**History 2702: FOOD IN WORLD HISTORY**

Semester/Year

Room/Building

Date/Time

**Instructor:** Chris Otter

**Office:** Dulles Hall 263

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**Office Hours:** XXXX

**Course Description and Goals**

Food is implicated in all dimensions of human existence. It is a biological necessity, without which human beings die. Control over food supplies is a basic function of all organized states and societies. Shared food traditions and tastes shape cultural identities. Human history, then, can be told as a history of how food has been produced, distributed and consumed. This course offers a synoptic, global history of food, beginning with pre-agricultural societies and ending with today’s global food crisis. The course particularly focuses on food systems and their ecological and biological effects.

The class is organized into 5 modules:

1. The deep history of food systems
2. The industrialization and globalization of food systems
3. Food systems, stress, and sustainability
4. Corn, wheat, meat, sugar: the history of four food systems
5. Food, diet, and the body

This course fulfills the general requirements and expected learning outcomes for the GE themes:

GOAL 1: Successful students will analyze an important topic or idea at a more

advanced and in-depth level than the foundations.

ELO 1.1: Engage in critical and logical thinking about the topic or idea of the theme.

GOAL 2: Successful students will integrate approaches to the theme by making

connections to out-of-classroom experiences with academic knowledge or across disciplines

and/or to work they have done in previous classes and that they anticipate doing in future.

ELO 2.1: Identify, describe, and synthesize approaches or experiences as they apply to the theme.

ELO 2.2: Demonstrate a developing sense of self as a learner through reflection, self-assessment, and creative work, building on prior experiences to respond to new and challenging contexts.

This course fulfills the specific requirements for the Sustainability GE theme:

GOAL 1: Students analyze and explain how social and natural systems function, interact, and evolve over time; how human wellbeing depends on these interactions; how actions have impacts on subsequent generations and societies globally; and how human values, behaviors, and institutions impact multi-faceted, potential solutions across time.

ELO1.1: Describe elements of the fundamental dependence of humans on Earth and environmental systems and on the resilience of these systems.

ELO 1.2: Describe, analyze and critique the roles and impacts of human activity and technology on both human society and the natural world, in the past, currently, and in the future.

ELO 1.3: Devise informed and meaningful responses to problems and arguments in the area of sustainability based on the interpretation of appropriate evidence and an explicit statement of values.

Course Readings

There is no required textbook for this course. All readings will be posted on Carmen.

Course Papers and Assignments

1. **Attendance and Class Participation (10%)**. Students are expected to attend every class. Each lecture will include periods where the material is opened up to discussion and there will be some classes which are discussion-only. The best learning takes place when students participate, so students will receive credit for comments, observations, answers and questions.
2. **Two Response Papers (20% each)**. In week 3 and week 6 students are given response papers, one for module one and one for module 2. For each response paper, they are given a series of questions relating to the module, from which they pick one and answer it. The paper must refer to lectures and class readings. It will be 4-5 pages long and correctly formatted.
3. **World Food Crisis Paper (20%).** In week 12, students write a paper which invites them to respond to the Eat-Lancet Commission on Healthy Diets from Sustainable Food Systems Summary Report (2019), in which they situate the Commission’s findings within the longer history of food systems and their sustainability.
4. **Final Paper (30%)**. At the end of the course, students present a final paper in which they explore the history of one particular food (or recipe) and its relationship to the planet and to the human body. The final 2 modules discuss these particular issues in detail.

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend every lecture. If you can’t make a lecture, please contact me in advance with a valid excuse. More than 2 unexcused absences will result in a grade of 0 for attendance and class participation.

Grading Scale

A (93-100), A- (90-92), B+ (87-89), B (82-86), B- (80-82), C+ (77-79), C (73-76), C-(70-72), D+ (67-69), D (63-66), D- (60-62) E (below 60).

Grades will be rounded up. For example, a 92.3 will become a 93.

Statement on Academic Misconduct

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>.

Statement on Disability

The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options.  To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services.  After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact information: [slds@osu.edu](mailto:slds@osu.edu); 614-292-3307; [slds.osu.edu](http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/); 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.

Statement on Mental Health

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student’s ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you or someone you know are suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life’s Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting [ccs.osu.edu](http://ccs.osu.edu/) or calling [614­-292-­5766](tel:%28614%29%20292-5766). CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on call counselor when CCS is closed at [614­-292-­5766](tel:%28614%29%20292-5766) and 24 hour emergency help is also available through the 24/7 National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-­800­-273-TALK or at [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/).

Statement on Violence and Sexual Harassment

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at [http://titleix.osu.edu](http://titleix.osu.edu/) or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator at [titleix@osu.edu](mailto:titleix@osu.edu)

Statement on Diversity

The Ohio State University affirms the importance and value of diversity in the student body. Our programs and curricula reflect our multicultural society and global economy and seek to provide opportunities for students to learn more about persons who are different from them. We are committed to maintaining a community that recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among each member of our community; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential. Discrimination against any individual based upon protected status, which is defined as age, color, disability, gender identity or expression, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status, is prohibited.

**Class Schedule and Readings**

MODULE 1

EARLY FOOD SYSTEMS

Week 1

*Foraging, Hunting, and Fire: Food in Deep Human History*

Kristen J. Gremillion, “Beginnings,” and “Foraging,” in Ancestral Appetites: Food in Prehistory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 12-47.

*The Neolithic Revolution and the Emergence of Agriculture*

Jared Diamond, “The Worst Mistake in the History of the Human Race,” *Discover Magazine*, 1987. Access online at:

<http://discovermagazine.com/1987/may/02-the-worst-mistake-in-the-history-of-the-human-race>

David Graeber and David Wengerow, “The Ecology of Freedom,” in *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity* (New York: Farrah, Straus, and Giroux, 2021), 249-275.

Week 2

*The Emergence of East and South Asian Food Systems*

E.N. Anderson, “The Crucial Millennium,” in *The Food of China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 29-56.

*The Emergence of American Food Systems*

Sophie D. Coe and Michael D. Coe, “The Aztecs: People of the Fifth Sun,” in *The True History of Chocolate*, 2nd ed. (London: Thames and Hudson, 2007), 65-105.

Week 3

*Food in Ancient Greece and Rome*

Linda Civitello, “Grain, Grape, Olive: Ancient Greece and Imperial Rome,” in *Cuisine and Culture: A History of Food and People* (Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons, 2008), 25-52.

*Food in Medieval and Renaissance Europe*

Massimo Montanari, “To Each His Own,” in *The Culture of Food*, trans. Carl Ipsen (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 68-97.

***RESPONSE PAPER ONE HANDED OUT***

Week 4

*No Class: Work on First Response Paper*

MODULE 2

THE INDUSTRIALIZATION AND GLOBALIZATION OF FOOD SYSTEMS

*The New World and the Columbian Exchange*

Alfred Crosby, “New World Foods and Old World Demography,” in *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 165-207.

***RESPONSE PAPER ONE HANDED IN***

Week 5

*The Transformation of Food Systems and Cultures, 1700-1945*

Carol Helstolsky, “Introduction,” and “The Cooking of Consent, Italy 1922-1935,” in *Garlic and Oil: Politics and Food in Italy* (New York: Berg, 2004), 1-10, 63-90.

Harvey Levenstein, “The Golden Age of Food Processing: Miracle Whip *über Alles*,” “The Best-Fed People the World Has Ever Seen?” and “Fast Food and Quick Bucks,” in *Paradox of Plenty: A Social History of Eating in Modern America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 101-130, 227-236.

*The Nutrition Transition and the Industrialization of World Food Systems*

Rachel Laudan, “Modern Cuisines: The Expansion of Middling Cuisines, 1820-1910,” *Cuisine and Empire: Cooking in World History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 248-307.

Week 6

*Synthetic Fertilizers, Fossil Fuels and Population Growth*

Vaclav Smil, “Nitrogen in Agriculture,” “Creating an Industry,” and “Consequences of the Dependence,” in *Enriching the Earth: Fritz Haber, Carl Bosch, and the Transformation of World Food Production* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2004), 1-20, 83-108, and 177-198.

*The Globalization of Food*

Rachel Laudan, “Modern Cuisines: The Globalization of Middling Cuisines, 1920-2000,” *Cuisine and Empire: Cooking in World History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 308-359.

***RESPONSE PAPER 2 HANDED OUT***

Week 7

*No Class: Work on Final Projects*

*In-Class Discussion and Explanation of Final Project*

***RESPONSE PAPER 2 HANDED IN***

Week 8

*Where Have We Come So Far? A Discussion of the History of Food Systems, Plus Short Questionnaire*

MODULE 3

FOOD SYSTEMS, STRESS, AND SUSTAINABILITY

*Food and War*

Lizzie Collingham, “Introduction – War and Food,” “Germany’s Quest for Empire,” and “The Soviet Union – Fighting on Empty,” in *The Taste of War: World War II and the Battle for Food* (New York: Penguin, 2012), 1-14, 18-48, 317-346.

Week 9

*Famine (1): Ireland and India*

Alex de Waal, “A Short History of Modern Famines,” in *Mass Starvation: The History and Future of Famine* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018), 53-82.

*Famine (2): Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and China*

Frank Dikötter, “Preface,” “‘Dear Chairman Mao’,” “The Gulag,” “The Final Tally,” and “Epilogue,” in *Mao’s Great Famine* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), xi-xvii, 215-223, 287-292, and 324-338.

Week 10

*No Class: Individual Meetings, Work on Outlines for Final Paper*

*Monoculture and Agroecosystems*

John Soluri, “Going Bananas,” and “Altered Landscapes,” in *Banana Cultures: Agriculture, Consumption, & Environmental Change in Honduras and the United States* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 18-40 and 75-103.

***FINAL PAPER OUTLINE HANDED IN***

Week 11

*The World Food Problem and the Green Revolution*

Nick Cullather, “The World Food Problem,” and “A Parable of Seeds,” in *The Hungry World: America’s Cold War Battle against Poverty in Asia* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2010), 1-10, 159-179.

*The World Food Crisis Today*

The Eat-Lancet Commission, “Healthy Diets from Sustainable Food Systems,” 2019. Available online at: <https://eatforum.org/content/uploads/2019/07/EAT-Lancet_Commission_Summary_Report.pdf>

Week 12

*Class Discussion and Debate on the History of World Food Crises*

***EAT-LANCET RESPONSE PAPER HANDED OUT***

MODULE 4

THE HISTORY OF FOOD SYSTEMS

*Corn*

Helen Anne Curry, “Introduction,” “Copy,” and “Grow,” in *Endangered Maize: Industrial Agriculture and the Crisis of Extinction* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2022), 1-14, 97-124, and 191-226.

Week 13

*Wheat*

Aaron Bobrow-Strain, “The Invention of Sliced Bread: Dreams of Control and Abundance,” and “The Staff of Death: Dreams of Health and Discipline,” in *White Bread: A Social History of the Store-Bought Loaf* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012), 51-104.

***EAT-LANCET RESPONSE PAPER HANDED IN***

Meat

Vaclav Smil, “Meat in Modern Societies,” in *Should We Eat Meat? Evolution and Consequences of Modern Carnivory* (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 71-111.

Sugar

Sidney Mintz, “Food, Sociality, and Sugar,” and “Power,” in *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), 3-18, 151-186.

Week 14

FOOD, DIET AND THE BODY

*Food, Evolution, and the Body*

Daniel Lieberman, “The Vicious Circle of Too Much,” in *The Story of the Human Body: Evolution, Health and Disease* (New York: Allen Lane, 2013), 251-292.

*The History of Diabetes*

Arleen Marcia Tuchman, “Misunderstanding the African-American Experience,” in *Diabetes: A History of Race and Disease* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020), 69-101.

Week 15

*Gender, Diet, Fat-phobia: The History of Dieting*

Hillel Schwartz, “Prologue: Ritual and Romance,” and “Hearts of Darkness, Bodies of Woe,” in *Never Satisfied: A Cultural History of Diets, Fantasies and Fat* (New York: Anchor Press, 1986), 1-20, and 189-236.

*Class Discussion on Food, Diet and the Body*

***FINAL PAPER HANDED IN***