

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

Academic Year: 2023-24, Semester 1

Instructor: Mr. Soh Chuah Meng Esmond

Course Code: HH2008

Course Title: Feasting and Fasting: Food and Drink in History

No of Aus: 3

Contact Hours: 39 (weekly seminars of 3 hours each)

A. 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

Any absence from class without a valid reason will have a direct impact on your overall course grade. It is of utmost importance that you adhere to the following guidelines regarding valid reasons for your absence.

Valid reasons for missing a class session are limited to the following:

1. Falling ill: In case of illness, a medical certificate must be provided as supporting documentation.
2. Participation in approved activities organized by NTU: An excuse letter from the relevant bodies must be submitted to validate your absence.

In the event that you are unable to attend a lecture, it is mandatory that you notify the course instructor via email prior to the commencement of the class. Failure to do so may result in the absence being considered unexcused. Absences from class due to any other reasons must be supported by official documentation, such as a time chit or a signed communication bearing the letterhead of the organization(s) with which you are associated. **However, it is essential to note that the acceptance or rejection of these documents solely lies within the discretion of the instructor.**

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.

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 16th or 17th 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). **Your overall essay's grade will suffer in the face of deviation from these guidelines and/or sloppy citations.** Familiarise yourself with the difference between a footnote citation and bibliographic entry.

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, doing unrelated assignments or cyber-slacking 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.

2. In-Class Writing Assignment (30%)

Between weeks 3 and 13, I will administer a total of five in-class tests during the final 30-40 minutes of the seminar each week. This can range from a primary source analysis, a real-life scenario where your knowledge of the history of food is needed, a historiographical review, or an exercise in communicating your citations properly in annotated footnotes. **I may also bring up material which has been presented during the second hour of class (see below) – another reason why you should listen attentively and take meaningful notes.** All responses must be submitted to me by the end of class (1630 hours), otherwise your attendance will be deemed null and void. **Given the time sensitive nature of this assignment, there are no opportunities for make-ups and replacement tests.**

Formative feedback will be given in-person and to the entire class in the week following each test. Each assignment will be scored according to the following rubric:

- Outstanding – 5-6 marks.
- Average – 3-4 marks.
- Needs Improvement – 1-2 marks.

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

From week three onwards, students will be divided into nine groups for this assignment, where they will facilitate a 40 minute 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 10-15 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 10 minutes of their presentation, presenters must condense the class's contribution and synthesise them with their own research and observations.

All of the 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.

A thorough rubric will be released during the start of the semester. For starters, the following guidelines should suffice:

- Do **not** read from slides, from a script, or your phones. **Your grade will be severely compromised if you do otherwise.** This is supposed to be an impassioned pitch, and you are expected to prepare for your presentation ahead of time. Convene with the [LCC Communications Cube](#) if you need help preparing for your presentations.
- I expect everyone to pay full attention to the speakers. Note-taking during this time is only limited to pen and paper. **I will not hesitate to severely penalize individuals in their class participation grade if they are caught cyber-slacking or doing things unrelated to the class during the presentations of others.**

As a general rule, all group members will receive the same grade, **but I will penalise individuals who do not contribute adequately.** If any single member requests a peer evaluation, all group members must submit an online evaluation form by 1900 hours on the presentation day. The form serves as a guide for potential moderation. I may contact the group, collectively or individually, for further evidence backed by clear, reliable and timestamped documentation. Claims without documentation will be dismissed, as hearsay is not acceptable as evidence.

4. Final Essay (40%)

With the help of relevant primary and secondary sources, students are required to write a 2500-word essay on any topic related to the history of food. This assignment aims to showcase your ability to conduct thorough research and present a coherent argument. It is essential to utilize the Chicago Manual of Style for citations and references, ensuring accuracy and adherence to academic standards. Prior to the deadline, the completed essay must be uploaded onto Turnitin. The specific deadline for this assignment will be communicated at a later date.

I strongly advise students to consult me in-person or via Zoom in preparation for this assignment. **By week 4, everyone 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.

1. Definitions, Theoretical Frameworks and Approaches

Required Reading:

- Mary Douglas, “Deciphering a Meal,” *Daedalus* 101:1 (1972): 61–81.
- Jack Goody, *Cooking, Cuisine and Class: A Study in Comparative Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), selections.
- Mark Michael Smith, *Sensory History* (Oxford and New York: Berg Publishers, 2007), selections.

2. The Rise of Agriculture

Required Reading:

- Andre Mayer and Jean Mayer, “Agriculture, the Island Empire,” *Daedalus* (1974): 83-95.
- 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.

Further Reading:

- Francesca Bray, “Science, Technique, Technology: Passages Between Matter and Knowledge in Imperial Chinese Agriculture,” *The British Journal for the History of Science* 41:3 (2008): 319-344.
- 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.
- Leida Fernández Prieto, “Islands of Knowledge: Science and Agriculture in the History of Latin America and the Caribbean,” *Isis* 104:4 (2013): 788-797.

3. Colonialism, Migration and Travel

Required Reading:

- 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 (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.

Further Reading:

- 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.
- John G. Butcher, *The Closing of the Frontier: A History of the Marine Fisheries of Southeast Asia, c. 1850-2000* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2004).
- Daniel Bender, "The Delectable and Dangerous: Durian and the Odors of Empire in Southeast Asia," *Global Food History* 3:2 (2017): 111-132.

4. Communal Dining and Food Taboos

Required Reading:

- [Just skim through this] Victor Benno Meyer-Rochow, "Food Taboos: Their Origins and Purposes," *Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine* 5:1 (2009): 1-10.
- 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.

Further Reading:

- Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* [London and New York: Routledge, 2002 (1950)].
- Eduardo P. Archetti, *Guinea Pigs: Food, Symbol and Conflict of Knowledge in Ecuador* [London and New York: Routledge, 2020 (1997)].
- A. Van Huis, "Insects as Food in Sub-Saharan Africa," *International Journal of Tropical Insect Science* 23:3 (2003): 163–185.
- Kim Kisun, Lee Sungyoung, and Jongoh Lee, "Taboos Related to Food Culture at the 13th–14th-century Mongols," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 68:3 (2015): 293-302. <http://real.mtak.hu/37258/1/062.2015.68.3.4.pdf>

5. Dining Out and Food Service Establishments

Required Reading:

- 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.

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- 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.

Further Reading:

- Qin Shao, “Tempest over Teapots: The Vilification of Teahouse Culture in Early Republican China,” *The Journal of Asian Studies* 57:4 (1998): 1009–41.

6. Famines and Economic crises

Required Reading:

- 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.

Further Reading:

- Eric Vanhaute, “From Famine to Food Crisis: What History can Teach us about Local and Global Subsistence Crises,” *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 38:1 (2011): 47-65.
- Cormac Ó Gráda, “Great Leap into Famine: A Review Essay,” *Population and Development Review* 37:1 (2011): 191-202.
- Lee Seung-Joon, “Airborne Prawns and Decayed Rice: Food Politics in Wartime Chongqing,” *Journal of Modern Chinese History* 13:1 (2019): 124-147,

7. Ritual and Religion

Required Reading:

- 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.
- Bradford Bouley, “Digesting Faith: Eating God, Man, and Meat in Seventeenth-Century Rome,” *Osiris* 35 (2020): 42-59.
- 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.

Further Reading:

- 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.
- Kelvin Tan, “How Chinese Buddhist Women Shaped the Food Landscape in Singapore,” *BiblioAsia* (July-September 2022): <https://biblioasia.nlb.gov.sg/vol-18/issue-2/jul-sep-2022/buddhist-women-vegetarian-food-singapore>.

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- 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).
- 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.
- Esmond Chuah Meng Soh, “Practicing Salvation: Meat-Eating, Martyrdom, and Sacrifice as Religious Ideals in the Zhenkongjiao,” *Journal of Chinese Religions* 50:1 (2022): 77-114.

8. Gender, Kitchens and Domesticity

Required Reading:

- 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.

Further Reading:

- Anita Guerrini, “A Natural History of the Kitchen,” *Osiris* 35 (2020): 20-41.
- Bjørn Enge Bertelsen, “Maize Mill Sorcery: Cosmologies of Substance, Production, and Accumulation in Central Mozambique,” in *Framing Cosmologies* (Manchester University Press, 2016), 199-220.
- Ai Hisano, “Home Cooking: Betty Crocker and Womanhood in Early Twentieth-Century America,” *The Japanese Journal of American Studies* 21 (2010): 211-230.

9. Mass Production, Food Safety, Preservation and Industrialisation

Required Reading:

- 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.
- 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.

Further Reading:

- Sally Grainger, *The Story of Garum: Fermented Fish Sauce and Salted Fish in the Ancient World* (Routledge, 2020).
- Benjamin Aldes Wurgaft, “Meat Mimesis: Laboratory-Grown Meat as a Study in Copying,” *Osiris* 35 (2020): 310-323.
- Carolyn Cobbold, “The Introduction of Chemical Dyes into Food in the Nineteenth Century,” *Osiris* 35 (2020): 142-161.

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- Deborah Fitzgerald, “World War II and the Quest for Time-Insensitive Foods,” *Osiris* 35 (2020): 291-309.
- 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.
- Marcelo Bucheli, “Enforcing Business Contracts in South America: The United Fruit Company and Colombian Banana Planters in the Twentieth Century,” *The Business History Review* 78:2 (2004): 181–212.
- Paul Josephson, “The Ocean’s Hot Dog: The Development of the Fish Stick,” *Technology and Culture* 49:1 (2008): 41–61.
- Edward Geist, “When Ice Cream was Poisonous: Adulteration, Ptomaines, and Bacteriology in the United States, 1850–1910,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 86:3 (2012): 333-360.

10. Nationalism, State Policies and Food

Required Reading:

- 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.
- 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.
- Joshua Schlachet, “On Bread and National Ruin,” *Asian Medicine* 17:2 (2022): 296-324.

Further Reading:

- Ichijo Atsuko and Ronald Ranta, *Food, National Identity and Nationalism: From Everyday to Global Politics* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

11. Medicine and Health

Required Reading:

- 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.
- Scott Bamber, “Medicine, Food, and Poison in Traditional Thai Healing,” *Osiris* 13 (1998): 339–353.
- Joyce E. Chaplin, “Why Drink Water? Diet, Materialisms, and British Imperialism,” *Osiris* 35 (2020): 99-122.

12. Food and Eating in Institutional Settings

Required Reading:

- Anne Allison, “Japanese Mothers and Obentōs: The Lunch-Box as Ideological State Apparatus,” *Anthropological Quarterly* 64:4 (1991): 195–208.
- Sandra Cate, “‘Breaking Bread with a Spread’ in a San Francisco County Jail,” *Gastronomica* 8:3 (2008): 17–24.
- Jacob M. Feagans, Darius A. Jahann, and Jamie S. Barkin, “Meals Ready to Eat: A Brief History and Clinical Vignette with Discussion on Civilian Applications,” *Military Medicine* 175:3 (2010): 194-196.
- Peggy O’ Donell, “The Politics of Pie Cutting at West Point’s Mess Hall,” *Atlas Obscura*, June 27, 2017, <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/west-point-mess-hall-pie>.

Further Reading:

- Amy B. Smoyer, “‘It’s the Black Girls That Have the Most’: Foodways Narratives and the Construction of Race in a Women’s Prison,” *Food and Foodways* 23:4 (2015): 273-285.
- Michael Owen Jones, “Dining on Death Row: Last Meals and the Crutch of Ritual,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 127:503 (2014): 3–26.
- Steve Siporin, “The Kosher Con Game: Who’s Keeping Kosher in Prison?” *Western Folklore* 74:1 (2015): 58–79.
- Ulrike Thoms, “The Technopolitics of Food: The Case of German Prison Food from the Late Eighteenth to the Early Twentieth Centuries,” *Osiris* 35 (2020): 162-182.

13. Invented Traditions and Heritagization

Required Reading:

- 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.
- Cho Hyojung, “Fermentation of Intangible Cultural Heritage: Interpretation of Kimchi in Museums,” *Museum Management and Curatorship* 28:2 (2013): 209-227.
- 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.