




2019

Food Writing

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Food Writing Spring 2019

Instructor: Carol A. Connare
University of Massachusetts Amherst
Classroom: Du Bois Center, Floor 22 of Du Bois Library
Instructor office hours: Du Bois Library Room 415
email: cconnare@library.umass.edu

Course Description

This advanced writing four-credit course approaches food writing from a news reporting perspective. The Pioneer Valley is home to a network of food producers, from farmers and cheesemakers to brewers and beekeepers. Students will travel into the field to meet people who make and grow what we eat, conducting interviews and collecting information to synthesize into multimedia stories for publication around themes such as health, history, travel, ecology, animal welfare, social change, nutrition, and home cooking. Students will experience the full spectrum of food writing—blogs, magazine articles, personal essays, reviews, recipes, social and cultural commentary—and create stories in a variety of these forms.

Learning Objectives:

1. Generate story ideas through critical reading and personal experience
2. Conduct research and evaluate information using primary and secondary texts
3. Communicate effectively through writing and multimedia storytelling
4. Apply and improve descriptive and narrative writing
5. Critically evaluate one's own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness through group critique.

Texts: All texts and media to view will be supplied through the LMS/Moodle.

Format and Assignments: Members of the class are expected to attend class meetings, read the assigned readings, complete all written and multimedia storytelling assignments, and participate in class discussions and activities.*

Participation is paramount for group critique. To give useful, constructive criticism for a fellow writer to inspire revision is to receive the same in return. This is how we become better writers, together. You will be asked to provide feedback on your classmates' writing assignments in the draft stage and they will do the same.

Reading Responses (350-500 words each) & Quizzes. Responses to questions posed in conjunction with assigned readings and films posted on Moodle (due dates indicated in course schedule below). Due by start of class the day of the class for which it is assigned. The questions require you to analyze the representation, data, or argument in the work or reading. Answers may summarize the content or argument and evaluating the evidence of a story; connect the reading to contemporary or historic issues and events; compare and

contrast perspectives; serve as a jumping-off point for writing and further research. Reading response assignments will be graded check plus (95; clearly understood the reading and assignment, good analysis and commentary), check (85; understood the reading and assignment), check minus (75; does not demonstrate clear understanding of the reading and/or assignment), or zero (0; did not complete the assignment). The two lowest grades you receive will be dropped in the final calculation of your grade for this part of the class.

Four 1000-word written assignments on food topics of your choice to be submitted to local and regional news outlets: Suggestions for formats will be discussed in class such as 1) Personal Essay; 2) Interview with a chef or food producer; 3) Recipe with a story; 4) service or travel-related food story. These assignments require you to evaluate possible sources of information on your topic, pick those that are most reliable and suitable, collect and analyze content, summarize your findings in your own words, and present the subject from your own perspective.

Final Project: For your final project, you will first propose a topic and meet with the instructor to submit your proposal. The final project will be 2000-2500 words in length and can incorporate one or more major themes and include one or more formats, one of which must employ digital audio and/or visual components.

Instructor Feedback: The instructor will provide assessment and feedback in the form of line editing/ production edit notes, AP style corrections, and organizational/content comments on stories and final project.

Assignments Policy: Assignments will be docked one half grade per day late for unexcused late assignments.

Readings & Viewings: Readings and media are listed on the attached course schedule and available through links on Moodle.

Grading: *The recipe for your success is:*

	Grading scale:	
Attendance & Writing Workshop	93-100	A
Participation: 15%	90-92	A-
Reading response & Quizzes: 15%	87-89	B+
Final Portfolio: 70% as follows	83-86	B
Four 750-1000 word stories 10% each	80-82	B-
Final Project: 2,000+ words 15%	77-79	C+
Food Blog: Posting all work on blog	73-76	C
with digital storytelling 15%	70-72	C-
	67-69	D+
	63-66	D
	62 or lower	F

Academic Honesty: Cheating and plagiarism (uncredited copying) on exams or papers is cause for the grade F (0) for the entire course, not simply the assignment in question. In your assignments be careful to acknowledge—using quotation marks and footnotes as appropriate—the sources of distinctive phrases that are not your own and ideas that are not clearly common knowledge. University policy regarding Academic Honesty is explained at this website:

http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/

Etiquette: Yes, etiquette. Such as... arriving for class on time; not talking over others in class; not leaving the room during class; not using electronic devices except when invited to by the instructor. Your full attention is requested the duration of each class and during field experiences.

Support & Resources

24/7 UMass Online Help Desk and Technical Support

Phone: 1-888-300-6407

Email: amherstsupport@umassonline.net

Click on Live Text Support to text chat with a customer service representative

Students with disabilities should make themselves known to the teaching assistants and instructor the first week of class. The instructor must receive a “Notification of Accommodations” from Disability Services. Special arrangements for note-taking, tests, assignments and any other contingency must be agreed upon with the instructor and your teaching assistant. Special arrangements for tests must be made one week or 3 lectures before the test. All discussions will be confidential. You can meet with your teaching assistant or the instructor during office hours or by appointment to discuss arrangements.

Contact Information:

Disability Services, 161 Whitmore Admin. Bldg.

181 Presidents Drive, University of Massachusetts

Amherst, MA 01003-9313, Phone (V/TTY): 413-545-0892

Fax: 413.577.0122

Email: ds@educ.umass.edu

Website: <http://www.umass.edu/disability/>

Disability Services at the University of Massachusetts provides members of the University community with the finest educational opportunities and the most appropriate accommodations available for people with disabilities.

*According to the U.S. Department of Education, a 4-credit course that meets 3 times a week requires 9 hours of work per week outside the classroom on the part of the students. You can use this as a guide, on average, to estimate how much time per week it will take you to do the reading and writing assignments for this class.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Jan 22 & 24

Welcome & Introductions

Readings: Bourdain O Mania: *Kitchen Confidential* excerpt (Bourdain); “Anthony Bourdain and the Power of Telling the Truth” (Helen Roser, *The New Yorker* June 2018); [Anthony Bourdain NYT Obituary](#), *Will Write for Food* excerpt; “The Pure American Banality of Donald Trump’s White House Fast Food Buffet Banquet” (*The New Yorker* Jan 2019)

Writing Assignments: Intro worksheets, My Favorite Meal, My Legacy

Week 2: Jan 29 & 31

Food Writing & Social Change

Readings: *Fast Food Nation* excerpt; “False Prophets” (excerpt from *The Gospel of Food* By Barry Glassner, HarperCollins. “Black Cake” Emily Dickinson; “Ash Cake” Frederick Douglass; “Bread” and “Watermelons” Henry David Thoreau; Alice Waters: *The Farm Restaurant Connection* excerpt; [“Alice Waters on Sex, Drugs, and Sustainable Agriculture”](#) (NYT August 2017).

Viewing: *In Defense of Food: An Eater’s Manifesto* (Michael Pollan, PBS 2014)

Writing Assignments: Reading Responses and Guilty Pleasures

Week Three: February 5 & 7

More Food Writing & Social Change

Readings: “In Defense of True ‘Cue” (Calvin Trillin, *The New Yorker*, November 2015) “The American Table” (*Smithsonian* 2013); “The Pleasures of Eating” (Wendell Berry); “America Your Food is So Gay” (John Birdsall, *Lucky Peach*); “My Organic Industrial Meal” (Michael Pollan); The Ethical Pitfalls of the Viral “Best Burger in America” Essay (Helen Rosner, *The New Yorker*, November 2018); “The Monk in the Orchard” (*Yankee Magazine*, Fall 2014)

View: *Food, Inc.* (Robert Kenner, 2008)

Writing: Reading Responses; *Food Inc.* Quiz

Week 4: February 12 & 14 (Feb 12 cancelled due to snow)

Portfolio Consultation and Food Blogging

Readings: [2018 Saveur Blog Award Winners](#); Food Blogging (*Will Write for Food* excerpt); [Monetize Your Blog](#)

View: *King Korn* (Bullfrog Films, 2007)

Writing: King Korn Response questions, Writing about Your Writing Process; Portfolio Ideas worksheet

Meet: Individual meetings to talk about stories for portfolios.

Week 5: Feb 19 (no class) and Feb 21

More Food Blogging

Readings: All About Food Blogging; [This is How Much Money Food Bloggers can Make](#); [The Smitten Kitchen is Back](#) (Bon Appetit, Novemer 2017); So You Want to Write a Food Blog (*The New Yorker*, 2015); [8 Things They don’t Tell You When You](#)

[Start a Food Blog](#); “Food Porn as Postfeminist Play” (Tisha Dejmancee; Television and News Media journal, 2015)

View: [Food52.com](#); Julie and Julia

Writing: Reading Responses and Food Blog Site Construction: name, departments

Week 6: Feb 26 & 28

Historic Cookbooks and Sustainability Dinner

Readings: Future of Cookbook Publishing (Chowhound, 2010); [Publishers’ Weekly: Spring 2019 Food & Cookbooks](#); [The Future of Cookbooks](#) (Slate, 2012); The

[Undergraduate Chef Review](#) (Publisher’s Weekly 2017; [“The Obsessive Sport of Shopping for a Vintage Copy of Joy of Cooking”](#) (bon appetit 2017) [The Archive of Eating](#) (*New York Times Magazine* 2017)

Visit: Hampshire Dining Hall Sustainability Dinner (Feb. 26) & Special Collections and University Archives cookbook collection (Feb 28)

Writing: Visit to Archives response; Reading Responses

Week 7: March 5 & 7

Writing for Magazines/Popular Food Writing Formats

Readings: [Pizza Recipes for Grownups](#) (*Yankee Magazine*); Michelle Topor’s North End (*Yankee Magazine*); Cape Cod is my Oyster (*Yankee Magazine*); Criminally Delicious;

[“Why Are We Still Talking About Avocado Toast?”](#) (Bon appetit 2017); “Glory Road” (Jane & Michael Stern, *Saveur Magazine*); “Hot for Tamales” (Smithsonian 2014); [“Take in the State Fair”](#) (Keillor, 2009); Me, Myself, and Ribeye

Writing: Personal Essay Draft Due; story pitch for major project due

SPRING BREAK March 11-15, 2019

Week 8: Marcy 19 & 21

The Psychology of Food

Readings: Calm Energy; [Forcing People at Vending Machines to Wait Nudges them to Buy Healthier Snacks](#) (NPR The Salt May 2017); [Eating Comfort foods May Not Be So Comforting after All](#) (NPR The Salt October 2014) [“What Cookies and Meth have in Common”](#) (New York Times, June 2017); [“The Addicted Brain”](#) (National Geographic 2017)

Writing: Draft of Interview with A Chef of Food Producer Due; Psychology of Food assignment

Week 9: March 26 & 28

Memoir

Readings: *Heat* (excerpt) Bill Buford; “A Short History of my Long Drinking Life” (bon appetit, October 2017); My Father’s Chowder (*Saveur*); Kitchen Horrors (excerpt, Laurie Colwin)

Writing: Draft of Every Recipe Has a Story Due

Week 10: April 2 & 4

Fine Ingredients

Readings: [“How the Sugar Industry Shifted the Blame to Fat”](#) (*The New York Times*, 2016) *Extra Virginity* (excerpt); Olive Oil Consumer Reports; UMass Research Bears Fruit; Parmesan Cheese is Not What it Seems

View: [How Karl Hammer Feeds 600 Chickens without Grains](#)

Write: Draft of Food Service or Travel Feature due

Week 11: April 9 & 11

Writing Recipes

Readings: Recipe Test Guide; How to Write a Recipe; [Test Kitchen Talk with the Science of Savory](#) (NPR Fresh Air 2012); [How to Develop a Recipe Like a Test Kitchen](#)

Editor;

Writing: Draft of Final Project Due

Week 12: April 16 & 18

Writing Workshops and Food Blog Portfolios

Week 13: April 23 & 25

Writing Workshops and Food Blog Portfolios

April 30: Last Day of Class

May 3: Portfolios due (blog link sent) by 4p.