

**SC/STS 4785 3.0**  
**Science, Health, and Food**  
**2017**

**Time**

Friday, 11:30 AM to 2:30 PM

**Location**

York Vari Hall (VH) 3017

**Class Website**

Moodle - <https://moodle.yorku.ca>

**Instructor**

Benjamin Mitchell

Email: [bdhell@yorku.ca](mailto:bdhell@yorku.ca)

Office Hours: Fridays 3 PM to 4 PM, or by appointment

**Class Description**

The science, culture, and medicine of food reveals the ways in which we eat symbols and drink connections. This course will explore the past, present, and future of food and food systems, and how these systems influence the immediacy of our daily lives.

Along the way, we will consider such issues as the historical importance of cookbooks as gendered repositories of familial knowledge, medicine, and politics, how the science and politics of sugar structured colonial relations that are still felt today, and how food systems relate to microbial as well as global ecologies. We will also examine the rise of modern western food science, some of the environmental and ecological dimensions of agriculture and food production, and how intersectional issues of race, class, and gender intertwine with global food systems, insecurities, and forms of resistance.

Part of this course will be team taught with the students involved as we work together to identify key themes and topics in food studies and help educate each other based on issues that are most immediate and relevant to ourselves. Each class will feature a short lecture by the instructor, discussions, in class work, and teaching modules developed by the students.

## Reading & Lecture Schedule

(All readings will be accessible through the course's Moodle page)

Friday, September 8

### **Food Studies, Foodways, and Cookbooks**

Readings: 1. Koc, Sumner, and Winson, "The Significance of Food and Food Studies." (4 pages) 2. Koc, Bancarz, and Speakman, "The Interdisciplinary Field of Food Studies." (9 pages) 3. Cooke, "Canada's Food History through Cookbooks." (12 pages) 4. Norman, 'Fit for the table of the most fastidious Epicure': Culinary Colonialism in the Upper Canadian Contact Zone. (16 pages)

Friday, September 15

### **A Bittersweet Revolution: Haiti, Sugar, and the Science of Atlantic Colonialism**

Readings: 1. Abbott, *Sugar: A Bittersweet History*, Selections (40 pages)

Wednesday, September 22 Last date to add a course without permission of instructor

Friday, September 22

### **The European Chemistry of Food: Fires of Life, Industry, and Revolution**

Readings: 1. Liebig, *Familiar Letters on Chemistry*, selections (26 pages). 2. Cullather, *The Foreign Policy of the Calorie* (28 pages).

Friday, September 29

### **"Domesticating" Scientific Management**

Reading: 1. Carson, *Silent Spring*, selections (34 pages). 2. Graham, "Domesticating Efficiency: Lillian Gilbreth's Scientific Management of Homemakers, 1924-1930." (38 pages)

Friday, October 6

### **Food Standards, Food Testing, and Factory Farming**

#### **First Internet Article Due**

Reading: 1. Hawthorne, "Chapter 3: The First 100 years" in *Inside the FDA: The Business and Politics Behind the Drugs We Take and the Food We Eat* (28 pages).  
Winson, *The Industrial Diet*, selections (18 pages)

Friday, October 13

### **Food, Distribution, and Modern Slavery**

Reading: 1. Josephson, "The Ocean's Hot Dog: The Development of the Fish Stick" (21 pages) 2. Lebaron, "Slaves of the State: American Prison Labour Past and Present" <<https://www.opendemocracy.net/beyondslavery/genevieve-lebaron/slaves-of-state-american-prison-labour-past-and-present>> 3. Amy Goodman, Robin McDowell, and Martha Mendoza, "Is the Seafood You Eat Caught by Slaves? Meet the Pulitzer Winners"

Who Broke Open a Global Scandal”

<[https://www.democracynow.org/2016/4/18/is\\_the\\_seafood\\_you\\_eat\\_caught](https://www.democracynow.org/2016/4/18/is_the_seafood_you_eat_caught)>

Friday, October 20

**Justice and Hunger: Nutritional Science, Civil Rights, and the Black Power Movement**

Reading: 1. Harris, *High on the Hog: A Culinary Journey from Africa to America* (17 pages). 2. Potorti, “Feeding Revolution: The Black Panther Party and the Politics of Food” (9 pages) 3. Heynen, “Bending the Bars of Empire” (18 pages)

In class: clips from *The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution*

**October 27<sup>th</sup> No class – Fall Reading Days**

Friday, November 3

**Food Security, Food Sovereignty, and the Science of Sugar**

Reading: 1. Martens, et al., “Understanding Indigenous Food Sovereignty through an Indigenous Research Paradigm.” (15 pages) 2. Documentary: Sugar Coated (accessible through the York University Library website) 3. Colleen Kimmett, “The Poor Need a Guaranteed Income, Not Our Charity” < <https://thewalrus.ca/the-poor-need-a-guaranteed-income-not-our-charity/>>

In class: clips from *That Sugar Film* and *Qimmit: A Clash of Two Truths*

Friday, November 10

**Water Protectors: Testing and Protesting**

Reading: 1. #StandingRockSyllabus (31 pages + photos and timeline), selections. 2. Prudham, “Poisoning the Well: Neoliberalism and the Contamination of Municipal Water in Walkerton, Ontario” (14 pages)

Friday, November 17

**Surveillance for Supper: Addiction and Fat Studies**

Reading: 1. Fraser, “The Inner Corset: A Brief History of Fat in the United States” (4 pages). 2. Lyons, “Prescription for Harm: Diet Industry Influence, Public Health Policy, and the ‘Obesity Epidemic’” (11 pages) 3. Boero, “Fat Kids, Working Moms, and the ‘Epidemic of Obesity’” (6 pages) 4. Stuart McMillen, “Rat Park” <<http://www.stuartmcmillen.com/comic/rat-park/#page-1>>

Friday, November 24

## **The Privatization of Life: Patents, GMOs, and Additives**

### **Second Internet Article Due**

Reading: 1. Peekhaus, *Resistance is Fertile: Canadian Struggles on the BioCommons*, selections (30 pages).

In class: clips from *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto*

Friday, December 1

## **“Live and Help Live”: Bees, Epigenetics, Gut Microbioms, and our Interconnected Lives**

Reading: 1. United Nations Environment Programme, *UNEP Emerging Issues: Global Honey Bee Colony Disorder and Other Threats to Insect Pollinators* (11 pages). 2.

Pollan, “Some of My Best Friends Are Germs”

<<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/19/magazine/say-hello-to-the-100-trillion-bacteria-that-make-up-your-microbiome.html>> (19 pages)

### **Evaluations**

1. Participation (15%)
2. Mid-term interviews (5%)
3. Reflections and exchanges (30%)
4. Teaching module (20%)
5. Internet Articles (30%)
6. Research Paper (30%) (optional, see description)

### **Participation**

Students are expected to come to class having done the required readings and having prepared topics of their own for discussion and reflection. **Each class it is hoped that students will come with at least one question or observation about the themes of the day.**

For students with social anxiety or other reasons for needing an alternative way of assessing their participation, they have the option of doing more reflection and discussion assignments on the Moodle site. Other arrangements can also be made as needed.

### **Reflections and Exchanges**

Throughout the term students are expected to post four (4) 500-word reflections on the readings or themes covered in the course (each worth 5%) and **at least** two (2) 500-word peer reflections discussing what they found valuable about another student’s reflection, and how it has influenced

their own thinking about the course material (each worth 5%). If they wish, students can do more peer-reflections and have them count towards their own reflections.

These reflections will be graded based on their ability to show how well the student has been able to reflect on, analyze, synthesize, and correlate class material, clarity of presentation, and imagination.

**The first reflection is due by Friday, September 22 at the latest, and the second is due on Friday, October 6 at the latest.** The other four can be done at any time before the final lecture.

## Teaching Module

In this course students will be designing and delivering their own half-hour teaching modules where they will have the opportunity to assign their classmates readings or other forms of participation, present on a topic of their choice relevant to the course material, facilitate discussions, and consider ways of assessing peer engagement and learning.

Grading of the assignment will be divided into three parts

1. (5%) Students' engagement with each other's teaching modules
2. (15%) Students' presentation and facilitation of discussion
3. (10%) A 1000-word reflection paper due a week after the presentation on the process with an assessment of classmate engagement showing your thoughts and reflections on:
  - a. How did you prepare for the module? What kind of resources did you look at? Why did you think they were good resources? Do you think there were things you did particularly well, could have done better, or differently?
  - b. Did you prove what you set out to prove? Why or why not.
  - c. How would you rate your colleagues' engagement with what you had to say? Did your talk relate to some of their own concerns? What do you think they took away from your module?
  - d. Include a bibliography of sources you used.

## Internet Articles

Throughout the term students will be expected to write two internet articles worth 15% each on topics relevant to science, health, and food. **The first article is due October 6. The second is due November 24.**

The articles will be about 1250 words each and will be evidence-based, **supported by sources and citations for any information or media used**, but aimed at a general audience. They will be posted on a class blog, and students are encouraged to share their work on their networks.

Think about things like tags, search terms, networks to share your articles in (professional groups, public groups, but also think of platforms, Twitter, Tumblr, Facebook, Reddit, etc.) In

class, we will discuss the kinds of response your articles have received and why you think that might be the case.

### **Interviews**

Students will hold a 20-minute interview with the professor during the term, worth 5% of the students' overall grade.

**This will be during the weeks of November 3, November 10, and November 17.** It will be at a time that works for both the student and the professor. These interviews can be done either in person, over Skype, or Google Hangouts, as the student prefers.

The purpose of this interview is to assess how you are doing, how you've been thinking about the themes and topics of the course, and to keep in touch with your thoughts about your teaching module and article assignments.

### **Major Research Project (Optional)**

Those students who intend to go on to advanced degrees or who wish to learn about writing academic papers are encouraged to consider doing a major research project. This project is an original 3000 to 4500-word research paper relevant to some theme of the course in any of the major areas of science and technology studies (feminist studies, postcolonial studies, queer theory, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, history, etc.)

If the student chooses this option it can replace (30%) of their grade for any activity or combinations of activities in the course. (For example: A student who does a major research project would have the option of not doing a teaching module, the article assignment, or, if you're really feeling anti-social, the reflections and exchanges and participation or interviews.

Students are expected to consult with the instructor about their topic and the direction their research project is taking at least three weeks before the deadline.

### **Class Policies**

#### **Assignment Submissions**

All assignments should be either emailed or given to the instructor on the day that they are due.

#### **Late Policy**

Students are expected to consult with the instructor ahead of time if they anticipate problems meeting the deadlines of the course. A week's extension will be granted in every case, provided that students inform the instructor of their reasons for needing an extension a week before a deadline. If the instructor does not hear anything from the student, late assignments will be penalized by minus five percent (-5%) a day until they are submitted.

**Academic Integrity**

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense and a form of cheating. Just don't do it. You're not sticking it to the man this way; you're paying the man to give you anxiety, cynicism, or both. Please remember that you are expected to know and abide by the University's Academic Integrity Policies. These can be found on York's Student Paper & Academic Research Kit (SPARK) website: [http://www.yorku.ca/spark/academic\\_integrity/index.html](http://www.yorku.ca/spark/academic_integrity/index.html)

**Accessibility**

The flexibility of assignment format and forms of dialogue with classmates in this course has been calculated to increase its accessibility as much as possible. However, the instructor recognizes that this does not cover every contingency, and encourages students to communicate with him should these accessibility measure not be sufficient.