

GEORGIA TECH
SPRING SEMESTER 2026
HTS 2018 – FOOD AND SOCIETY
SYLLABUS

Day/Time: Tuesday and Thursday 3:30–4:45

Location: Skiles 308

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Office Hours: Thursdays 1:30-3:00 pm via [Zoom](#)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course traces the development of our global industrial food system, including large-scale agriculture and supply chains that distribute food over long distances and escape seasonality. We will consider the inextricable connections between people, food, and the environment. We will examine the power relations, politics, class prejudices, racial associations, and gender formations that historically affected and frequently shaped production and consumption patterns in the United States, from colonization to the present. In doing so, we will explore the shifting meanings and experiences of food, the ways that knowledge about food is produced and circulated, and how social movements have sought to address systemic injustices in the food system.

This course does not have any pre-requisites. Students of any background or discipline are encouraged to participate. This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Social Sciences area. Core IMPACTS provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals. Course content, activities and exercises will help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies: Intercultural Competence, Perspective-Taking, and Persuasion.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course fulfills Georgia Tech's Learning Goal E (Social Sciences): "Effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economics, political, social, or geographic relationships develop, persist, or change."

More specifically, students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge about how our food system has developed and changed over time
- Identify and articulate the connections between food, race, class, and gender throughout different trends and movements of U.S. history
- Critically analyze primary and secondary sources by placing them within historical contexts, identifying key evidence or arguments, and developing new questions
- Engage in scholarly discussions and debates through writing and verbal communication

COURSE STRUCTURE

This course involves a combination of lectures, break-out group discussions, and activities. You should refer closely to our Canvas page for information and updates.

RESOURCES AND REQUIREMENTS

Canvas

Electronic versions of the syllabus, required readings, assignments, and other course materials will be available through Canvas. You may access Canvas directly via:

<https://www.canvas.gatech.edu/>.

Collaboration

Collaboration is an important part of the learning process and there will be ample opportunities for you to work with your peers throughout the semester, whether through group break-out discussions, class activities, or presentations. Innovative ideas are often generated by combining diverse perspectives. Each person will bring their own experiences, expertise, ideas, and techniques to the class. Be open-minded, empathetic, and respectful to each other. Feedback should be constructive, communication should be clear, and decisions should be negotiated. The classroom is an inclusive space where everyone should feel comfortable participating without fear of judgement.

Participation

Your active participation in this class is essential to generating a collaborative environment and to developing a shared conversation over the course of the semester. Participation requires mindfulness of your role in the classroom. Be respectful to your peers and be aware of the level of your engagement: Are you leaving it up to your fellow students to talk or do all the work? Are you dominating conversations or activities? If you find it difficult to speak up in class or to participate in group activities, come talk with me during my office hours or make an appointment at any time. Attendance and Participation will constitute 10% of your final grade.

Assignments

1. Reading “Takeaways.” Each week, you will submit a brief takeaway (2-3 sentences) addressing the assigned readings—something that surprised you, challenged an assumption, or changed how you think about food and society. The goal is reflection and engagement, not summary.
2. Group Discussion Facilitation. Once during the semester, you will work in a small group with classmates to facilitate discussion of the assigned readings. This assignment emphasizes collaborative preparation, oral communication, and the ability to guide and sustain productive class conversation.
3. In-Class Reflections and Primary Source Analyses. Throughout the semester, you will complete short, in-class writing reflections and primary source analyses that engage directly with historical texts, images, or material

evidence related to food systems. These exercises focus on developing critical thinking through close reading, evidence-based interpretation, and attention to historical context.

4. Food Biography Midterm Essay. In this midterm essay (800-1200 words), you will select a single food or plant and trace its historical “biography,” examining its origins, cultural meanings, and movement through systems of trade, labor, and power.
5. “Off on a Tangent” Final Presentations and Research Paper. This assignment asks you to go “off on a tangent” by researching a food- and society–related topic beyond the core course materials. You will complete a short research paper (1500–2000 words) and share their findings through a concise in-class presentation.

GRADING SCALE AND GRADE ALLOCATION

Your final grade will be assigned as a letter grade according to the following scale:

A 90-100%
B 80-89%
C 70-79%
D 60-69%
F 0-59%

Grades will be allocated accordingly:

Attendance and Participation.....	10%
Group Discussion Facilitation.....	15%
Reading Takeaways.....	15%
In-Class Reflections and Analyses.....	15%
Food Biography Midterm Essay.....	20%
“Off on A Tangent” Final Research Paper/Presentation.....	25%

LOGISTICS, POLICIES, AND OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Academic Honesty and Integrity

Georgia Tech seeks to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. Any student suspected of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, which will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations. Avoid plagiarism in any form. Remember, plagiarism is not just about copying someone else’s writing. Any time that you present an idea without correctly citing it, you are committing plagiarism. For information on

Georgia Tech's Academic Honor Code, please visit: <https://policylibrary.gatech.edu/student-life/academic-honor-code>

Accessibility and Accommodations

Georgia Tech's Office of Disability Services provides support and resource information for students with disabilities. If a student requires academic accommodations, it is their responsibility to register with the Office of Disability Services. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and that disability accommodations are not provided until an accommodation letter has been processed. Students registered with the Office of Disability Services who have a letter outlining their academic accommodations, are strongly encouraged to coordinate a meeting with their professor to discuss a protocol to implement the accommodations as needed throughout the semester. This meeting should occur as early in the semester as possible. Students must renew their accommodation letter every semester they attend classes. Contact the Office of Disability Services at (404) 894-2563 or visit their office in the Dean of Students Office. Additional information is available through their website: <http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu/>.

Artificial Intelligence Course Policy

This course is about growing in your ability to write, communicate, and think critically. Generative AI agents such as ChatGPT, DALL-E 2, and others present great opportunities for learning and for communicating. However, AI cannot learn or communicate for you, and so cannot meet the course requirements for you. You may use generative AI programs to help generate ideas and brainstorm. You should be aware that the material generated by these programs may be inaccurate, incomplete, biased or otherwise problematic. Also, use of these tools may stifle your own independent thinking and creativity.

As with any technology, generative AI tools need to be used critically and according to academic and professional expectations. Thus, when using generative AI tools in the work of this course, you are expected to adhere to these principles:

- **Responsibility:** You are responsible for the work you submit. In instances in which your instructor allows generative AI tool use, this means that any work you submit should be your own, with any AI assistance appropriately disclosed (see "Transparency" below) and any AI-generated content appropriately cited (see "Documentation" below). This also means you must ensure that any factual statements produced by a generative AI tool are true and that any references or citations produced by the AI tool are correct.
- **Transparency:** Any generative AI tools you use in the work of the course should be clearly acknowledged as indicated by the instructor. This work includes not only when you use content directly produced by a generative AI tool but also when you use a generative AI tool in the process of composition (for example, for brainstorming, outlining, or translation purposes).
- **Documentation:** If you include material generated by an AI program, it should be cited like any other reference material (with due consideration for the quality of the reference, which may be poor). When/if you use AI platforms in your assignments, please write a note to clarify where in your process you used AI, include the prompt used to generate

the material, and which platform(s) you used. See this article for how to cite AI properly:
<https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt>

Using generative AI tools in the course without adhering to these principles may be considered an infraction of the Georgia Tech Honor Code subject to investigation by the Office of Student Integrity.

Attendance Policy

Attending class, participating in group discussions, and engaging in class activities are essential to your success and to that of your classmates. Students are permitted up to three absences over the course of the semester. Beyond these three absences, a student's final course grade may be lowered by one letter grade for each additional absence, except in cases of documented, Institute-approved absences. It is the student's responsibility to notify the instructor and provide documentation as soon as possible so that any necessary accommodations or make-up work can be coordinated.

Institute Approved Absences

Students who anticipate missing class because of approved Institute activities (such as field trips, professional conferences, and athletic events) should make an Institute-approved absence request through the Registrar's Office. More information on guidelines and deadlines can be found at this site: <https://registrar.gatech.edu/info/institute-approved-absence-form-for-students>

Medical Emergencies or Illness

In the event of a medical emergency or an illness that is severe enough to require medical attention, students are responsible for contacting the Office of the Dean of Students as soon as possible to report the medical issue or emergency, providing dated documentation from a medical professional and requesting assistance in notifying their instructors. The medical documentation will be handled confidentially within the Office of the Dean of Students and will inform a decision as to whether communication with instructional faculty is appropriate. Requests will be honored to excuse a medical emergency or illness and allow make-up of the work missed. For More information on Georgia Tech's Policy regarding Student Absence from Class Due to Illness or Personal Emergencies, see: <https://catalog.gatech.edu/policies/student-absence-regulations/>

Make-up Policy

Permission of the professor is needed to make-up assignments. Make-up work is permitted for a documented medical emergency or illness, an approved Institute activity, or a religious observance. If you are going to miss an assignment, please make every effort to notify me before the missed class and to gather appropriate material to justify your absence. I will work with you to coordinate a reasonable deadline and/or make-up materials for the missed work.

Classroom Etiquette

Cell phones, games, iPods, and other portable electronic devices should be turned off and stored during the class period. You may use a laptop computer to take notes, but please refrain from using your computer to surf the web, shop for shoes, play games, catch up with your friends on

Facebook, or engage in other non-class related activities. Such behavior during class is distracting, and disrespectful of your fellow classmates and to your instructor.

Communication and Office Hours

I enjoy talking to students and I will be available to meet during office hours. If possible, take advantage of this time to raise any questions about the course and your research. It is a great opportunity for me to learn what you are getting out of the class, the areas in which you might still be struggling, or the new directions you are going with your thoughts and research. If you truly cannot meet during office hours but would like to meet one-on-one, please schedule an appointment with me.

Grading and Late Work Policy

Your work will be graded in accordance with the rubrics listed on assignment sheets, which will be posted to Canvas and discussed in class closer to each due date. I am happy to discuss concerns regarding your grade during office hours—not after class or via email. Any assignments that are turned in late will receive a 10% penalty per day late, up to five days, after which it will receive an automatic F. Please do your utmost to avoid turning in late work. Only in documented circumstances of personal illness or special emergency will this policy be altered. It is the student's responsibility to bring such documentation to the instructor's attention as soon as possible.

Student-Faculty Expectations

At Georgia Tech, we believe it is important to continually strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. For some basic expectations—that you can have of me, and that I have of you—see:

<http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/22/>

Tutoring and Academic Support

There are a range of resources available to Georgia Tech undergraduates that are designed to enrich each student's educational experience and support their academic progress. For more information, visit the Office of Undergraduate Education: <https://tutoring.gatech.edu/>

OVERVIEW OF THE SCHEDULE

This schedule may be adjusted and updated as needed during the semester.

WEEK 1, January 13th and 15th INTRODUCTION Tuesday: Lecture and syllabus overview Thursday: <i>Gather</i>, film
WEEK 2, January 20th and 22nd INDIGENEITY Tuesday: Lecture Thursday: Reading discussion Robin Wall Kimmerer, “The Honorable Harvest,” from <i>Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants</i>
WEEK 3, January 27th and January 29th COLONIZATION Tuesday: Lecture Thursday: Reading Discussion (Group 1 to facilitate) Dan Walden, “The Bounty of Providence”: Food and Identity in William Byrd’s <i>The History of the Dividing Line</i> Sean Sherman, “We’ve Got American Cuisine All Wrong”
WEEK 4, February 3rd and February 5th DIASPORA Tuesday: Lecture Thursday: Reading Discussion Helen Zoe Veit, “Fed Like So Many Pigs: Food and Enslaved Children in the Antebellum South” Michael W. Twitty, “Dear Disgruntled White Plantation Visitors, Sit Down,” <i>Afroculinaria</i>
WEEK 5, February 10th and February 12th REFORM Tuesday: Lecture Thursday: Reading Discussion (Group 2 to facilitate) + Primary Source Analysis Christine M.E. Guth, “Benjamin Smith Lyman and Cosmopolitan Vegetarianism” Michael Pollan, “An Eater’s Manifesto,” from <i>In Defense of Food</i>
WEEK 6, February 17th and February 19th IMMIGRATION Tuesday: Reading Discussion (Group 3 to facilitate) Anne Soon Choi, “La Choy Chinese Food Swings American?”: Korean Immigrant Entrepreneurship and American Orientalism Before World War II

Maria Godoy, “Why Hunting Down ‘Authentic Ethnic Food’ Is a Loaded Proposition” Thursday: <i>The Search for General Tso</i> film
WEEK 7, February 24th and February 26th LABOR Tuesday: Reading Discussion (Group 4 to facilitate) Douglas Sackman, “Nature’s Workshop”” The Work Environment and Workers’ Bodies in California’s Citrus Industry, 1900-1940 Nicolas Rivero and Eva Marie Uzcategui, “These Farmworkers Created America’s Strongest Workplace Heat Rules” Thursday: Lecture + <i>The Poison Squad</i> film
WEEK 8, March 3rd and March 5th CAPITALISM Tuesday: No Class - Food Biography Midterm Assignment Due on Canvas by 5PM Thursday: Reading Discussion (Group 5 to facilitate) John Soluri, “Banana Cultures: Linking the Production and Consumption of Export Bananas, 1800-1980” David Orr, “The Disaster of Philanthropy and Capitalism”
WEEK 9, March 10th and March 12th DEPRESSION Tuesday: Reading Discussion (Group 6 to facilitate) Chitose Sato, “Gendering ‘Hunger in the midst of commodity surplus’”: The Food Stamp Plan and American Women in the Great Depression Emily Holzknicht and Adam Wetbrook, “I’m Literally So Hungry, It’s All I Can Think Of” Thursday: “What America Ate” Archive Dive Activity
WEEK 10, March 17th and March 19th WAR Tuesday: Reading Discussion + Primary Source Analysis Mei-ling Yang, “Creating the Kitchen Patriot: Media Promotion of Food Rationing and Nutrition Campaigns on the American Home Front during World War II Thursday: Guest Speaker, Ann Chinn
WEEK 11: SPRING BREAK - NO CLASSES
WEEK 12, March 31st and April 2nd SUPERMARKETS AND SUBURBIA Tuesday: Lecture + Primary Source Analysis Thursday: Reading Discussion (Group 7 to facilitate) Anna Zeide, “Grocery Garbage: Food Waste and the Rise of Supermarkets” Stacy Mitchell, “The Great Grocery Squeeze: How a Federal Policy Change in the 1980s Created the Modern Food Desert,” <i>Atlantic</i>

WEEK 13, April 7th and April 9th CIVIL RIGHTS Tuesday: “Off on A Tangent” in-class research workshop Thursday: Reading Discussion at the Eco-commons Angela Jill Cooley, “The Politics of the Lunch Counter”
WEEK 14, April 14th and April 16th COUNTERCULTURES Tuesday: Reading Discussion (Group 8 to facilitate) + Primary Source Analysis Ryan Edgington, “Be Receptive to the Good Earth” Cynthia Greenlee, “How Black Foragers Find Freedom in the Natural World” Thursday: <i>The Biggest Little Farm</i> film
WEEK 15, April 21st and April 23rd OFF ON A TANGENT Presentations will span class on Tuesday and Thursday Research papers Due on Canvas by Friday April 24 at 5:00 PM (in lieu of final exam)
WEEK 16, April 28th FUTURES Tuesday: In-class Activity, Joy Harjo “Perhaps the World Ends Here”