This course interrogates the processes that underlie the act of eating and tasting food. We approach this question from the anthropology of science, the anthropology of the senses and political economy. We explore the ways we use our senses to taste food, and the intersection between sensual experiences and language. How do our senses interact with each other to constitute the taste experience and how do we verbalize it? How do individual sensorial experiences become part of broader social phenomena? A second strand of analysis will consider the relationship between food and systems of knowledge: how do we distinguish between safe and unsafe food and what is the difference between natural and industrial? The third strand of analysis will consider the question of how taste is formulated before it arrives to our plates. What are the conditions of production and circulation of food, and the connection between place and taste.

NOTE: I’m trying to coordinate a couple of sensory experiences for the class. It is possible that class will run overtime once or twice during the semester.

Texts Available from the COOP (required):

Paxson, Heather. The Life of Cheese
Solari, John. Banana Cultures

Books and readings are available from the class website and/or the reserve desk at Tozzer library.

Course Requirements and Expectations:

1) Class Participation. This is a discussion-based seminar of the readings and topic for the day. It is crucial that each student comes prepared and on time to participate in thoughtful and creative ways. Bear in mind that the quality of a discussion-based seminar depends on everybody, teacher and students, coming together to share their thoughts.

2) Attendance. Attendance is essential to this course. If a student misses a class, she or he needs to write a one-page paper outlining his or her thoughts on the readings for the week.
3) **Plagiarism.** Just don’t do it. Plagiarism is the act of taking someone else’s work or ideas and passing them as your own. Students caught plagiarizing will face severe consequences. Plagiarism also applies to cutting and pasting from websites such as wikipedia. Scholarly work is cumulative and it is perfectly normal to be in dialogue with other scholars and be inspired by their ideas, but they must be properly cited. All work submitted for this course must be your original writing. If in doubt, please consult with me.

4) **Laptop/internet use.** This is a discussion-based seminar and it demands an active effort to be engaged in the discussion. As such, browsing the internet is counter-productive to the goals of the course. The use of computers/tablets is allowed only to take notes and/or to refer to the readings for those of you who do not print them out. At the beginning of class, switch off the internet. Moreover, internet use is not only distracting to you but also to those around you who will be distracted by dancing cats or whatever else is on your screen. Cellphone use is prohibited. If students do not comply with the laptop etiquette for this course, I reserve the right to ban laptop use during the course of the semester.

**Assignments:**

1) **Research paper. 40%**
Each student will write a research paper on a topic of their choosing that is relevant and inspired by the themes of this course. Topics must be approved by me before you embark on substantive research. Come see me during office hours or make an appointment to talk about your paper.

A project proposal is due on **October 1st**. It should be 1-2 pages in length and include a list of possible sources to be used in the paper.

Papers are due on **December 10**, and will be 10-12 pages in length for undergraduates, 15-20 pages for graduate students.

2) **Class Presentation/Participation. 25%**
Each student will choose a week during which they will make a ten minute presentation at the beginning of class summarizing the themes for the week. This presentation is not meant to be an exhaustive summary of the week’s readings. Rather, it is meant to draw out themes that arise from the set of readings and how they relate to the course.

In addition, students are expected to actively participate in class.

3) **Reading Responses. 35%**
Students will write five (5) reading responses over the course of the semester. The responses should be short—no more than a single-spaced page written in 12-point font (approx. 500 words). The reading responses are an opportunity to reflect on the materials for the week ahead of class. Reading responses are due on **Tuesdays at 11pm**, and must be submitted on time to
receive full credit. Papers will be evaluated using a √/ √+/ √- scale. You will sign up during the second week of class.

In addition, all students will write a one-page food memory to be circulated with everybody on week 4. More details will be announced in class.

**Accommodations for students with disabilities**

Students needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a documented disability must present their Faculty Letter from the [Accessible Education Office](#) (AEO) and speak with the professor by the end of the second week of the term (September 10). Failure to do so may result in the Course Head’s inability to respond in a timely manner. All discussions will remain confidential, although Faculty are invited to contact AEO to discuss appropriate implementation.

**Reading Schedule**

**Week 1 September 3 -- Introduction**  
Film: Excerpts from *Tampopo*, directed by Juzo Itami (1985)

**Week 2, September 10 -- Experience and the senses I**  
**Sensorial Experience: Sous-vide eggs**  


Caldwell, Melissa. 2014. Digestive Politics in Russia: Feeling the sensorium beyond the palate. *Food and Foodways*.

Supplemental Reading (Optional):


**Week 3, September 17— Experience and the senses II**  
**Sensorial experience: Everyone brings a smell hidden away in a paper bag.**


**Supplemental Reading (Optional):**


**Week 4, September 24 — Nostalgia and affect**


**Supplemental Reading (Optional):**


**Week 5, October 1—Connoisseurship**

Sensorial experience: coffee cupping

PAPER PROPOSAL DUE BY CLASSTIME


**Supplemental Reading (Optional):**


**Week 6, October 8— Place**

**Sensorial experience: terroir comparison**


**Supplemental Reading (Optional):**


**Week 7, October 15— Cheese**

**Sensorial experience: cheese featured in the book**

**Week 8, October 22 -- Food and the nation-state**

Mintz, Sydney. Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom (selections)


**Supplemental Reading (Optional):**


Galenba, Rebecca B. 2012. "Corn is food, not contraband": The right to "free trade" at the Mexico-Guatemala border. *American Ethnologist* 39 (4): 716-734


**Week 9, October 29-- Industrialization**

Sensorial experience: potato chip tasting


**Supplemental Reading (Optional):**


**Week 10, November 5— Bananas**

**Sensorial experience: baked bananas**


**Week 11, November 12-- Tasting Nature**

**Sensorial experience: debate on the most and least natural foods we can imagine.**


**Supplemental Reading (Optional):**


**Week 12, November 19-- Food and Risk.**

**Sensorial experience: natto and boiled okra (slime).**


Sternsdorff Cisterna, Nicolas. (in submission). *Food after Fukushima: Risk and citizenship in post 3.11 Japan.*

Supplemental Reading (Optional):


**Week 13, November 26, Thanksgiving recess, no classes**

**Week 14, December 3 -- To the future**

**Sensorial experience: vanilla—artificial, essence and bean.**


Supplemental Reading (Optional):

**Paper due December 10.**