

South Asian University

Department of Sociology

Politics of food and foodways: Taste, Health and Nutrition

Dr. Ishita Dey

(4 credits)

Aim and objective of the course

The main objective of the course would be to introduce the students to what contributes to the making and circulation of 'food' and 'foodways' in contemporary times. Every society has its own norms, and regulations around what is to be produced and consumed as food. Food plays an important role in social organization and hence is not immune from the politics around its control and distribution. The principles and practices of what is to be cooked, eaten, distributed and wasted contributes to the making of foodways. Therefore, foodways provide an interesting analytic to study what counts as food.

A study on food-ways is shaped by politics of food availability, food production and food distribution. Food availability is shaped by the changing relationship between humans and non-humans. Recent discourses on health and nutrition has pointed to a need for a multispecies approach to understand how bacteria, microbes contribute to the sensorial appeal of the food, health, as well as a cause of health risks. Considering ideas of nutrition or health are not universal how do foodways contribute to changing meanings of nutrition particularly associated with eating. Given that food is a marker of difference, an object of conspicuous consumption, source of status and prestige a close introspection of contemporary foodways will reveal how 'healthy' foods are marketed as free of sugar, cholesterol. How do these shape politics of food, thereby gendered notions of body?

Brief summary of the course outline

To do so the course will begin with anthropological approaches to the study of food and nutrition with a special emphasis on how 'senses' played an important role in the making of food. A discussion on senses, remains incomplete without a cross cultural comparison of nutrition, senses and food with a special focus on taste, touch and smell in cultures of eating. Reproduction of senses as studies on food craftsmanship and agriculture will show requires a close readings of intersections of human – nonhuman and its impact on creating 'health'-y food. The final section would be on food, body and health to understand cross cultural meanings of nutrition in the making of food ways.

Unit 1: Introduction to food and foodways

In this unit the students will be introduced to theoretical approaches to the study of food and nutrition and how it has shaped ideas around politics of food.

Section1.1 : Approaches to food and eating

Compulsory readings

Murcott, Anne. 1988. "Sociological and Social Anthropological Approaches to Food and Eating." *World Review of Nutrition and Dietetics* 55:1-40.

Levi- Strauss, Claude. 2008. 'The Culinary triangle'. In Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik. *Food and culture. A Reader*. 36-43. London: Routledge.

Harris, Marvin. 1974. *Cows, Pigs, Wars & Witches. The Riddles of Culture*. New York: Random House. Pp3-35.

Goody, Jack. 1982. *Cooking, Cuisine and Class : A comparative Sociology*. Cambridge University Press (Selected chapters)

Counihan, Carole. "Introduction : Food and Gender. Identity and Power:" In Carole M. Counihan and Steven L. Kaplan. *Food and Gender. Identity and Power*. Harwood Academic Publishers.pp1-11

Additional Reading

Pollan, Michael. *Cooked. A natural history of transformation*. Penguin

Mackendrick, Norah. 2014. "Foodscape", <https://contexts.org/articles/foodscape/>, Accessed on 10 December 2018

Beardsworth, Alan and Keil, Teresa.1997. *Sociology on the menu. An invitation to the study of food and society*. London: Routledge.(Ch 3 & 5)

Section 1.2 Politics of food

Islam, Mufakharul. 2007. "The Great Bengal Famine and the Question of FAD Yet Again". *Modern Asian Studies* 41(2) : 421-440.

Dreze, Jean. 2004. "Democracy and Right to Food". *Economic and Political Weekly* 39 (17):1723-1731

Mehra, Weeda.2017. "Gendered food insecurity: The legal and social foundations for women's food discrimination in Afghanistan" in *Perspectives Asia* 5: 31-33.

Bashaw Urugachi, Zenebe. 2010. "Food price hikes, food security, and gender equality: assessing the roles and vulnerability of women in households of Bangladesh and Ethiopia" *Gender and Development* 18 (3): 491-501

Kent, Rebecca. 2014. "Patterns of food consumption in conflict affected households in Trincomalee, Sri Lanka". In: Collinson, P. and MacBeth, H., eds. *Food in Zones of Conflict: Cross-disciplinary Perspectives*. Berghahn Books. pp. 65-76

Sathyamala, C. 2018. "Meat-eating in India: Whose food, whose politics, and whose rights?" *Policy Futures in Education* 0(0) : 1-14.

Additional readings

Appadurai, Arjun. 1988. "How to make a national cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India". In *Comparative Study of Society and History* 30 (1):3-24.

Bestore, Theodore. 2005. "How the sushi went global." In *The Cultural Politics of Food and Eating*. J.I Watson and M.L Cadwell eds. Blackwell :Oxford.

Siegel, Benjamin. 2018. *Hungry Nation :Food, Famine and the making of modern India*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press. (Selected chapters)

Avenshi Centre for Women's Studies. 2012. "Editorial: What's the menu? Food politics and hegemony". *Broadsheet on Contemporary Politics* 1(4): 2-3.

Unit 2 : Role of sense : Politics of foodways

The role of 'distinction' through taste, touch and smell will inform how sensorium plays an important role in politics of foodways.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1984. *A Social Critique of the Judgement of the Taste*. Tans., R. Nice Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Selected chapters)

Sutton, David E. 2010. "Food and the senses." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 39 (2): 209-223

Mintz, Sidney. 1996. *Tasting food, Tasting freedom: Excursions into Eating, Culture, and the Past*. Boston: Beacon. Chapter 3.

Kikon, Dolly. 2015. "Fermenting Modernity: Putting *Akhuni* on the Nation's Table in India" *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 38(2): 320-335.

Holtzman, Jon D. 2006. "Food and Memory." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 35: 361-378

Ray, Krishendu. 2016. "Rescuing Taste from the Nation," *Gastronomica: The Journal of Critical Food Studies* 16(1): 9-15.

Ray, Krishendu. 2017. "Bringing the immigrant back into the sociology of taste". *Appetite* 119: 41-47.

Additional Readings

Janeja, Manpreet K. 2010. *Transactions in Taste: The Collaborative Lives of Everyday Bengali Foods*. London: Routledge.

Buettner, Elizabeth. 2008. "Going for an Indian": South Asian Restaurants and the Limits of Multiculturalism in Britain, *The Journal of Modern History* 80 (4): 865-901.

Butler, Ella. 2018. "Tasting off-flavors: food science, sensory." *The Senses and Society* 13 (1): 75-88.

Ohnuki-Tierney, Emiko. 1999. "We eat each other's food to nourish our body: The global and local as mutually constituent forced." Edited by Raymond Grew, 240-272. Boulder: Westview Press.

Bhushi, Kiranmayi. 2018. "South Asian Subjectivities in Devon Avenue. Exploring ethnic enclaves and their foodscapes". In Dev Nath Pathak (eds). *Another South Asia*. Delhi : Primus. Pp223-250

Unit 3 : Beyond single species : multispecies and politics of food

Studies on laboring for food has shown the significance of how humans interact with ecology, animal, and plant world. This section will explore a need for moving beyond single species approach to unravel new foodways and creating sustainable futures.

Latour, Bruno. 1988. *The Pasteurization of France*. Alan Sheridan and John Law, trans. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. (Selected chapters)

Loots, Liiane. 2007. "Women, Food and Biopolitics: Gender Debates for Southern Africa" *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity* 73 *Biopolitics: New Technologies Trilogy*, Volume 1,1 :79-91

Paxson, Heather. 2008. 'Post-Pasteurian Cultures: The microbiopolitics of raw-milk cheese in United States.' *Cultural Anthropology* 23(1): 15-47.

Navdanya. 2003(2009). No GM Crops and Food. A Handbook for Activists. http://navdanya.org/site/attachments/category/11/Genetic_Engineering4.pdf

Additional Reading

Kirksey, Eben, Schuetze, Craig and Stefan Helmreich. 2014. 'Tactics of multispecies ethnography' In Eben Kirksey (ed). *The Multispecies Salon*. Durham and London : Duke University Press.

<http://www.multispecies-salon.org/>

Unit 4: Eating, Health and Nutrition

Studies on food has need a deeper introspection around politics of diet and health. In this section we will engage with some of the health risks that foods pose to examine if we need to rethink 'fast' – 'industrial' foodways and its risks on health, body and nutrition.

Street, Alice. 2015. "Food as pharma: marketing nutraceuticals to India's rural poor", *Critical Public Health* 25(3): 361-372.

Nestle, Marion. 2015. *Soda politics. Taking on Big Soda (and Winning)*. Oxford University Press.

Donner, Henrike. 2011. 'Gendered bodies, domestic work and perfect families: new regimes of gender and food in Bengali middle-class lifestyles'. In *Being middle-class in India: A way of life*, edited by Henrike Donner, 47-72. Oxon: Routledge.

Henry, Jeya and Macbeth, Helen. "Special Nutritional Needs in Refugee Camps : A cross-disciplinary approach" In: Collinson, P. and MacBeth, H., eds. *Food in Zones of Conflict: Cross-disciplinary Perspectives*. Berghahn Books

Parasecoli, Fabio. 2005. "Feeding hard bodies: food and masculinities in men's fitness magazines." *Food & Foodways* 13.1-2 : 17-37.

Additional Reading

Dey, Ishita. 2017. "Health, Standardization and 'Bengali' Sweets". In K. Bhushi (Ed.), *Farm to Fingers: The Culture and Politics of Food in Contemporary India* (pp. 103-127). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Nesheim MC, Nestle M. 2015. [The internationalization of the obesity epidemic: the case of sugar-sweetened sodas](#). In: Sahn DE, ed. *The Fight against Hunger and Malnutrition: The Role of Food, Agriculture, and Targeted Policies*. Oxford : Oxford University Press. pp89-106

*Field Visit as per SAU Guidelines

*Assessment as per SAU Guidelines