ENGL 4147. Food and Globalization: London and the British Empire
Spring 2016

I. Overview

In recent years, London has increasingly become renowned for its culinary scene. In this course, we will examine the history of London from the early modern era to the present by looking at changes in its cuisine. We will focus especially on the impact that globalization and empire have had on everyday diets. Tobacco, coffee, tea, and sugar: all of these items entered the London marketplace when English subjects began traveling to and colonizing territories in the Americas and Asia. As the networks of the British Empire brought new immigrant populations to the city, the foods on offer changed as well to include such now iconic dishes as curry. While studying the food of one city, we will thus also map out a much broader history of global commerce, migration, and cultural exchange.

We will construct this map by doing a wide variety of readings: texts will include scholarly works of history, anthropology, and literary and cultural studies. They will also include diverse primary sources, including travel narratives, natural histories, cookbooks, and novels. We will go on numerous excursions around London as well, which will be our other major source of information and insight into our course topic. Museums and libraries will enable us to access historical and archival materials, while markets and other sites around the city will give us a taste of present-day food cultures.

II. Objectives

By taking this course, students will:

1) Gain an understanding of the history of London and the British Empire through the study of food
2) Become familiar with several foundational disciplinary methods, including participant observation, archival research, and textual analysis
3) Learn how to produce a wide variety of analytical and creative works, including photo essays, historical research reports, and literary reviews

III. Readings

The following textbooks will be required:


Other readings will be provided in electronic form.

**IV. Assignments**

Students will be given more detailed instructions for all assignments during the course of the semester. In general, the assignments match up with both the readings and excursions, which will be used to model relevant research techniques and methods.

1) Participation (10%). The course will be run as a seminar, and students will be expected to demonstrate knowledge of the readings and participate actively in class discussions.

2) Fieldwork-based photo essay of a culinary site in London, 3-4 pp., plus photos (15%). For their first assignment, students will be asked to choose a culinary site in London and produce a written, ethnographic description of the site and its cultural significance. Students will also be asked to integrate photos into their essay to illustrate their points. Readings from the first week of class will include a published, scholarly photo essay so that students have a model to follow. During the first excursion to Borough Market, the instructor will also discuss and perform participant observation with the students so that they get hands-on guidance with the methodology.

3) Research report on the global history of a British food, 3-4 pp. (15%). For this assignment, students will conduct original, archival research into the global history of a British food. They will also find appropriate secondary sources and write up the results of their research as a paper. Before turning in the paper, students will read several works of historical scholarship that focus on particular foods. They will also go with the instructor on several excursions to museums and archives and learn how to find primary sources.

4) Review of a cookbook by a London restaurateur/chef, 3-4 pp. (15%). In order to practice skills of textual analysis, students will produce a review of a contemporary cookbook written by a London restaurateur or chef. An excursion to Books for Cooks, a well-known cookbook store in London, will help the students identify works to analyze. We will also spend several class sessions discussing cookbooks and other literary works.

5) Final project presentation (5%). So that students have a chance to see what collective knowledge they have produced about London and British food cultures, they will present the results of their final projects in class.

6) Final project, 8-10 pp. (40%)—Students will have the option of expanding any one of their previous three written assignments into a longer study. In other words, they can complete 1) an extended anthropological study of a culinary site, 2) a report, grounded in archival research, on
the global history of a British food, or 3) a review and synthetic analysis of three cookbooks by London restaurateurs/chefs.

V. Reading and Assignment Schedule

Week 1  What Is British Food?

Excursion: Borough Market

Week 2  Fish and Chips: The Jewish Origins of English Food

Excursion: Jewish Museum of London

Week 3  Tobacco: The First American ‘Food’ Craze in London
Thomas Harriot, A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia (London, 1588)
James I, Counter-blaste to Tobacco (London, 1604)

Photo essays due

Week 4  Coffeehouses and the Public Sphere

Excursion: British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings

Week 5  Early Caribbean Foodies
Richard Ligon, A True and Exact History of the Island of Barbados (London, 1657)
Hans Sloane, A Voyage to Jamaica (London, 1707), excerpts

Excursion: Chelsea Physic Garden
Week 6  Sugar, Slavery, and the Caribbean

Excursion: Museum of London Docklands

Week 7  Potatoes and Famine

**Research reports due**

Week 8  Midterm break

Week 9  Colonial Curries and Cookbooks
Flora Annie Steel and Grace Gardiner, *The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook* (London, 1888)

Excursion: Books for Cooks

Week 10  Brixton Market and Caribbean Immigration

Excursion: Brixton Market

Week 11  Hong Kong Restaurateurs

**Cookbook reviews due**

Week 12  Brick Lane

Excursion: Brick Lane

Week 13  Brick Lane, cont.

Week 14  **Final project presentations**

Week 15  Conclusions
**Final projects due**