PSY 345: PSYCHOLOGY OF FOOD

Lecture: Mon 11:00am - 1:50pm  
Professors: Dr. Debra Swoboda
Telephone: 718-262-2686  
Office: AC 4D06
E-Mail: dswoboda@york.cuny.edu  
Office Hrs: Tu 10-11, Th 3-4 & by appt.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
York College/CUNY Bulletin Description: Psychology 345 (Lib Arts). The Psychology of Food; 3 hours, 3 credits; Prerequisite: ENG 125 & ENG 126; 6 credits in psychology. Food and eating are central to what we are as human beings and how we relate to each other. Global change in diet and eating habits, a growing obesity problem, and the questionable sustainability of current food patterns point out their importance. This course will investigate food from a psychological perspective.

Instructor’s Description: How does food influence who we are and how we interact with others in our family, our culture, and society? In this course I will present what psychological science can tell us about the production and consumption of food, and about how eating impacts health and identity. To use a food metaphor, I know I cannot make you eat what I prepare, since that is your choice. But, if you come to class hungry, your efforts to study the psychology of food will help you understand the role of food in your life in new ways.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:
Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

1. Explain local, national, or global trends or ideologies regarding food systems and their impact on food production, distribution, and consumption
2. Identify the ways social and cultural food practices influence social identity
3. Describe the ways food pathways shape dietary choices
4. Evaluate ethical views associated with dietary choices
5. Assess the ways food preferences and choices impact health

REQUIRED TEXTS:

   This book describes various food chains through depictions of four types of meals - industrial, organic, sustainable, and do-it-yourself.

   This book describes how the fast food industry has infiltrated American society and the repercussions on the way food is produced, consumed, and understood.

3. Additional readings posted on Blackboard (see list of readings for each topic area):
CLASS MEETINGS:
I will conduct class through a combination of lecture and group discussion involving analysis of primary source readings, although some weeks this format will be supplemented by invited speakers or film viewings. You are expected to read assigned Blackboard articles before coming to class and to bring a copy of each article with you for use in discussion. Note: You may use a laptop – but not a cellphone – to view an article during a seminar in lieu of bringing a hard copy.
TOPICS AND TEXTS

Topic 1  Introduction: Why Study the Psychology of Food

Topic 2  Palate: The Psychology of Taste

Topic 3  Presentation: Food Marketing

Topic 4  Convenience: Fast Food

Topic 5  Creation: Food Production and Consumption

Topic 6  Choice: Alternative Food Pathways and Eating Preferences
Topic 7  Dogma: Nutrition and Health

Topic 8  Syndromes: Eating Disorders and Obesity

Topic 9  Responsibility: Dieting and the Politics of Fatness

Topic 10  Identity: Eating and Cultural/Ethnic Identity

Topic 11  Divided Identities: Food and Gender/Class Differences
### COURSE OUTLINE:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>TOPICS</th>
<th>READINGS/ ASSIGNMENTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Introduction: Why Study the Psychology of Food</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Palate: The Psychology of Taste</td>
<td>READ: Kimball; Lyman; Roach</td>
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<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Presentation: Food Marketing</td>
<td>READ: Capatti, Levenstein, Smith; Smith</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Convenience: Fast Food</td>
<td>READ: Fischler; Schlosser’s <em>Fast Food Nation</em> DUE: <em>Meat vs. Vegetarian Ethics Exercise</em></td>
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<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Exam #1 Reading and Evaluating Primary Sources</td>
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<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Creation: Food Production and Consumption</td>
<td>READ: Pollan’s <em>Omnivore’s Dilemma</em></td>
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<td>Week 7</td>
<td>Choice: Alternative Food Pathways and Eating Preferences</td>
<td>READ: Goodman; Ronald &amp; Adamchak; Singer</td>
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<td>Week 8</td>
<td>Dogma: Nutrition and Health</td>
<td>READ: Nestle; Pollan DUE: <em>Mindful Eating Exercise</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 9</td>
<td>Exam #2 Writing Papers in APA Style</td>
<td>READ: <em>APA Guide</em> (posted on course Bb site)</td>
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<td>Week 10</td>
<td>Syndromes: Eating Disorders and Obesity</td>
<td>READ: Gordon; Guthman; Ogden</td>
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<td>Week 11</td>
<td>Responsibility: Dieting and the Politics of Fatness</td>
<td>READ: Burgand; Crister; Hughes; Lyons; Smith</td>
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<td>Week 12</td>
<td>Identity: Eating and Cultural/Ethnic Identity</td>
<td>READ: AA Registry; Berg; Richards-Greaves</td>
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<td>Week 13</td>
<td>Divided Identities: Food and Gender/Class Differences</td>
<td>READ: Emsberger; Hughes; Parascoli; Roseberry DUE: <em>Paper</em></td>
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<td>Week 14</td>
<td>Reflections and Summing Up</td>
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<td>Finals Week</td>
<td>Final Exam</td>
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### CLASS PARTICIPATION:

I hope you actively participate in this course because I have found that it is the best way to engage you in learning the material. Your learning and enjoyment will be enhanced if you have prepared before coming to class by reading and thinking about the reading assignments being discussed. During discussion, we will explore reading assignments together as a class – analyzing passages, thinking aloud, asking questions, and testing ideas in a systematic fashion to gain deeper understanding. In my experience, discussion will also be more lively and interesting if we practice good discussion strategies by actively listen to each other, taking turns, and when talking, speaking to the whole class. I hope you will join me and your fellow students in sharing your thoughts and comments in this spirit.
EXAMS:
Exams are designed to assess your mastery of core concepts covered in lecture, discussion and the assigned readings. You will take two examinations and a non-cumulative final exam accounting for 60% of your grade. Each exam will include multiple-choice questions and essay questions. Your essay responses will be evaluated on the basis of content, organization and clarity of ideas, and grammatical expression.

PAPER AND WRITTEN EXERCISES:
In addition to exams, you will complete a paper and two written exercises worth 40% of your grade.

PAPER
The paper is designed to assess your application of course concepts covered in lecture, discussion, and assigned readings to some aspect of food. You must write a paper based on one of three topics: 1) Field Report; 2) Food and Identity; or 3) Future Scenario. Regardless of which topic you choose, your paper should be 5-6 pages long (excluding cover page and references page) and incorporate two secondary sources (other than the assigned readings) related to the topic. Papers should be written in APA style. To assist you in preparing your paper, we will discuss how to write and format a paper in APA style in class in advance of the paper submission deadline. Papers will be graded based on accuracy and organization of ideas, use of secondary sources, spelling and grammar, and application of APA style.

Field Report:
Write a paper that discusses your field research on a food production, distribution, or consumption center and the local, national, or global trends or ideologies affecting the center you visit. You should explore at length how particular food trends or ideologies influence the way food is made, distributed, or eaten. You could choose to visit, for instance, a farmer’s market and talk to some of the farmers about their work; a local grocery store and evaluate the healthfulness and affordability of its options; the Queens Farm Museum and explore the historical production and preparation of food in New York. Cite ideas from two secondary sources in developing your paper.

Food and Identity:
Write a paper that discusses how social or cultural food practices such as type of cuisine, agriculture technique, method of cookery, or eating and dining practices impact social identity. You should explore at length how a particular food practice influences peoples’ social behaviors and roles. For instance, you might examine the role of fish in Japanese cuisine; explain a connection between the food of a particular region and its geography and economics; analyze the menu at a restaurant to determine what populations, cultures, genders, and classes it is designed to appeal to; discuss gendered food roles in a particular country, class, or even your own family. Cite ideas from two secondary sources in developing your paper.

Future Scenario:
Write a paper that discusses how dietary choices and food enjoyment are influenced by food pathways (where these foods come from and how they get from farm to table). To do so, imagine an alternative diet for your grandchildren, fifty years from now, based on probable technological fixes to the resource challenges that will occur such as environmental crises, especially climate change, soil erosion, rising petroleum prices, and water shortages. For the scenario, describe three full meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner). You should explore at length how food supply influences aspects of eating such as taste, food preparation techniques, and table manners. Cite ideas from two secondary sources in developing your paper.
EXERCISES
Exercises are designed to assess your application of course concepts covered in lecture, discussion, and assigned readings to some aspect of food. You must complete two exercises: 1) Mindful Eating and 2) Meat Ethics (see course outline for due dates). Each exercise requires answering a series of questions about eating practices (either by you or by interviewing others) and examining the responses. A form for submitting responses to each exercise is posted on the course Bb site. Each exercise will be graded based on accuracy, thoroughness, and organization of exercise completion, spelling and grammar, and timeliness of submission.

Exercise #1 Meat vs. Vegetarian Ethics:
This exercise is designed to help you evaluate ethical views associated with making certain dietary choices. In this exercise, you are asked to qualitatively evaluate the ethical, ecological, and health reasons that people give for being a meat-eater or a vegetarian.

Find FIVE people from a variety of backgrounds (in age, gender, ethnicity). Record and analyze their answers to the following questions:
1. Are you a vegetarian? If so, when did you become one and why? (Vegetarians skip questions 2 and 3.)
2. If you do eat meat, please fill in the blanks: I eat meat because _____. I could not be a vegetarian because _____.
3. If you do eat meat, do you eat the same amount and type of meat as you did when you were growing up? Explain why you've changed or haven't changed.
4. How do you react to reports that there may be negative health effects from eating meat?
5. How do you react to the following statement by Isaac Bashevis Singer (Nobel laureate for literature) in the novel The Penitent (1983, p.27):
   “I watched someone at the next table working away at his plate of ham with eggs. I had long since come to the conclusion that man's treatment of God's creatures makes mockery of all his ideals and the whole alleged humanism. In order for this overstuffed individual to enjoy his ham, a living creature had to be raised, dragged to its death, tortured, scalded in hot water. The man didn't give a second's thought to the fact that the pig was made of the same stuff as he and that it had to pay with suffering and death so that he could taste its flesh. I've more than once thought that when it comes to animals, every man is a Nazi.”
   Do you (a) Agree totally, (b) Agree somewhat, or (c) Disagree totally? Explain.
6. Choose a paragraph about meat production in Eric Schlosser's Fast Food Nation and write one paragraph (approximately 250 words) to summarize the key points. Then read this paragraph to your respondents and ask them: “Are you (a) Bothered enough to consider rethinking your diet, (b) Somewhat bothered, but not enough to change your diet, or (c) Not bothered at all? Explain.”
7. Analyze respondents’ comments as a whole. What do the responses indicate about respondents’ attitudes toward meat? What do the responses suggest about what it takes to motivate people to eat less or no meat?
Exercise #2 *Mindful Eating:*
This exercise is designed to help you assess the ways food preferences and choices impact health. In this exercise, you are asked to systematically evaluate the relationship between what you normally eat and its nutritional value.

Research suggests that when food is easily accessible (especially fast food), plentiful, attractive, and, people will eat more of it, almost automatically, without thought. The converse of this finding is that when people are mindful of what they are eating, they eat less. As a step toward understanding this finding, complete the following exercise:

For seven days, keep a record of all eating occasions, including snacks. Then, create a chart organizing this information to compute the following:
1. When you ate the food and how long it took to eat it
2. The number of people you ate with (people you actually know)
3. Where you ate the food
4. Who prepared the food
5. The cost of your portion of this meal
6. The geographical source of the #1 ingredient (i.e., Iowa, Chile, Florida, etc. If you don't know, state "I don't know")
7. The predominant taste sensations
8. The nutritional composition of what you ate, including these numbers, which may be derived using USDA's online Nutrient Data Laboratory:
   - Total weight in grams. (Note that USDA does this by average portion size, which is often a lot less than what people actually eat)
   - Energy (cal)
   - Protein (grams)
   - Total lipid (fat) (grams)
   - Saturated fatty acids (grams)
   - Cholesterol (mg)
9. Looking back at the food consumed during seven days, calculate:
   - Your average daily calorific intake (total calories divided by 7)
   - The percentage of total calories that were derived from fat (multiply the number of grams of total lipid times 9, then divide this number by the total number of calories)
   - The percentage of total calories consumed away from home
10. Finally, analyze the significance of the week's food consumption:
    - What surprises you most about what and how you ate over those seven days?
    - How did keeping a food diary affect your food consumption?
    - Complete this sentence: "If we are what we eat, then I am..."
EVALUATION:

Exercise #1 = 50 points or 10%
Exercise #2 = 50 points or 10%
Paper = 100 points or 20%
Exam #1 = 100 points or 20%
Exam #2 = 100 points or 20%
Final Exam = 100 points or 20%
Total Evaluation = 500 points or 100%

Evaluation of Achievement. Course grades will be based on absolute thresholds for total points.

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<tr>
<th>Point Range</th>
<th>Percentage of Total</th>
<th>Final Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>465&gt;</td>
<td>93% &amp; &gt;</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>450 - 464</td>
<td>90-92.9%</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>435 – 449</td>
<td>87-89.9%</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>415 – 434</td>
<td>83-86.9%</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>400 – 414</td>
<td>80-82.9%</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<td>385 – 399</td>
<td>77-79.9%</td>
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<td>365 – 384</td>
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<td>350 – 364</td>
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<td>&lt;299</td>
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“INC” grades, which indicate that work is still pending before a final grade can be assigned, will be given at the discretion of the instructor. The final day to withdraw from this course with a “W” grade is November 17.

COURSE POLICIES:

On the first day of class, we will discuss the expectations and class norms that you would like to have for this course. To get us started, here are some of my policies:

1) Attendance. You should attend every class and arrive on time. I understand that extenuating circumstances can arise that can make this difficult, but please contact me if you cannot attend. In addition, if you have to miss a discussion or presentation, please obtain notes from one of your classmates and find out if there are any changes in assignments or deadlines.

2) Communication. You will need an active York email account to access Blackboard (Bb) assignments. I also often send messages (deadline reminders, notifications in case of emergency, additional information) to all students in the course via Bb, so you want to make sure you have an active York email account. If you do not have an active York email account, here is how to get one: follow the directions on the York website at: http://www.york.cuny.edu/it/webteam/live or call the helpdesk at 718-262-5300.

3) Syllabus Changes. Sometimes the perceived needs of students in a class or a college-wide emergency make it necessary or worthwhile for me to change the format of how the course proceeds. If I need to change the syllabus, I will discuss any proposed changes with you.

4) Late/Make-up Policy. Illness, death in the family, or other traumatic events unfortunately are a part of life. Special consideration for late work or missed activities will be given if you contact me with 24 hours and provide documentation.
5) **Classroom Etiquette.** Please observe some obvious standards of classroom etiquette. Cell phones ringing have been shown to interfere with other students’ performance (End, et al, 2010), and they are generally disruptive. So, cellular phones should be turned off during class. If you need to be called during class, please speak with me about the situation.

5) **Standards of Academic Integrity.** The College expects and requires academic honesty from all members of the College community. Some students don’t know what plagiarism is or is not. The College *Bulletin* defines academic dishonesty as including, but not limited to: a) unauthorized collaboration or representing another’s ideas as one’s own; and b) falsely obtaining, distributing, using, or receiving test materials. Please be aware that academic dishonesty will result in automatic failure for the entire course and may result in further disciplinary action by the College.

6) **Disability-Related Needs.** If you are a student with a documented disability who needs reasonable academic accommodations, please speak with me at the beginning of the semester. You should also contact the Office of Student Development/Counseling in 1G03 for assistance.

**STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS:**
How can you best succeed in the course?

1) Engage in active reading of the assigned texts. Your understanding and application of the major concepts in the texts will be enhanced if your reading of the texts includes marking interesting passages, organizing thoughts on paper, and listing significant questions.

2) Participate in class discussions. You will get a lot more out of class discussions if you contribute to the conversations. I may call on students if the class is too quiet or if only some students are participating – not to single out anyone but rather to make the class more lively and interesting. Discussions will also be more interesting if you practice good discussion strategies, and I will model good discussion strategies to support this practice.

3) Actively integrate information from lecture, reading assignments, and discussion. You will gain deeper understanding of course concepts (and probably perform better on exams) if you take steps to identify significant ideas and themes that occur in lecture, texts, and discussion and connect them. I can tell you that successful students in previous sections have told me that they were most successful when they routinely spent time looking for and attending to overlapping ideas located in their lecture notes, in assigned readings, and in class discussions.

4) We have all needed help in something at some point in our lives. If you find yourself not understanding the assigned readings, lectures, and assignments, please contact me. You can stop by my office hours or arrange a mutually convenient time if you cannot make my office hours. I look forward to seeing you.
OPTIONAL READINGS:
Please use the optional reading list I have provided in whatever ways best fit your needs and desires. One way you can use the optional readings is as a resource to identify secondary sources for the paper you must complete. Instead or in addition, if you are interested in further study of the psychology of food, you can go beyond the material provided in the required texts and use the optional readings to examine specific topics in more detail. Finally, you can also utilize the optional readings, which often provide a different perspective to the assigned texts, to critically evaluate what you learn.

The Psychology of Food:

This syllabus was developed using the York College/CUNY syllabus template.