

**Science & Society Topics: Food-Flix & Chill**  
S&TS 1126.101, Spring 2019

Meeting time: M/W 8:40-9:55am  
Location: 423 Morrill Hall

**Rebecca Harrison (“Becca”)**  
Office: 418 Morrill Hall  
Office Hours: M 10am-12pm  
Email: rah288@cornell.edu



*"Mommy wants you to know where your food comes from."*

### **Course Description**

If the films produced over the last 15 years serve as any indication, food resonates. With titles ranging from *Supersize Me* (2003) to *Food Evolution* (2016), with the likes of *Conspiracy* (2014) and a few thought-provoking Chipotle commercials sprinkled in-between, food topics have no dearth of cinematic appeal. This seminar will teach you to write clearly about food issues, paying particular attention to the parallels between the chosen films and contemporary food-related social movements. In addition to critical analysis of films through a “food studies” lens, we will sample readings from a variety of related genres, from science writing to blogs and media criticism. Writing assignments will span these methods, culminating in the submission of a collaboratively researched proposal for a class film script.

### **Course Rationale**

As a powerful lens of cultural and scientific analysis, food (and films about food) serves as a fruitful topic for an introductory writing course in science and technology studies. Discourses around food comprise many voices and dimensions, and this course will guide you through exploration and analysis of a variety of perspectives, including those of farmers, activists, scientists, journalists, historians, and ethicists. We will model our work on well-written, classic historical and contemporary texts and films that demonstrate the variety of writing styles and genres common in the field of Science & Technology Studies. The goal of this course is to use the writing (and revision) process to build clear, concise, and intellectually forceful arguments that suit the demands of a particular topic, medium, or audience.

## Required Texts

*The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*, Michael Pollan (2007)

*Food: The Key Concepts*, Warren Belasco (2008)

[Optional] *Food and Culture: A Reader* (Third Ed.), Eds. Caunihan & Penny Van Esterik (2011)

## Access to films

- ⇒ Most films are available on Blackboard through the “Course Reserves” folder
- ⇒ Films are available on a mixture of Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime. Please see “Food Flix Access Info” chart in class Google Drive folder for more information.
- ⇒ Optional Sunday evening film screenings in Morrill Hall Room 423

## Learning Outcomes

As you proceed through this course, your work should show that you have acquired basic techniques and vocabulary for analyzing texts and films about food, and for conducting original research on the topic. You should have a foundation for utilizing library resources and other research services at Cornell University, including an understanding of strategies for avoidance of plagiarism and other violations of Cornell's Code of Academic Integrity. In addition, you should learn to use and appreciate drafting, revising, and peer review to improve your writing. With these skills, you are expected to develop and demonstrate competency in formulating a specific, persuasive, arguable thesis; in supporting your position with appropriate evidence; and communicating your ideas in clear, grammatically correct prose.

## Journal Activity

This course is primarily a course about writing. And we will write a lot! I ask that you purchase a small journal at the beginning of the semester; the Cornell Store has an overwhelming selection, so be sure to pick something you will like to write in by hand. You should plan to bring it to class every day for in-class writing exercises and free writing. I will not collect or grade your journals.

## Conferences

You should each plan to have two individual conferences with me during the semester. Of course, I encourage everyone to meet with me more frequently. Please feel free to attend office hours, make appointments, or ask me questions over email.

## Attendance

Seminar-style classes only work if students are physically and mentally present. In the event of an emergency, serious illness, or other event, absences will be excused *if instructor is notified in advance*; however, please come talk to me as soon as possible so we can develop a strategy to keep you from falling behind. A lot of the activities we will do in class are difficult to make up on your own time. That being said, stuff happens. Two unexcused absences are permitted over the course of the semester. Each additional absence (or chronic tardiness or sleeping in class) will negatively impact your final participation grade.

## Requirements for Written Work

- Plan to submit two copies of each writing assignment: One as an MS Word document (please no Google Docs!) submitted via email *prior to arriving in class*, and one as a printed, stapled, hard-copy brought with you to class.
- Typed in a standard, 12-point font

- Double-spaced
- All pages should be numbered and have 1-inch margins
- Include your name, my name, the course number (STS 1126) and date
- Proofread and spelchek you're werk!

### **Requirements for Reading Assignments and Student-Led Discussion**

Reading (and talking about) good writing is a critical step in growing as writers. Unless otherwise stated, you are expected to come to class each Monday prepared to discuss that week's assigned readings and films. Please *bring* the readings and your notes with you. Each student will have an opportunity to (co)lead class discussion on these weekly readings. Your effectiveness and engagement in leading the class discussion will be reflected in your participation grade. Naturally, preparation is important for fostering discussion. You will receive a separate rubric and schedule to help you in leading an effective discussion, but you should plan to focus on the following:

- Clearly understanding the film or text — this may sometimes take multiple readings of the text and extensive note-taking;
- Preparing a quick summary of the film or text, including the author's main arguments and selection of specific passages to serve as evidence;
- Developing a number of effective, relevant, and diverse discussion questions that cover enough material for about 20 minutes of class time.

### **Grading Policy**

- Written work, including shorter (2-3 pages) and longer (5+ pages) essays — **70%**
- Class participation, including attendance, in-class writing, homework assignments, peer review workshops, and thoughtful participation during class discussions — **30%**
- There will be *numerous* extra credit opportunities for engaged attendance and written reflection at related out-of-class events

### **Electronics**

While computers are often helpful learning tools, they can also be distracting and stifle productive discussion. Because of this, I ask that laptops, tablets, and cell phones remain stowed unless I ask you to bring them to class in advance. Sorry, but I'm a millennial, too ☺

### **Academic Integrity**

Because words, ideas, and research represent the intellectual property with which scholars build their careers, "Using that property without permission or credit is a form of larceny" (Hjortshoj, *The Transition to College Writing* pg. 183). All of the work you submit in this course must have been written for this course exclusively. All sources or references must be properly cited, or you may risk penalty for violation of Cornell's Code of Academic Integrity: <http://ccengagement.cornell.edu/new-student-programs/academic-initiatives>. If you have questions, *please ask!*

### **Students with Disabilities**

I am happy to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for students with disabilities. Requests for academic accommodations are to be made during the first three weeks of the semester, except in unusual circumstances. Students are encouraged to register with Student Disability Services to verify their eligibility for appropriate accommodations.

## Calendar

### Week 1: Introduction

- Wednesday (Jan. 23) — Introduction

### Week 2: Why food? Why film?

- Monday (Jan. 28) — What can we learn from a few Chipotle commercials?
- Wednesday (Jan. 30) — **Essay 1 FINAL due (2-3 pages, ungraded)**; Reading film

*READ:* Food: The Key Concepts, Ch. 1 “Why Study Food?” pgs. 1-13; Food and Culture, “Why Food? Why Culture? Why Now?” pgs. 1-11

### Week 3: Are we what we eat?

- Monday (Feb. 4) — Instructor models first reading/screening discussion leadership
- Wednesday (Feb. 6) — Secondary sources and citations lesson with Food and Agricultural Librarian Ashley Downs *in Mann Library’s Stone Classroom*.

*READ:* Food: The Key Concepts, Ch. 2 “Identity: Are We What We Eat?” pgs. 15-34; Ch. 4 “Convenience: The Global Food Chain” pgs. 55-78

*SCREEN:* *Supersize Me* (2004)

### Week 4: King Corn

- Monday (Feb. 11) — **Essay 2 draft due**; Revisions workshop
- Wednesday (Feb. 13) — Lesson on evaluation, bias, and authority

*READ:* The Omnivore’s Dilemma, Introduction- Ch. 3; Yale Film Analysis Guide

*SCREEN:* *King Corn* (2008)

*Conferences February 12-15*

### Week 5: The historian’s toolbox

- Monday (Feb. 18) — **Essay 2 FINAL due**; *The Art of Quoting* in-class style exercise
- Wednesday (Feb. 20) — **Essay 2 Reflection due (2-3 pages)**; oral history lesson

*READ:* The Omnivore’s Dilemma, Ch. 4-7; Flowers & Swan (2011) article, “Eating at us”

*SCREEN:* *Food, Inc.* (2008)

### Week 6: The historian's toolbox (cont'd)

- Monday (Feb. 25) — FEBRUARY BREAK, No Class
- Wednesday (Feb. 27) — Guest: Horticulture archive researcher Dr. Karen Penders St. Clair

READ: *Samuels, H. (1986). Who controls the past. The American Archivist, 49(2), 109-124.*

### Week 7: The Botany of Desire

- Monday (March 4) — **Essay 3 PLAN due.** Workshop: Note-taking
- Wednesday (March 6) — Guest: Dr. Michael Mazourek, Cornell vegetable breeder & founder, Row 7 Seed Company

READ: *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, Ch. 8-10; *bon appétit* "Honeynut Squash Is a Tiny Squash with a Big History" (Nov. 2017); re-read Flowers & Swan (2011) article, "Eating at us"  
SCREEN: Netflix's *Chef's Table* (Season 1, Episode 2)

### Week 8: Plants over animals?

- Monday (March 11) — Discussion
- Wednesday (March 13) — **Essay 3 DRAFT due.** Workshop: Active vs. passive voice

READ: *Food: The Key Concepts*, Ch. 5 "Responsibility: Who Pays for Dinner?" pgs. 79-103;  
*The Omnivore's Dilemma*, Ch. 11-14  
SCREEN: *Forks Over Knives* (2011)

### Week 9: Are we seeing a food (or film) evolution?

- Monday (March 18) — Guest: Dr. T. Colin Campbell, Prof. Emeritus in Cornell Nutrition
- Wednesday (March 20) — **Essay 3 FINAL due.** Workshop: Standards of evidence.

READ: *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, Ch. 15-20; Selected excerpts, *The China Study*

### Week 10: "Big Ag" pushes back

- Monday (March 25) — Writing workshop: Returning to active vs. passive voice
- Wednesday (March 27) — **Book review due.** Writing workshop: Quotes and paraphrasing

READ: *Food: The Key Concepts*, Ch. 6 "The Future of Food" pgs. 105-123  
SCREEN: *Food Evolution* (2017)

### Week 11:

- Monday (April 1) — SPRING BREAK, No Class
- Wednesday (April 3) — SPRING BREAK, No Class

### Week 12: What's "science" got to do with it?

- Monday (April 8) — Writing about science
- Wednesday (April 10) — Guest: Dr. Sarah Evanega, Director, Cornell Alliance for Science

*READ:* Journal of Environmental Communication Special Issue (2010: Vol 4, Issue 3) – Food, Culture & the Environment: Communicating About What We Eat [selections]

### Week 13: Framing farming, revisited

- Monday (April 15) — **Essay 4 FINAL DUE**; Guest: Dr. Andy Novakovic, Cornell Prof. of Agricultural Economics
- Wednesday (April 17) — Field trip to Cornell University Teaching Dairy Barn

*READ:* Nisbet & Aufderheide (2009), "Documentary film: Towards a research agenda on forms, functions, and impacts"

*SCREEN:* "Milk Money," *Rotten* (2018); "Acres & Avenues" Ep. 1; CNBC on Gov't Cheese

### Week 14: Writing Workshop

- Monday (April 22) — Writing workshop: Interviews
- Wednesday (April 24) — Essays 5 workshop

**Final (collaborative) project/Essay 5 proposal due Wednesday, April 24 by 9:00pm**

### Week 15: Writing Workshop

- Monday (April 29) — Field trip to Cornell University Insect Collection archive
- Wednesday (May 1) — Essay 5 workshop

### Week 16: Conclusion

- Monday (May 6) — **Essay 5 FINAL PRESENTATIONS**; conclusion activity

**Essay 6 FINAL due: Thursday, May 16 at 11:30am**