

**Essentials of Cuisine**  
**FOOD-UE 1135.001 (3 credits)**

**Fall 2013**

Department of Nutrition, Food Studies and Public Health  
NYU Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development

Thursdays: 9:30am-12:15pm

Instructor: Christy Spackman [christy.spackman@nyu.edu](mailto:christy.spackman@nyu.edu)

Office Hours: Tuesdays, 1-2pm, and by appointment.  
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**Course Description and Objectives:**

In Essentials of Cuisine we examine how cuisines develop and evolve through examining the concept of “taste of place.” We ask whether and how such a thing as a cuisine can exist, given the individual subjectivity of tastes and perception. If so, what are the factors that frame and shape collective taste? Is a cuisine necessarily connected to a particular place? How do geography, history, politics, colonialism, economics, technology, religion, morality, and corporeal experience structure cuisine?

Essentials of Cuisine is organized conceptually so as to encourage critical engagement and facilitate comparison between these issues across a range of geographical, temporal and cultural contexts. The aim is to teach students how to use the familiar to analyze the unfamiliar, and to further hone students’ intellectual and practical skillsets (through readings, in-class discussions and writing exercises). In the first section of the course we consider the ideas of taste and place, examining how cuisine is embodied, created, regulated, and located. In the second part of the course we address movement, looking at how the circulation of things, peoples and their culinary traditions changes taste. Finally, we conclude by moving from the general to the specific, examining cultures of taste in two particular contexts.

**Course Texts:**

Required Books: Available at the bookstore and on reserve at the library.  
Bell, David and Gill Valentine. 1997. *Consuming Geographies*. New York: Routledge.  
Guy, Kolleen. 2007. *When Champagne Became French*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.  
Farquhar, Judith. 2002. *Appetites: Food and Sex in Post-Socialist China*. Durham: Duke University Press.  
Paxson, Heather. 2012. *The Life of Cheese*. Berkely: University of California Press.  
Petrini, Carlo. 2004. *Slow Food: The Case for Taste*. New York: Columbia University Press. (Available online through BOBST.)  
Trubek, Amy. 2009. *Taste of Place: A Cultural Journey into Terroir*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Required Articles: Linked from our NYU Classes site, under Course Documents.

**Course Requirements:**

Class blog contributions

5%

Reflection #1	20%
Reflection #2	20%
Reflection #3	35%
Class participation	20%
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>100%</b>

Grading Scale:

A	= 93-100
A-	= 90-92
B+	= 87-89
B	= 83-86
B-	= 80-82
C+	= 77-79
C	= 73-76
C-	= 70-72
D+	= 67-69
D	= 60-66
F	= Below 60

**Assignment Details:**

- Questions via class forum -- 4 weeks: (5%) Generate and submit one thoughtful question based on a week's assigned readings **four** times over the course of the semester. You may choose which weeks you will submit questions for, but you must submit a question for four separate weeks. The question can be open-ended and you need not provide an answer when you submit it. Perhaps you might have a question for one of the authors of the texts. Or, you might question some of the concepts and arguments put forward in the texts. Your posting can address any part of the reading, and it might connect one week's readings to previous class discussions, but it should critically engage with material. Entries should typically be between 20-60 words, and limited to 100 words maximum. **Your entry should be posted on the blog by 6pm on the Wednesday evening before class. At least one of the questions must be submitted before Part II of the course begins.**
- Reflection #1: (20%) **Due at midnight October 10.** Write a 3 page paper synthesizing and analyzing Part I of the course. A successful paper must include the following elements:
  - Identify three central themes/issues/concepts that have emerged throughout the first portion of the class.
  - Identify two theoretical "holes" or problems that have come up during Part I of the class (questions or issues presented by the theoretical framework/authors).
  - Pick one of the two holes or problems identified and explore what type of research you think needs to happen to address this problem.
  - *Include with the assignment your notes from the reading group discussion. You can scan them in, take a photo of them, etc.*

- **Reflection #2: (20%) Due at midnight November 21.** Write a 3 page paper that engages with displacement by examining a specific neighbourhood or culinary “group” found in New York City. Your paper should detail the “story” of the neighbourhood or culinary group and the commodities, politics, laws, geographies and spaces around it/them. Attach at least one photo “showing”/ illustrating your research. (A black and white photo printed on normal paper is fine) A successful paper will do the following:
  - Identify and define how you are thinking of displacement
  - Use the “story” of the neighbourhood or culinary group to illustrate/ support/ or problematize how we have discussed displacement (essentially, does what you see on the ground support what we have discussed in class? Does it tell an entirely different story? Or does it fall somewhere in the middle? Why do you think that is?)
  - Draw conclusions from your observations (these do not need to be grand or world-shattering conclusions)
  - Briefly point to what additional types of research might be needed within the academic community to better understand displacement
- **Reflection #3: (35%) Due in class December 17.** Over the course of the semester we will consider many different ways of understanding what ‘place’ is, as well as accompanying challenges, constraints and possibilities for thinking about cuisine and taste. For your final assignment, write a 5-6 page reflection paper on these course themes, making an argument for what you think ‘place’ and ‘taste’ are. Can there be such a thing as a ‘taste of place’? What are some of the possibilities and challenges? You should draw on a minimum of 4 readings from across the course in making your argument (arguing for or against these concepts, showing how they fit together, are dissonant, etc.). You are not required to bring in any additional readings, but you are welcome to do so if necessary for your argument (additional readings, if chosen, should remain at a minimum). As a reflection piece on the concepts of taste, place and cuisine, this assignment offers the opportunity for latitude and creativity, but you should demonstrate critical engagement with and evaluation of the texts. For example, you might compare and contrast the chosen readings, and then make an argument for your own opinion on the topic in relation to them. This requires that you make working definitions and assumptions explicit, explain how the chosen texts fit with one another, and demonstrate how and why you agree or disagree with them. You are welcome (and encouraged) to use your blog questions as a starting point in this assignment, but your engagement of texts that you have already addressed in reflection #1 should be minimal (unless approved in consultation with the instructors).

Each reflection paper should be typed, formatted with double spacing, 12 pt Times New Roman font, 1” margins on all sides, page numbers, and free of spelling and grammatical errors. It should be submitted in hard copy (stapled) at the beginning of the class on which it is due. Evaluation will be based on: clarity and scope of the synthesis and analysis; coherent and compelling arguments; logic and/or use of evidence in support of your claims; critical insight; eloquence; and proper formatting, citations and use of language.

Note all due dates on the schedule above. In the absence of medical documentation, late assignments will be penalized one full grade letter per day (e.g. an A paper will receive a B if received anytime within 24 hours after the initial due date, it will receive a C if received 24-48 hours after the initial due date, and so on). As well, please familiarize yourself with the University's policies on academic conduct, available at [http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/policies/academic\\_integrity](http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/policies/academic_integrity). Plagiarism and failure to cite sources properly will not be tolerated and will result in severe penalties.

**Participation:**

The course readings are mandatory, and you are expected to have completed all assigned readings prior to class. Occasionally, supplemental readings will be handed out in class a week prior to their discussion.

You are expected to attend and actively participate in every class throughout the course of the semester. This requires that you come to class prepared to critically engage with the texts and contribute to discussions through comments and questions. Please arrive on time and refrain from using phones in class. As this is a seminar course, you are allowed a maximum of two absences. Any absences beyond that will result in a full grade letter reduction to your final grade (e.g. an A- will become a B- after the third absence, and will become a C- after the fourth absence). Students with extenuating circumstances should contact the instructors in advance.

**Course Management and Communication:**

Be sure to check NYU Classes regularly for important announcements and supplemental materials. You may access our NYU Classes site via NYU Home. Information will also be distributed via email. Please check your NYU email account often.

Any student attending NYU who needs an accommodation due to a chronic, psychological, visual, mobility and/or learning disability, or is Deaf or Hard of Hearing should register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980, 240 Greene Street, [www.nyu.edu/csd](http://www.nyu.edu/csd).

## Topics and Readings:

All readings listed below are required, unless otherwise noted as a recommended text. Any changes will be announced both in class and on NYU Classes. Assigned readings draw from books (available in the bookstore) and articles. Readings accessible via NYU Classes are marked with (Classes).

### PART I: TASTE IN PLACE

#### Week 1: Sept 5 -- Course Introduction – Culinary Bodies: Problematizing Taste and Place

- Smith, David V. and Robert F. Margolskee. 2001. "Making Sense of Taste." *Scientific American*, March 18. <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=making-sense-of-taste>. (Classes)
- Rosenblum, Lawrence D. 2009. "You drink what you think." *Psychology Today*, August 24. <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/sensory-superpowers/200908/you-drink-what-you-think> (Classes)

#### Week 2: Sept 12 -- Situating Space, Locating Place

- Bell, David and Gill Valentine. 1997. "Region," in *Consuming Geographies*. New York, NY: Routledge. [Chapter 6 only]
- Leschziner, Vanina. 2006. "Epistemic Foundations of Cuisine: A Socio-Cognitive Study of the Configuration of Cuisine in Historical Perspective." *Theory and Society* 35 (4): 421-443. (Classes)
- Paolisso, Michael. 2007. "Taste the Traditions: Crabs, Crab Cakes, and the Chesapeake Bay Blue Crab Fishery." *American Anthropologist* 109 (4):654–665. (Classes)
- Rozin, Elizabeth. 1982. "The Structure of Cuisine," in *The Psychobiology of Human Food Selection*, ed. Lewis M. Barker. Westport, CT: AVI Publishing. (Classes)
- Spray, Zona. 2002. "Alaska's Arctic Cuisine." *Gastronomica*. 2(1): 30-40. (Classes)

Recommended: Cresswell, Tim. 2004. *Place: A Short Introduction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell. [pp.1-12.] (Classes)

#### Week 3: Sept 19 -- Sensing Internal and External Geographies [guest lecture: Jennifer Berg]

- Sack, Daniel. 2001. "Liturgical Food" and "Moral Food," in *Whitbread Protestants*. New York: St. Martin's Press. [Chapters 1 and 5]
- Rouse, Carolyn and Janet Hoskinst. 2004. "Purity, Soul Food, and Sunni Islam: Explorations at the Intersection of Consumption and Resistance." *Cultural Anthropology*. 19 (2): 226-249. (Classes)
- Bell, David and Gill Valentine. 1997. "Body," in *Consuming Geographies*. New York: Routledge. [Chapter 2]

Recommended: Anderson, Jennifer L. 1987. "Japanese Tea Ritual: Religion in Practice." *Man*. 22: 475-498. (Classes)

#### Week 4: Sept 26 – Training Taste, Building Citizens: Inventing Place and Constructing Community through Taste Education [guest lecture: Jennifer Berg]

- Leynse, Wendy L.H. 2006. "Journeys through 'Ingestible Topography': Socializing the 'Situated Eater in France,'" in *Food, Drink and Identity in Europe*, ed. Thomas M. Wilson. Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B.V. (Classes)

- Petrini, Carlo. 2004. *Slow Food: The Case for Taste*. New York: Columbia University Press. [Excerpts. Available online through BOBST.]
- Terrio, Susan. 2000. "Re-educating French Palettes," in *Crafting the Culture and History of French Chocolate*. Berkeley: University of California Press. [Chapter 3 only; available online through BOBST] (Classes)

Bell, David and Gill Valentine. 1997. "Community," in *Consuming Geographies*. New York, NY: Routledge. [Chapter 4 only]

Spiering, Menno. 2006. "Food, Phagophobia and English National Identity. *European Studies* 22: 31-48. (Classes)

Week 5: Oct 3 -- Inventing Tradition and Cultural Patrimony [guest lecture: Shayne Figueroa] (*Shayne will briefly present a real-life example from her research of how tradition and cultural patrimony are invented; you will then meet with your reading group in preparation for completing Reflection #1*)

- Guy, Kolleen. 2007. *When Champagne Became French*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. [Pages TBD]
- Trubek, Amy. 2009. "Place Matters," in *Taste of Place: A Cultural Journey into Terroir*. Berkeley: University of California Press. [Chapter 1 only]

Recommended: Bell, David and Gill Valentine. 1997. "Nation," in *Consuming Geographies*. New York: Routledge.

Week 6: October 10 – No Class (*Reflection 1 due electronically by midnight along with your notes from the reading group discussion*)

## PART II: DIS-PLACE-MENT

Week 7: Oct 17 – Exporting Taste, Mining Place: Colonialism and Postcolonialism

- Guy, Kolleen. 2010. "Culinary Connections and Colonial Memories in France and Algeria." *Food & History* 8 (1): 219-236. (Classes)
- Peters, Erica. 2001. "Culinary Crossings and Disruptive Identities," in *Of Vietnam: Identities in Dialogue*, eds. Jane Bradley Winston and Leakthina Chau-Pech Ollier. New York: Palgrave. (Classes)
- Janes, Lauren. 2010. "Exotic Eating in Interwar Paris: Dealing with Disgust." *Food & History* 8 (1): 237-256. (Classes)

Week 8: Oct 24 -- Delocalization, Material Culture and Taste

- Smith. 2007. "De-mystifying a Change in Taste: Spices, Space and Social Hierarchy in Europe, 1380-1750." *The International History Review* 29, 2: 237-257. (Classes)
- Pelto and Pelto. 1983. "Diet and Delocalization: Dietary Changes since 1750." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 14 (2): 507-528. (Classes)
- Cook, Ian and Michelle Harrison. 2007. "Follow the Thing: West Indian Hot Pepper Sauce." *Space and Culture* 10 (1): 40-63. (Classes)
- Cook and Crang. 1996. "Culinary Culture, Displacement and Geographical Knowledges." *Journal of Material Culture* 1(2): 131-153. (Classes)

Week 9: Oct 31 – Political Geographies: Shaping and Making Place and Taste through Media and Propaganda

- Farquhar, Judith. 2002. *Appetites: Food and Sex in Post-Socialist China*. Durham: Duke University Press. [Pages 1-47; 167-175; Conclusion]
- Nestle Water Tasting Guide

Recommended: Helstosky, Carol. 2004. *Garlic and Oil: Food and Politics in Italy*. New York, NY: Berg. [Chapters 3 and 4]. (Classes)

Week 10: Nov 7 – Migration, Diaspora and Tastes of ‘Home’

- Renne, Elisha R. 2007. “Mass Producing Food Traditions for West Africans Abroad.” *American Anthropologist* 109 (4): 616-625. (Classes)
- Harbottle, Lynn. 1997. “Taste and Embodiment: The Food Preferences of Iranians in Britain,” in *Food Preferences and Taste: Continuity and Change*, ed. Helen Macbeth. Providence: Berghahn Books. (Classes)
- Law, Lisa. 2001. “Home Cooking: Filipino Women and Geographies of the Senses in Hong Kong.” *Cultural Geographies* 8 (3): 264-283. (Classes)
- Bell, David and Gill Valentine. 1997. “Home,” in *Consuming Geographies*. New York: Routledge. [Chapter 3]

Week 11: Nov 14 – Cultural Geographies and Physical Properties: microTerroir

- Paxson, Heather. 2013. *The Life of Cheese: Crafting Food and Value in America*. Berkeley: University of California Press. [Preface, Chapter 1; pgs 46-54; Chapter 5 - 6; Recommended: 92-94; Chapter 4]
- Trubek, Amy. 2009. *Taste of Place: A Cultural Journey into Terroir*. Berkeley: University of California Press. [Chapters 2-5]

Recommended: Wilson, James E. *Terroir: The Role of Geology, Climate and Culture in the Making of French Wines*. [Excerpt] (Classes)

Week 12: Nov 21 – No Class (Reflection 2 due electronically by midnight along with your notes from the reading group discussion)

Week 13: Nov 28 – No Class Thanksgiving

Week 14: Dec 5 -- Rethinking Terroir? Problematizing Trubek

- Trubek, Amy. 2009. *Taste of Place: A Cultural Journey into Terroir*. Berkeley: University of California Press. [Chapter 6 and Epilogue]
- Paxson, Heather. 2013. *The Life of Cheese: Crafting Food and Value in America*. Berkeley: University of California Press. [Chapter 7]
- West, Harry G. 2011. “Thinking Like a Cheese: Towards an Ecological Understanding of the Reproduction of Knowledge in Contemporary Artisan Cheesemaking”, in *Understanding Cultural Transmission: A Critical Anthropological Analysis*, eds. R. Ellen, S. Lycett and S. Johns. Oxford: Berghahn Books. (Classes)  
Recommended: *Decanting Robert Parker* (Classes)

PART III: SPOTLIGHT ON CUISINES – BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

Week 15: Dec 12 -- Spotlight I: India

- Vidal, Denis. 2005. "In Search of Basmatisthan: Agro-Nationalism and Globalisation," in *Globalizing India: Perspectives from Below*, eds. Jackie Assayag and Christopher John Fuller. Anthem Press, London.
- Someshwar, Manreet Sodhi. 2011. "My Empire for an Onion." *New York Times*, January 19. [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/20/opinion/20iht-Someshwar20.html?\\_r=1&scp=2&sq=onion%20india&st=cse](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/20/opinion/20iht-Someshwar20.html?_r=1&scp=2&sq=onion%20india&st=cse)

Recommended: Rao, M. S. A. 1986. "Conservatism and Change in Food Habits among the Migrants in India: A Study in Gastrodynamics," in *Aspects in South Asian Food Systems: Food, Society and Culture*, eds. R. S. Khare and M. S. A. Rao. Durham, North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press.

Nandy, Ashis. 2004. "The Changing Popular Culture of Indian Food: Preliminary Notes." *South Asia Research* 24 (1): 9-19.

Final: Dec 17 -- Spotlight II: Mexico and Course Conclusion (8 AM Meeting time)