

**HH2008**  
**Feasting and Fasting: Food and Drink in History**  
**Nanyang Technological University**

Semester 1, AY2022/23

**A. Course Details**

Academic units: 3

Meeting time: To be announced

Venue: To be announced

Instructor: Mr. **Soh** Chuah Meng Esmond

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Office hours: By appointment

**Course Description**

Food history is an exciting new area of scholarship that draws on social, economic, cultural and political histories to help explain how and why practices and patterns of consumption have changed over the centuries. This course will explore the idea that everything has a history – even habitual actions like cooking and eating and seemingly mundane foodstuffs like rice and chili. Food history challenges the boundaries of nationalist histories to demonstrate long histories of trans-cultural connections and culinary collaborations. Students will learn how food can be used as a lens to understand complex cultural, political, social, economic, and environmental phenomena.

**B. General Expectations**

You are expected to complete all assigned pre-class readings and activities, attend all seminar classes punctually and take all scheduled assignments by due dates. You are expected to take responsibility to follow up with course notes, assignments and course related announcements for seminar sessions you have missed. You are expected to participate in all seminar discussions and activities.

**Absenteeism**

Absence from class without a valid reason can affect your overall course grade. Valid reasons include falling sick supported by a medical certificate and participation in NTU's approved activities supported by an excuse letter from the relevant bodies. If you miss a lecture, you must inform the course instructor via email prior to the start of the class.

**Academic Integrity**

Good academic work depends on honesty and ethical behaviour. The quality of your work as a student relies on adhering to the principles of academic integrity and to the NTU Honour Code, a set of values shared by the whole university community. Truth, Trust and Justice are at the core of NTU's shared values.

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As a student, it is important that you recognize your responsibilities in understanding and applying the principles of academic integrity in all the work you do at NTU. Not knowing what is involved in maintaining academic integrity does not excuse academic dishonesty. You need to actively equip yourself with strategies to avoid all forms of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, academic fraud, collusion and cheating. If you are uncertain of the definitions of any of these terms, you should go to the academic integrity website for more information. Consult your instructor(s) if you need any clarification about the requirements of academic integrity in the course.

### **Citations and Reference Style**

All citations are to be rendered in footnotes and accompanied with a complete bibliography rendered in the Chicago 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> Manual of Style. All submitted assignments should be typed in single-space, Times New Roman font, size 12, and the margins justified (inclusive of footnotes, which should be in Times New Roman font, size 10).

### **Policy on Late Submissions**

For each day for which an assignment is late, the total grade will be dropped by one. For example, an assignment worthy of an A+ that is late by a day will only be given an A grade, while one that is late by two days will be graded out of A- and so on. On a case by case basis, in the face of a medical emergency or extenuating circumstances, deadlines may be extended if students request for them **via email**. Extensions that are requested via Telegram or WhatsApp will be ignored and deemed void.

## **C. Assessment**

### **1. Class Participation (10%)**

Before class, students will post a question on the theme of the class based on their readings in NTULearn. This question must reflect their comparison and contrast of the different readings that are assigned that week. Students are also expected to participate actively in class discussions and contribute to the case study presentations of their colleagues (see below). Disruptive behaviour, such as constant tardiness or non-course-related conversations during lectures, presentations, or class discussion, will adversely affect your participation score. In addition, although I welcome a variety of informed opinions of controversial topics in class, I have **no tolerance for ad hominem remarks or personal attacks** and will not hesitate to refer the transgression to the department for further disciplinary action if necessary.

In addition to the above, from the third week of semester, students who are not presenting anything in a given week have to make a historical meme that draws inspiration from the assigned readings. They have to be prepared to give a thirty second oral contextualisation of the meme in class. As this is an exercise in public history, no obscene, distasteful, vulgar or sexually suggestive meme formats are allowed.

### **2. Found Object Presentation (10%)**

Each student will select an item of food, bring it to class, and account for its historical significance in relation to the week's themes and readings in a 15 to 20 minute presentation.

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Besides examining the food's historiographical significance in relation to the week's theme and world history, students must explain how the item was grown, manufactured, cooked, processed or advertised today, before comparing their present day observations with the secondary sources that they have consulted. For example, in a bottle of pasta sauce that claims to be "Italian," was the recipe and plant indigenous to Italy? If so, when was this the norm? Under what circumstances this became the case? A bibliography of consulted works is expected from each presentation.

As part of their discussion, presenters must explain why they have chosen to refer to these sources, and what they may have potentially missed out in the course of their research. There are several ways of approaching this assignment and problematizing the history of the selected food or dish, and I will reward presentations which adopt a creative format when engaging with their audience. On average, starting from the third week of class till week thirteen, **three students** will be presenting weekly.

### **3. Historical Case Study and Primary Source Activity (20%)**

Students will be divided into groups for this assignment, where they would facilitate an hour long discussion. They must select a dish, historical event or personality related to the history of food and connect their case study of choice to the week's themes and assigned readings. For the first fifteen to twenty minutes of their presentation, presenters will introduce the class to their case studies, before assigning suitable primary sources (translated into English if necessary) to their audience for perusal. In the last fifteen minutes of their presentation, presenters must condense the class's contribution and synthesise them with their own research and observations. **Please note that your groupmates for this project will be the same as those who will work with you for your Group Documentation Project (see below).**

**Groups must submit a proposal describing their topic of study to the instructor at least a week before their presentation and gain his approval via email or face to face consultation.** To do well in this assignment, presenters do not necessarily need to lead the class to a "correct" answer. Instead, they are graded based on how they have engaged with the week's themes, assigned readings, how coherently they have structured the session and selected their sources to encompass different ways of interpreting the same issue in history. I will reward presentations which adopt a creative format when engaging with their audience. The frequency of these presentations will be confirmed once the class size and schedule have been finalised by the second week of semester. Ideally, each group would present once in the first half of the semester, and another time after recess week.

### **4. Group Documentation Project (30%)**

The Group Documentation Project will be based on the documentation portfolio (20%), and presentation (10%) in week 13 of the course. The emphasis will be on crafting and executing a research documentation project. It shall focus on collecting and synthesising various primary materials from archives (such as photographs, letters, old footage and documentaries), online databases and oral history interviews. The documentation portfolio will be graded on its organisation, degree of coherence, novel use of sources and research methodology. **Please note that your groupmates for this project will be the same as those who have worked with you in the historical case study and primary source assignments (see above).**

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For this assignment, each group will select a heritage food or dish in Southeast Asia, account for the history of their subject and contextualise their case study of choice with additional readings and the concepts that we will discuss throughout this course. As part of their analysis, students must explain which groups in the present day had designated the dish or food to be a part of “heritage,” and what criteria were used by the organisations or individuals that they have consulted. In addition, they are expected to compare and contrast the public image and histories (such as commonly told stories about how they have ‘originated’) of their subjects with their own primary and secondary research, and account for any gaps, discrepancies or similarities that they may have encountered.

I strongly advise students to read the articles prescribed for week 13 before they begin compiling their documentation portfolio and preparing for their presentation, for several themes may be relevant for their analysis. **By week 4, groups must submit a proposal describing their topic of study to the instructor and gain his approval via email.** The grading rubric for this assignment will be made available by the second week of class.

### 5. Essay Outline (5%)

**Due week 6 on Turnitin – date to be decided once the timetable is finalised**

This serves as a build up to your final essay assignment (see below). Your outline should include your topic of study, a list of the research questions that you have identified, methodology, the primary sources you will be consulting, a tentative thesis and a critical literature review of the secondary research that you have consulted. The length and presentation of ideas in this essay outline is entirely up to the author’s initiative and choice. I accept topic sentences with bullet points or a draft introduction which contains all of the information that is listed above. However, the outline must be written in complete sentences and cited with the Chicago Manual of Style (either the 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> edition).

### 6. Final Essay (25%)

With the help of relevant primary and secondary sources, students are to write a 2500-3000 word essay on any topic related to the history of food. This assignment should be cited with the Chicago Manual of Style and uploaded onto Turnitin before the deadline. The assignment’s deadline will be announced later.

#### 1. Introduction

No readings – Read ahead for next week

Besides going through the broad themes of the module, an essay writing workshop will be organised. We will cover the basic structure of a history essay, finding primary sources, the purpose of a literature review, a thesis statement, how to cite your references and the components of a bibliography.

#### 2. Definitions, Theoretical Frameworks and Approaches

Required readings:

- Mary Douglas, “Deciphering a Meal,” *Daedalus* 101:1 (1972): 61–81.

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- Jack Goody, *Cooking, Cuisine and Class: A Study in Comparative Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), selections.
- A book chapter on sensory history, to be decided

### Supplementary Readings:

- TBA.

### 3. The Rise of Agriculture

#### Required readings:

- Mark B. Tauger, *Agriculture in World History* (Routledge, 2010), selections.
- Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), selections.
- Daniel Zohary, Maria Hopf and Ehud Weiss, *Domestication of Plants in the Old World: The Origin and Spread of Domesticated Plants in Southwest Asia, Europe, and the Mediterranean Basin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), selections.

### 4. Colonialism, Migration and Travel

#### Required readings:

- Alfred W. Crosby, *The Colombian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Greenwood, 1973), 165-207.
- Timothy Walker, "Slave Labor and Chocolate in Brazil: The Culture of Cacao Plantations in Amazonia and Bahia (17th–19th Centuries)," *Food and Foodways* 15, : 1-2 (2007): 75-106.
- Andrea Montanari, "The Stinky King: Western Attitudes toward the Durian in Colonial Southeast Asia," *Food, Culture & Society* 20:3 (2017): 395-414.

#### Supplementary Readings:

- Barbara Watson Andaya, "Women and Economic Change: The Pepper Trade in pre-Modern Southeast Asia," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 38:2 (1995): 165-190.

### 5. Communal Dining and Food Taboos

#### Required readings:

- Faizah Binte Zakaria, "Qingzhen from the Perspective of the Other: Consumption and Muslim Boundary-Making in Republican China, 1920–1949," *Journal of Islamic and Muslim Studies* 3:2 (2018): 21-42.
- Isaac Yue, "The Comprehensive Manchu–Han Banquet: History, Myth, and Development," *Ming Qing Yanjiu* 22:1 (2018): 93-111.
- William R. Black, "How Watermelons became Black: Emancipation and the Origins of a Racist Trope," *Journal of the Civil War Era* 8:1 (2018): 64-86.

#### Supplementary Readings:

- TBA. Likely the concept of the potlatch in *The Gift* by Marcel Mauss.

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### 6. Dining Out and Food Service Establishments

Required readings:

- Bill Ellis, “Whispers in an Ice Cream Parlor: Culinary Tourism, Contemporary Legends, and the Urban Interzone,” *Journal of American Folklore* 122:483 (2009): 53-74.
- Els van Dongen, “Localizing Ethnic Entrepreneurship: ‘Chinese’ Chips Shops in Belgium, ‘Traditional’ Food Culture, and Transnational Migration in Europe,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 42:15 (2019): 2566-2584.
- Selina Ching Chan, “Tea Cafés and the Hong Kong Identity: Food Culture and Hybridity,” *China Information* 33:3 (2019): 311-328.

**Essay outline is due this week.**

### 7. Famines and Economic crises

Required readings:

- Antony Trewavas, “Malthus Foiled Again and Again,” *Nature* 418:6898 (2002): 668-670.
- Wayne K. Durrill, “Atrocious Misery: The African Origins of Famine in Northern Somalia, 1839-1884,” *The American Historical Review* 91:2 (1986): 287-306.
- Jane Ziegelman, *A Square Meal: A Culinary History of the Great Depression* (HarperCollins, 2016), selections.
- Troy Sternberg, “Chinese Drought, Bread and the Arab Spring,” *Applied Geography* 34 (2012): 519-524.

Supplementary Readings:

- TBA.

### **Recess Week**

### 8. Ritual and Religion

Required readings:

- David Carrasco, “Cosmic Jaws: We Eat the Gods and the Gods Eat Us,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 63:3 (1995): 429–463.
- Bernard R. Ortiz de Montellano, “Aztec Cannibalism: An Ecological Necessity? The Aztec Diet Was adequate in Protein and Cannibalism would not have Contributed Greatly,” *Science* 200:4342 (1978): 611-617.
- Nikolas Broy, “Moral Integration or Social Segregation? Vegetarianism and Vegetarian Religious Communities in Chinese Religious Life,” in *Concepts and Methods for the Study of Chinese Religions Volume III: Key Concepts in Practice*, ed. Paul R. Katz and Stefania Travagnin (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 35-65.
- Regina Grafe, “Popish Habits vs. Nutritional Need: Fasting and Fish Consumption in Iberia in the Early Modern Period,” *Oxford Economic and Social History Working Papers* 55 (2004).

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### Supplementary Readings:

- Ludwig Alsdorf, *The History of Vegetarianism and Cow-Veneration in India*, trans. from the Bal Patil, rev. Nichola Hayton, ed. Willem Bollée (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), selections.

## 9. Gender and Domesticity

### Required readings:

- Phyllis Herman, “Relocating Rāmarājya: Perspectives on Sītā’s Kitchen in Ayodhyā,” *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 2:2 (1998): 157–84.
- Jay Mechling, “Boy Scouts and the Manly Art of Cooking,” *Food and Foodways* 13 (2005): 67-89.
- Vineeta Sinha, “Mapping Singapore’s Culinary Landscape: Is Anyone Cooking?,” in *Food, Foodways And Foodscapes: Culture, Community And Consumption In Post-colonial Singapore*, ed. Lily Kong and Vineeta Sinha (Singapore: World Scientific Press, 2016), 159-184.
- Ai Hisano, “Home Cooking: Betty Crocker and Womanhood in Early Twentieth-Century America,” *The Japanese Journal of American Studies* 21 (2010): 211-230.

### Supplementary Readings:

- A chapter on the cosmology of corn in Africa and the role of women in cooking.

## 10. Mass Production, Food Safety, Preservation and Industrialisation

### Required readings:

- William Parmenter, “The Jungle and its Effects,” *Journalism History* 10:1-2 (1983): 14-34.
- Jordan Sand, “A Short history of MSG: Good Science, Bad Science, and Taste Cultures,” *Gastronomica* 5:4 (2005): 38-49.
- Brian Lander, Mindi Schneider and Katherine Brunson, “A History of Pigs in China: From Curious Omnivores to Industrial Pork,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 79:4 (2020): 865-889.
- Julia S. Torrie, “Frozen Food and National Socialist Expansionism,” *Global Food History* 2:1 (2016): 51-73.
- Geoffrey K Pakiam, “A Fresh Look at Fish through a Brief History of Fish Head Curry,” *BERITA Newsletter* (2019/2020), 5-10.

### Supplementary Readings:

- Paul Josephson, “The Ocean’s Hot Dog: The Development of the Fish Stick,” *Technology and Culture* 49:1 (2008): 41–61.
- TBA, probably related to salted fish and garum

## 11. Nationalism, State Policies and Food

### Required readings:

- Mark Moberg, “Crown Colony as Banana Republic: The United Fruit Company in British Honduras, 1900–1920,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 28:2 (1996): 357-381.

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- Zachary D. Poppel, “Quick Rice: International Development and the Green Revolution in Sierra Leone, 1960–1976,” in *The Routledge History of Food*, ed. Carol Helstosky (Routledge, 2014), 364–383.
- Arjun Appadurai, “How to Make a National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 30:1 (1988): 3–24.
- Carrie Packwood Freeman and Oana Leventi-Perez, “Pardon your Turkey and Eat Him Too: Antagonism over Meat Eating in the Discourse of the Presidential Pardoning of the Thanksgiving Turkey,” in *The Rhetoric of Food: Discourse, Materiality, and Power*, ed. Joshua Frye, Michael S. Bruner (Routledge, 2012), 116–133.

### Supplementary Readings:

- TBA.

## 12. Medicine and Food

### Required readings:

- Ken Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance* (California: University of California Press, 2002), selections.
- Scott Bamber, “Medicine, Food, and Poison in Traditional Thai Healing,” *Osiris* 13 (1998): 339–353.
- Vivienne Lo, “Pleasure, Prohibition and Pain: Food and Medicine in China,” in *Of Tripod and Palate: Food, Politics, and Religion in Traditional China*, ed. Roel Sterckx (New York ; Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 163–84.

## 13. Invented Traditions and Heritagization

### Required readings:

- Zachary Nowak, “Folklore, Fakelore, History: Invented Tradition and the Origins of the Pizza Margherita,” *Food, Culture & Society* 17:1 (2014): 103–124.
- Veronica Sau-Wa Mak, “The Heritagization of Milk Tea: Cultural Governance and Placemaking in Hong Kong,” *Asian Anthropology* 20:1 (2021): 30–46.
- Kim Chi Hoon, “Kimchi Nation: Constructing Kimjang as an Intangible Korean Heritage,” in *Urban Foodways and Communication: Ethnographic Studies in Intangible Cultural Food Heritage Around the World*, ed. Casey Lum and Marc de Ferrière le Vayer (London, UK: Roman and Littlefield, 2016), 39–54.
- Lee Seow Ting and Hun Shik Kim, “Food Fight: Gastrodiplomacy and Nation Branding in Singapore’s UNESCO Bid to Recognize Hawker Culture,” *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* 17:2 (2021): 205–217.

**Presentations and documentation portfolios are due this week.**