IV.   | The Road to Wellville   |
| January 26        | V.    | Yale Men: Irving Fisher and National Vitality                 |
| January 28        | VI.   | Counting the Calorie  |
| February 2        | VII.  | The Science of Nutrition                                      |
| February 4        | VIII. | Pure Food   |
| February 9        | IX.   | Baby Fat  |
| February 11       | X.    | Molding the Male Body (Guest Lecturer: Beth Linker)           |
| February 16       | XI.   | Fasting Girls   |
| February 18       | XII.  | American Hunger   |
| February 23       | XIII. | Midterm Examination   |
| February 25       | XIV.  | Food for Fighters! Feeding the United States Army             |
| March 1           | XV.   | Starving for Science  |
| March 3           | XVI.  | Food in the Fifties (Guest Lecturer: Kari McLeod)             |

## *Spring Break*

- March 22 XVII. Better Living Through Chemistry: Artificial Sweeteners, Fake Fats, and the “New Non-Foods”
- March 24 XVIII. Medicalizing Obesity
- March 29 XIX. Diet Doctors
- March 31 XX. Surgical Solutions
- April 5 XXI. Fat! So?: “Sizism” in American Culture
- April 7 XXI. The Epidemic of Childhood Obesity (Guest Speaker: Marlene Schwartz, Co-Director, Yale Center on Eating Disorders)
- April 12 XXII. Feeding Fast
- April 14 XXIII. Frankenfoods
- April 19 XXIV. How now Mad Cow?
- April 21 XXV. The Fattest People on Earth

### *Course Requirements:*

Students will attend, in addition to lectures, one weekly discussion section. These sections are intended to provide a forum for informed discussion and debate about the readings and material presented in lecture. There will be a midterm examination on February 23, and a final examination on May 10 at 9 a.m.. Students will also write an essay review due April 5. This essay (2500-3000 words) will provide a critical analysis of *one* of the following books:

Peter N. Stearns, *Fat History: Bodies and Beauty in the Modern West*. ( New York University Press, 1999).

Marion Nestle, *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health* (University of California Press, 2002).

T. Coraghessan Boyle, *The Road to Wellville* (Viking Press, 1993).

### *Evaluation*

Grades in the course will be based on the following:

Attendance/Participation in Section	15%
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Midterm Examination	30%
Final Examination	35%
Essay Review	20%

*Reading Assignments:*

**Week I**

“Colonial Creoles” from Donna R. Gabaccia, *We Are What We Eat* (1998)

John R. Young, *An Experimental Inquiry into the Principles of Nutrition*, M.D. thesis, University of Pennsylvania 1803 (excerpts)

**Week II**

Levi Pollard, interview, from *Weevils in the Wheat: Interviews with Virginia Ex-Slaves* (1976)

Mary Reynolds, Louisiana, from *Lay My Burden Down: A Folk History of Slavery* (1994)

Thomas Affleck, “On the Hygiene of Cotton Plantations and Management of Negro Slaves,” *Southern Medical Reports*, 1850

*The Jungle*, chapters 1-8

**Week III**

Irving Fisher, “The Influence of Flesh Eating on Endurance,” *Yale Medical Journal*, 1907

Francis Benedict, “The Influence of Mental and Muscular Work on Nutritive Processes,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 1910

Horace Fletcher, “The Mind Power-Plant” and “Tell-tale Excreta,” from *The New Glutton or Epicure* (1906); and “Scientific Experiments,” from *Fletcherism: What It Is* (1913).

*The Jungle*, chapters 9-20

**WEEK IV**

*The Jungle*, chapters 21-31  
*Protecting America’s Health*, chapters 1-4

**WEEK V**

Morris Fishbein et al, *Your Weight and How to Control It: A Scientific Guide by Specialists and Dieticians* (1928), “The Craze for Reducing,” “Reducing and T.B.,” “Our Changing Food Habits,” and “The Overweight Child.”

Jeffrey P. Brosco, “Weight Charts and Well Child Care: When the Pediatrician Became the Expert in Child Care,” in *Formative Years: Children’s Health in the United States, 1880-2000* (2002)

Elizabeth Toon and Janet Golden, “Rethinking Charles Atlas,” *Rethinking History*, 2000

## **WEEK VI**

*Fasting Girls*, chapters 1, 3-7, 9

## **Week VII**

*Paradox of Plenty*, chapters 4-6

## **Week VIII**

Ancel Keys et al, *The Biology of Human Starvation* (1950), chapters 1, 4

L. J. Arrington, *The Price of Prejudice: the Japanese-American Relocation Center in Utah during World War II* (1962)

Charles G. Roland and Harry S. Shannon, “Patterns of Disease among World War II Prisoners of the Japanese: Hunger, Weight Loss, and Deficiency Diseases in Two Camps,” *Journal of the History of Medicine*, 1991.

Jesse Berrett, “Feeding the Organization Man: Diet and Masculinity in Postwar America,” *Journal of Social History*, 1997

## **Week IX**

*Paradox of Plenty*, chapters 7-8, 11-13  
*Protecting America’s Health*, chapters 13-14

## **Week X**

Arthur Cramp, “Fooling the Fat,” from *Your Weight and How to Control It* (1928)

“Losing Weight—an Ill-fated New Year’s Resolution,” *New England Journal of Medicine*, 1998

Rockney, A. E. "Surgical Operations on the Obese and the Advantage of Preparatory Fasting," *Northwest Medicine*, 1911

Sheila and David Rothman, "The Body as Turf," in *The Pursuit of Perfection: the Promise and Perils of Medical Enhancement* (2003)

Betty Shermer, "Intestinal Bypass," Louise Wolfe, "Weight Loss Surgery: Miracle Cure or Mutilation?"; Kelly, "Medical Crimes, or, Since When Have Men Cared About Our Health?"; Mona Hudson, "Bypass," from *Shadow on a Tightrope: Writings by Women on Fat Oppression* (1983)

### **Week XI**

Marlene Schwartz et al, "Weight Bias Among Health Professionals Specializing in Obesity," *Obesity Research*, 2003

Marlene Schwartz and R. Puhl, "Childhood Obesity: a Societal Problem to Solve," *Obesity Reviews*, 2003

Annemarie Jutel, "Does Size Really Matter? Weight and Values in Public Health," *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine*, 2001.

Margaret K. Bass, "On Being a Fat Black Girl in a Fat-Hating Culture," in *Recovering the Black Female Body: Self Representations by African American Women* (2001).

Dan Seligman, "Flab and the EEOC," *Forbes*, 1999.

"Is an Ample Body an Able Body?" from Sondra Solovay, *Tipping the Scales of Justice* (2000)

### **Week XII**

*Fast Food Nation*, introduction and chapters 1-6

Warren Belasco, "Algae Burgers for a Hungry World? The Rise and Fall of Chlorella Cuisine," *Technology and Culture* (1997)

### **Week XIII**

*Fast Food Nation*, chapter 7 through afterword.

Michelle Mell, Rice Rimm, and David Studdert, "The McLawsuit: The Fast Food Industry and Legal Accountability for Obesity," *Health Affairs* (2003)