COURSE DESCRIPTION:
Culinary traditions—and culinary innovations—are forged at the intersection of culture, history, politics, economics, geography, and ecology. In the 21st century, amid animated conversations about globalization and climate change, we are increasingly aware of where our food comes from, and how our individual food choices affect our neighbors and the rest of the world. This course examines how we write and read about our food system—and ultimately what we do with that information. Our conversation begins with two seminal works about food’s relationship to its surrounding environment: anthropologist Sidney Mintz’s study of the global history of sugar, *Sweetness and Power*, and environmental activist Rachael Carson’s polemic about pesticide use in American agriculture, *Silent Spring*. We then shift to the contemporary moment, considering new ideas about the combination of global politics and local food by journalist Michael Pollan, novelist Jonathan Safran Foer, and chefs Dan Barber and José Andrés. In written assignments, you will analyze the assigned texts as well as write your own food-system narratives.

ASSIGNED SOURCES:

**Books we’ll plan to read:**
José Andrés, *We Fed an Island: The True Story of Rebuilding Puerto Rico One Meal at a Time*
Dan Barber, *The Third Plate: Field Notes on the Future of Food*
Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*
Jonathan Safran Foer, *Eating Animals*
Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*
Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore’s Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* and *In Defense of Food*
Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation*

Note: You will not have trouble finding these, though you may be uncertain about which edition is best—this is something that we will talk about as a class, so you may want to wait before purchasing them.

**Websites we’ll regularly consult:**
- Eater
- The Fern
- The Food Tank
- Grist
- The New Food Economy
- The New Yorker
- The New York Times
- Politico

We’ll also look at excerpts from films, TV shows, and material from other media during class. We may also want to taste some of the foods we’re talking about.

**WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:**
You will write one short introductory assignment, three three-page “read, research, respond” papers throughout the semester, and then a proposal, outline, draft, and complete version, between ten and twelve pages, of your final project.

**Introductory assignment:**
Your first assignment is to complete these three sentences:

“When I think of narratives of the food system, what comes to mind is…”

“My reasons for taking this class are…”
“In this class, I would like to read…”

That’s it. You may write anything you like, as long as you write complete sentences. And you should write about something that interests you, in a style that interests you. Please write three sentences only. The objective of this assignment is to get the conversation started, on your side and mine. You will have plenty of time expand and elaborate on your ideas during the semester.

**Read, Research, Respond (RRR) papers:**

In each RRR paper, you will write a three-paragraph reflection, no shorter than two pages and no longer than four pages, on a specific assigned text.

You should summarize your reading in the first paragraph, identifying essential plot points and themes (particularly in a narrative work) or core ideas and arguments (particularly in a critical text). You will likely also want to pay some attention to the author’s writing style and tone, and you may want to give some thought to the question of who constitutes the primary intended audience (that is, whom did the author imagine would be reading this work?). Since a summary that touches on every detail of a text would be as long as the text itself, summarizing necessarily involves an element of choice. When I ask you to outline what is essential in a text, I am at once concerned with your ability to demonstrate the basic comprehension that the text requires of any reader and interested to know which details of the text are particularly important to you.

The next paragraph will also be a summary, but the object of discussion here will not be the text itself but the body of existing, published responses to the text. In order to write this paragraph, you will need to do some research, and you should ultimately settle on three outside sources to mention in your assignment. These sources may be scholarly or popular; they may come from newspapers or social media or academic journals. What is important here is that you find material that reasonably helps you understand, analyze, and advance your own arguments about the assigned text. Finding good sources is a key component of making strong arguments.
In the final paragraph of this assignment, you will move beyond other writers’ ideas in order to express your own. Here, you should write several focused sentences that build upon one another and lead to a substantive conclusion in which you state your opinion about the themes and ideas you summarized in the paragraphs above. Do you agree with what the critics you found had to say about the writing style of the author you are discussing, for example? Why or why not? Be specific. Which aspects of your sources helped you to understand the text? Thinking carefully over everything that you have read, how do you think the critics or writers you chose might have improved their arguments or expanded their discussions? You need not answer each of these questions about each text—again, a response that touches on every single point of a text would be at least as long as the text itself. But do present a coherent and cohesive point of view. When you reach the end of this paragraph, you should have successfully woven your ideas together with those of the assigned author and of their critics.

Final paper:
Your final paper will be your own narrative about a specific aspect of the global food system. This requires skillful research and interpretation as well as a firm personal stance. You may choose to combine reflections on your personal experience with a discussion of your research. We will review this assignment in much more detail during the semester, and along the way you will write a proposal, an outline, and a work in progress. The complete final paper should be ten to twelve pages long, and it should include a works-cited list with at least five sources.

Grading and evaluation:

Grade breakdown (maximum for each component):
Class participation: 10 points
3 RRR papers: 45 points (15 points each)
Final paper proposal: 5 points
Final paper outline: 5 points
Final paper work in progress: 10 points
Final paper: 25 points

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<th>NYU GRADE CATEGORIES</th>
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<td>A ≥ 93</td>
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While you should not expect to consistently receive maximum points, you should know that I am interested in seeing you produce the best work you are capable of. I encourage you to come to my office hours or to arrange to meet with me in person at another time at least once during the semester so that we can discuss approaches to your work that could bring you closer to your own goals as well as to my expectations.

**A NOTE ON DOING RESEARCH:**
While search engines have unquestionably provided expanded opportunities to researchers in recent years, simply typing “food systems” into Google (or another search engine like Baidu, or a library database like ProQuest Central) is probably not the most effective way to locate sources that are specifically relevant to the scholarly project of this class. Try to reduce down the noise of all the available information into a thoughtful discussion by choosing more focused search terms. You will have to enter several versions of your search terms, in a process of trial and error, to really get a sense of the existing material.
Even more importantly, though, you are most likely to find relevant material (and to find it quickly) if you know where to look. Once you find a book or article that you trust, look for a “works cited” or “further reading” list on the final pages that can lead you to other similar sources. Browse the website of any major library or ask a librarian for help to identify the key scholarly journals and databases related to the topic of your research. Look for websites at the center of the critical conversation on your topic. These are a few tips to get you started; as the semester goes on and you undertake more research on your own, we will talk in more depth about how to find and evaluate sources.

However you find the sources that you choose to refer to, you must acknowledge them by citing, at least, the title of the work, the name of the author, and title of the periodical or website or the name of the book publisher. Please note that Google and Baidu are not publications but rather tools that aggregate and link to existing publications. When citing a source, please do not list a search engine or other research interface as the publisher of a particular text. A publisher is an entity (again, such as a magazine or a publishing house for books) responsible for commissioning, editing, and selling a text, and you can almost always identify the publisher of a particular text in print or online if you look hard enough. I will be happy to help you find this information if you get stuck.

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Participation accounts for 10% of your final grade. A seminar is a space in which we develop knowledge collaboratively. Your opinions matter. And the process of comparing, debating, and reconsidering our opinions makes all of us better readers, writers, and thinkers. Please come to class prepared to engage in the conversation.

It should go without saying that attendance is a prerequisite to participation. Of course, I know that everyone has busy, complicated, sometimes stressful, and hopefully very interesting lives, of which this class is just one part. For that
reason, anyone can miss one class during the semester with no penalty, no questions asked (though it is courteous to let me know if you will miss class, and to briefly mention why). Each subsequent absence (with the exceptions of those for serious medical reasons, family emergencies, and religious holidays) will reduce your class participation grade by one point.

CLASSROOM COMMUNITY
Please call me “Emily.” I ask you to do this not because I think I don’t deserve respect as your professor but because I think you deserve respect as my students. If I’m going to refer to you by your first names, then I think it’s only fair that you do the same with me. I do have some preferences that I have established as policies in my classroom: computers and tablets are fine (and encouraged!), but please put your phones away and close your email, social networking sites, and any potentially distracting programs; you should not eat in the classroom, though drinks are fine; and if you must get up to leave the room while class is in session, please do so as quietly as possible.

Please keep in mind that several of the texts we will be reading engage with questions of identity and difference, taking up the topics of nationality, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. Please remember to be respectful of others—and yourself—in considering the perspectives offered by the readings. Please do not assume that certain experiences—including your own—are “normal” or “abnormal.” You and your classmates each bring an entirely unique personal history into the classroom. I encourage you to value all of these positions, yours and others. I agree with my colleague Jameson Fitzpatrick that this approach will very likely make you a better student, classmate, reader, writer, and person.

I will sometimes share one student’s work with the entire class in order to provide an interesting example or spark a conversation. I will also sometimes ask you to share your work in pairs or small groups. I expect you to be collaborative but I also understand that there are times when, for different reasons, you may feel
especially uncomfortable sharing your writing or voicing your thoughts. Since it
is hard for me recognize these moments for each individual student, I rely on you
to let me know if you find something offensive or intimidating. If at any point in
the semester you are troubled by a conversation, reading, assignment, or activity
in class, please speak up. You can always send me an email, attach a note to your
homework, speak to me briefly before or after class, come to office hours, or,
should something be urgent, ask to speak to me privately during class.

**STAYING IN TOUCH**

Email is the best way to reach me, and my email address is emily.stone@nyu.edu.
I make every attempt to respond to emails within two weekdays (Monday-Friday),
and I would like you to do the same when it comes to emails from me or your
classmates in this seminar. If you do not receive a response within two weekdays,
please do not be shy about sending me a reminder.

You are always welcome to email me with questions about the course, and while I
expect your emails to be polite, they need not be overly formal. (If you would like
to find out more about email conventions in professional and academic settings,
take a look at a good, though not exactly new, article published in the *New Yorker*
titled “*Elements of E-Style*”.)

I also hold open office time at the time listed at the top of this syllabus (subject to
change, with advance notice) at my office at 411 Lafayette St, 4th floor. You are
welcome to stop by without an appointment. If you have a schedule conflict, just
let me know and we can arrange another time.

**I will also send out reminders and instructions for the following week at the end of the day every Friday. This message goes from NYU Classes directly to students’ NYU email accounts. Be sure to check these weekly emails.**
EXTRA GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The Writing Center provides additional support for student writers at NYU. Writing Center consultants are faculty and experienced undergraduate peer tutors from a range of majors; they can provide an outside perspective on a draft, be a sounding board as you develop ideas, or help you better understand where you want to take a writing assignment. You can book appointments at either 411 Lafayette (Washington Square) or Dibner Library (Brooklyn) in advance online, or walk in to either location. Appointments do fill up—please plan ahead.

Each of the first-year dorms has a Writing Affiliate. Writing Affiliates are instructors from the Expository Writing Program who offer workshops and one-on-one conferences during the semester. They are available to help with your writing at any stage, and for any course. The Writing Affiliates will also be available for one-on-one conferences at monthly RISE (Residential International Student Exchange) events, which you may hear about online and by email.

The University Learning Center provides a wealth of peer-to-peer tutoring services and activities related to academic writing and many other subjects.

The Center for Student Life offers a range of programs and resources, including some dedicated to commuter and off-campus students.

The NYU IT Service Desk is another terrific resource. You can contact IT (information technology) experts online or by phone 24 hours a day. Please contact them (not me!) with questions about NYU Classes or Microsoft Word.

Through the NYU library, you have access to millions of publications, and almost as many research tools and resources. Librarians are available in person and online almost 24 hours per day.
If you have a disability for which you wish to receive specific accommodations, I invite you to be in contact with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities and speak to me during the first week of class. Importantly, though, it is up to you whether and how to disclose your disability status.

And if you have concerns about the conventions and expectations of this class or other college classes, I likewise invite you to speak to me. I would also like to remind you to take advantage of NYU’s vast network of resources for students. A helpful place to start is the University Life page (with links to safety, health, and wellness resources).

**A NOTE ON PLAGIARISM**
The Expository Writing Program at NYU helpfully defines “academic integrity” as “[g]iving credit to someone whose work has helped you.” Failure to follow appropriate conventions for giving credit, whether intentional or unintentional, is plagiarism. To knowingly allow someone else to pass off your written work as their own is another form of the same practice, as is—nearly without exception—incorporating paragraphs, sentences, or even individual phrases from a published source into your own writing without placing that borrowed material within quotation marks. Plagiarism may be punished by failure in this course or even more grave penalties, but I hope that it will not come to that point for anyone. We will have several chances during the semester to talk about academic conventions in the United States, but please familiarize yourself with the Expository Writing Program’s “Statement on Academic Integrity” now and consult the sources acknowledged in that document as well. When in doubt, err on the side of caution and cite sources extensively. And remember that if these or any other conventions are unclear to you, you can always ask.

**CONVENTIONS OF EDITED WRITTEN ENGLISH**
As with all languages, the conventions of the English language change over time and from place to place. Nonetheless, a fairly stable set of conventions
characterizes the edited written English accepted in most academic, journalistic, and workplace settings. If you feel that those conventions are unfamiliar to you, please take advantage of the one-on-one coaching and resources provided by the Writing Center. It is your responsibility to proofread and edit the work that you turn in for this class to the best of your abilities.

**WEEKLY SCHEDULE:**

*Please complete reading assignments before the classes in which they will be discussed.*

*Specific deadlines for writing assignments may vary from week to week, so please pay attention to announcements that I make in class and over email. We may decide to adjust this preliminary outline, depending on where conversations in class take us.*

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<th>READING:</th>
<th>WRITING:</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>WEEK 1: January 29</strong></td>
<td>Deadlines may vary—please check NYU Classes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barber intro (1-22), recent publications TBD (approx. 25 pages)</td>
<td>Intro (1 page)</td>
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<td><strong>WEEK 2: February 5</strong></td>
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<td>Mintz (xv-xxx, 3-73)</td>
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<td><strong>WEEK 3: February 12</strong></td>
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<td><strong>WEEK 4: February 19</strong></td>
<td>RRR1 (3 pages)</td>
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<td>Barber Part I (23-100)</td>
<td>GUEST LECTURE TBD</td>
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<td><strong>WEEK 5: February 26</strong></td>
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<td>Barber Part II (101-198)</td>
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<td><strong>WEEK 6: March 4</strong></td>
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<td>Barber Part III (199-320)</td>
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<td><strong>WEEK 7: March 11</strong></td>
<td>RRR2 (3 pages)</td>
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<td>Barber Part IV (321-423)</td>
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<td><strong>SPRING BREAK</strong></td>
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<td><strong>WEEK 8: March 25</strong></td>
<td>Proposal (2 pages)</td>
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<td>Pollan, <em>Omnivore’s Dilemma</em> 1-14; <em>In Defense of Food</em> 1-16</td>
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<td><strong>WEEK 9: April 1</strong></td>
<td>GUEST LECTURE TBD</td>
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<td>Recent publications TBD (approx. 75 pages)</td>
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<td><strong>WEEK 10: April 8</strong></td>
<td>RRR3 (2 pages)</td>
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<td>Excerpts from Foer (approx. 20</td>
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<td>WEEK 11: April 15</td>
<td>Andres, prologue and chapters 1-3 (approx. 100 pages)</td>
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| WEEK 12: April 22 | Outline (3 pages)  
CLASS OUTING TBD |
| WEEK 13: April 29 | Andres, chapters 4-7 (approx. 100 pages) |
| WEEK 14: May 6 | Andres, chapters 7-8 and epilogue (approx. 50 pages)  
Final paper work-in-progress [WIP] (5-6 pages) |
| WEEK 15 | Recent publications TBD (approx. 75 pages)  
Wrap up and celebrate  
FINAL PAPER (10-12 pages) DUE MAY 15 |