

Course Outline

HIST 3276 – Topics in Environmental History

Food, Land, and Subsistence in Human History

Section: 001
Classroom: F204
Class Time: Mon, 12:30 – 3:30

I encourage you to come by my office, whether to get help with assignments, ask questions about course material, discuss your progress, or simply to talk history.

Introduction

The news today is full of concerns about food – from the environmental contamination of water supplies by factory farms to the health effects of fast food. This course will contextualize these topics by exploring the cultural and environmental history of food. We will focus on food as a product of human-environment interaction through agriculture, humanity's main source of food and central form of interaction between humans and the rest of nature. Students will gain historical and political perspective on the growing environmental, supply, and health problems of the contemporary world food system.

Course Structure

Hist 3276 is primarily a lecture course, and most weeks will feature a lecture on that week's topic. The remainder of our time will be spent in different ways. Often, we will discuss the questions generated for that week's readings, but films and other activities are also possible.

Required Texts

All readings are available in the bookstore. The Tannahill and Wright books are also on reserve at the library.

Required Readings

Tannahill, Reay. *Food in History*, Rev. Ed. New York: Three Rivers Press, 1995.
Hist 3276 Course Reader, Part A (Weeks 1-6) (Available now).
Hist 3276 Course Reader, Part B (Weeks 7-13) (Available shortly).

Required for Assignment 1

Wright, Ronald. *A Short History of Progress*. Toronto: House of Anansi Press, 2004.

Style Guide

Rampolla, Mary Lynn. *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*, 4th ed. or 5th ed. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004 or 2006. Note: Required for all courses in history. No work will be assigned from this book but it will be assumed that you have it.

Marks and Assignments

Assignment	Weight	Due Date
Reading Questions	5%	TBA
Essay #1	15%	Jan 29
Midterm Test	10%	Feb 12
Essay #2	35%	Mar 19
Final Exam	35%	TBA

Reading Questions

Students will be required, at regular intervals, to create and hand in a question (or questions) based on the week's readings. We will discuss these questions in class following the lecture and come up with a question (or questions) for the midterm test and final exam (though not all the questions generated in class will necessarily appear on the exams). Questions must be e-mailed to the instructor (at jamesm@nipissingu.ca) at least 24 hours before the start of class (by Sunday at 12:30). Questions will be marked on a pass/fail basis. More details in class.

Essay #1 – Short Essay

This assignment tests your ability to read carefully and to express your thoughts in essay form. You will be asked to write a critical analysis of Ronald Wright, *A Short History of Progress*, in the form of a short (3-4 pages) essay. More details in class.

Essay #2 - Major Essay

The major essay will be based on a set list of topics. Each topic will specify a book that must form the basis of the paper. In order that the book be available, you will have to sign up for the topic of your choice (two students per topic). 8-10 pages. More details in class.

Midterm Test

The midterm test will be a relatively short test (about 30 minutes) designed to give you a sense of your grasp of course material so far. It will be largely based on the questions generated in class.

Final Exam

To be taken during the April exam period. The final exam will contain questions designed to test basic knowledge as well as essay questions designed to test your understanding of course concepts and your ability to integrate this knowledge into a coherent historical argument. The exam will contain a selection of the questions generated in class. It will cover material from both lectures and seminars. More details in class.

University Grading Standards (from the Academic Calendar)

"A" - (80-100%)

"B" - (70-79%)

"C" - (60-69%)

"D" - (50-59%)

"F" - (0-49%)

"A" indicates Exceptional Performance : comprehensive in-depth knowledge of the principles and materials treated in the course, fluency in communicating that knowledge and independence in applying material and principles.

"B" indicates Good Performance : thorough understanding of the breadth of materials and principles treated in the course and ability to apply and communicate that understanding effectively.

"C" indicates Satisfactory Performance : basic understanding of the breadth of principles and materials treated in the course and an ability to apply and communicate that understanding competently.

"D" indicates Minimally Competent Performance : adequate understanding of most principles and materials treated in the course, but significant weakness in some areas and in the ability to apply and communicate that understanding.

"F" indicates Failure: inadequate or fragmentary knowledge of the principles and materials treated in the course or failure to complete the work required in the course.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty includes cheating and plagiarism. The definition of cheating is fairly straightforward. The following information on plagiarism is offered to clear up any possible confusion. I advise you to read the section of the university calendar dealing with academic dishonesty and come to me if you have any questions or concerns.

The university calendar defines plagiarism as follows:

“Essentially, plagiarism involves submitting or presenting work in a course as if it were the student’s own work done expressly for that particular course when, in fact, it is not. Most commonly plagiarism exists when:

- a) the work submitted or presented was done, in whole or in part, by an individual other than the one submitting or presenting the work.
- b) parts of the work (e.g. phrases, ideas through paraphrase or sentences) are taken from another source without reference to the original author.
- c) the whole work (e.g. an essay) is copied from another source and/or
- d) a student submits or presents a work in one course which has also been submitted or presented in another course (although it may be completely original with that student) without the knowledge or prior agreement of the instructors involved.”

Penalties range from a grade of zero on the assignment concerned to expulsion from the university. Students should be warned that I take a very dim view of plagiarism and will pursue the maximum possible penalty against anyone suspected of it.

Late Policy

Assignments must be handed in at the start of class on the due date. After this time assignments will be considered to be late.

Penalties: Late assignments will be penalized 3% per day, counting weekends as one day. Assignments handed in more than 10 days after the due date will receive a grade of zero.

Assignments cannot be submitted by e-mail.

Schedule

Week

1 (Jan 8): Introduction: Deciphering a Meal

Readings: None

2 (Jan 15): The Origins & Spread of Agriculture

Tannahill, 1-41.

Diamond, "To Farm or Not to Farm," and "How to Make an Almond," CR.

Vasey, "The Origins of Agriculture," CR.

3 (Jan 22): Corn, Rice and Olives: Food & Ancient Civilizations

Tannahill, 43-91, 103-51.

Diamond, "The Ancient Ones: the Anasazi and their Neighbors," CR.

4 (Jan 29): Origins & Rituals of the Medieval Meal

Tannahill, 92-102, 153-95.

Donahue, "Mixed Husbandry: the English Ecological System," CR.

Paston-Williams, from "Good Lordship & Feasting," CR.

Simmons, from "Agriculture and its Impact," CR.

5 (Feb 5): The Columbian Exchange

Tannahill, 197-229, 252-79.

Cronon, "A World of Fields and Fences," CR.

Mintz, "Production," CR.

6 (Feb 12): Agriculture, Food & Industrialization

Tannahill, 281-95, 306-20.

Cronon, "Annihilating Space: Meat," CR.

Grigg, "Large-Scale Grain Production," CR.

7 (Feb 19): Reading Week

8 (Feb 26): Mutton to Milk: the Changing Diet of the Industrial Age

Tannahill, 295-305, 320-36.

Levenstein, "The New Nutritionists Assault the Middle Classes" and "The Newer Nutrition, 1915-1930," CR.

Horowitz, "A Meat-Eating Nation," CR.

9 (Mar 5): The Transformation of Farming in the 20th Century

Tannahill, 336-40, 344-46.

McNeill, from *Something New Under the Sun*, CR.

Steinberg, "Moveable Feast," CR.

Worster, "Florescence: The Grapes of Wealth," CR.

10 (Mar 12): Postwar Food Systems

Levenstein, "The Golden Age of Food Processing," CR.

Friedmann, "Remaking 'Traditions'," 36-48, CR.

Friedmann, Harriet. "The Political Economy of Food: The Rise and Fall of the Postwar International Food Order." *The American Journal of Sociology*, 88 (Supplement: Marxist Inquiries: Studies of Labor, Class, and States) (1982), S248-S286. Avail. through JSTOR

11 (Mar 19): Gender, Family, & Cooking

Friedmann, "Remaking 'Traditions'," 48-54

Levenstein, "The Great Regression: The New Woman Goes Home," CR.

Dummitt, from "Finding a Place for Father: Selling the Barbeque in Postwar Canada," CR.

Innes, "'34,000,000,000 Work-Hours' Saved: Convenience Foods and Mom's Home Cooking," CR.

12 (Mar 26): Worries

Tannahill, 354-58.

Scott, "Taming Nature: An Agriculture of Legibility and Simplicity," CR.

Smil, "Environmental Change and Agroecosystems," CR.

Pollan, from *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*, CR.

13 (Apr 2): Prospects

Smil, "Nitrogen & Civilization: Managing the Nitrogen Cycle," CR.

Laidlaw, "Saving Agriculture from Itself," CR.

Shiva, "Reclaiming Food Democracy," CR.

Friedmann, "Remaking 'Traditions'," 54-60, CR.