

Hong Kong Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences
The University of Hong Kong

Food in Chinese Culture: The Past in the Present

Syllabus for Course IHSS6003 at HKU, Jan –April, 2021

Venue: Room 201, 2/F, May Hall, HKU

Time: Thursdays 11:00AM -1:00 PM

Instructor: Prof. Angela K.C. Leung

“You are what you eat” means much more than what the statement appears to convey. It obviously implies food as self, and as a necessity for health, but also that eating is an act based on deep, complex knowledge about the food and how it is produced. Eating is more than a random, trivial biological act as it expresses cultural memory and moral values of a society. The materiality of a food shapes the knowledge and technology deployed by a society that produces it. Food consumption, on the other hand, is an art of bodily care, managed by the individual and regularized by the state. One way to understand the values and biopolitical governance of a society is to study the making and consuming of foods as crucial materials, and the human and non-human actors involved in the processes. Since the publication of KC Chang’s edited volume on *Food in Chinese Culture. Anthropological and Historical Perspectives* (1977), many studies have been produced by historians and anthropologists on food in different Chinese societies, past and present, including especially work on post-modern development. It is time to reflect more systematically on changing Chinese food and foodscape up to the present, and to measure the impact of collective memory of pre-modern food culture, considered as “traditional”, on contemporary knowledge and practices, partly in response to the increasingly problematized industrialization and globalization of foods.

This seminar is based on intensive readings of both historical and anthropological work on food. We begin by looking at traditional Chinese food systems based on indigenous food crops, highlighting rice and soybean, two of China’s five major crops since Antiquity, but of very different materiality, playing different roles in the Chinese foodscape. The former is China’s main staple, and the latter a unique indigenous legume that can be converted into many different food forms by an amazing array of sophisticated techniques, notably fermentation. Taking fermentation as one but not the only example, we trace China’s changing technological engagement with food production from the artisanal to the industrial period. This will allow us to better understand the process of knowledge production in tandem with evolving health ideology, from traditional “life nourishment” techniques to modern nutritional science.

Finally, making comparisons with other food cultures, we try to understand how Chinese “traditional” food knowledge and techniques are relevant to the problematized globalization and industrialization of food, and to see if these “traditions” or their re-invention do address those problems, allowing us to imagine the future of Chinese foodscape.

This course is a **research & training seminar** designed to enable students to develop a critical approach to the study of food culture and technology, to analyse and discuss collectively in class, and to deploy new ideas in a piece of academic work.

The seminar will meet regularly during the spring semester of 2021. Students will be asked to read assigned theoretical and empirical essays (about 100 pages per week) that will be discussed in class. All students are expected to participate actively in class discussions. They will also need to present two pieces of work: 1) a short think piece based on the readings and 2) a final essay on a topic related to one of the themes of the seminar that they will also present in the last class. Students should discuss the topic of their final essay with the teacher before March.

Requirements and Evaluation

The requirements of this class are:

1. Students should attend all classes, read all required readings before coming to class so that they can actively take part in the discussion.
2. Each student should submit a thoughtful **think-piece about food culture**. Think pieces need to be uploaded to Moodle. For the presentation of the think-piece, students are free in their media choice (video, ppt, comic, blog-writing, images). The presentation of the think-piece will be on **March 18**.
3. Final research essay related to food: Choose a topic related to any theme that is discussed in class. This final essay should be uploaded to Moodle by Monday **May 10, 10 pm** and should be no longer than 15 double-spaced pages (including references, Times New Roman 12 pt., 1-inch margins, for references use "author year: page number" format, e.g. 2006:14).
4. Oral presentation of your final essay will be on April 29.

SUBMIT ON TIME: NO LATE SUBMISSION OF ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED.

Your performance in this course will be assessed according to the following criteria:

Participation (active participation in discussions): 25%
 Presentation of the think piece: 15 %
 Presentation of final essay: 15 %
 Final essay: 45%

Structure and Themes

**** All readings will be uploaded to Moodle in December 2020**

Books:

- 1) Leung and Caldwell eds., *Moral Foods: The Construction of Nutrition and Health in Modern Asia*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press 2019 (A pdf of the book is uploaded to Moodle)
- 2) Sutton, David. *Remembrance of Repasts: An Anthropology of Food and Memory*. New York: Berg 2001. (Reserved in library)
- 3) Trubek, Amy. *The Taste of Place. A Cultural Journey into Terroir*. University of California Press, 2008. (Reserved in library)

4) Chang, KC ed., *Food in Chinese Culture. Anthropological and Historical Perspectives*. New Haven: Yale University Press 1977. (chapters of the book uploaded to Moodle)

1. Jan 21 Introduction to food study

- Barthes, Roland, "Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption" in Counihan, C. & Van Esterik eds., *Food and Culture: A Reader*. NY, London: Routledge 1997: 20-27
- Chang, KC "Introduction", *Food in Chinese Culture. Anthropological and Historical Perspectives*. New Haven: Yale University Press 1977: 1-21
- Caldwell, M. & Leung, A. "Introduction", in Leung & Caldwell, eds., *Morale Foods: The Construction of Nutrition and Health in Modern Asia*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press 2019
- Klein, J. "introduction" in J.Klein & A. Murcott eds. *Food consumption in global perspective: Essays in the Anthropology of Food in Honour of Jack Goody*. Palgrave MacMillan 2014: 1-24
- Minz, S. and Du Bois, C. "The Anthropology of Food and Eating" *Annual Review of Anthropology* 2002, 31: 99-119.
- Spary, E.C., & Zilberstein, A., "On the Virtues of Historical Entomophagy", *Osiris*, 35, 2020: 1-19.

2. January 28. The Chinese food system : crops and meat

- Yu, Y.-S, "Han", in Chang, K.C. *Food in Chinese Culture*. 1977: 53-84.
- Bray, F. "Purity and promiscuity", in Bray, F. et al eds., *Rice: Global Networks and New Histories*. Cambridge University Press 2015: 37-40
- Mintz, S., Tan, C-B, Du Bois, C. "Introduction: The Significance of soy". *World of Soy*. Singapore: University of Singapore Press, 2008: 1-26.
- Huang, H.T. "Early uses of soybean in Chinese history", *The World of Soy*. 2008: 45-55
- Fu, Jia-chen, "The romance of the bean: rethinking the soybean as technology and modern commodity", in Fu, *The Other Milk. Reinventing Soy in Republican China*. Washington U Press 2019: pp. 19-40
- Watson, James "Meat: a cultural biography in (South China), in Klein, J & Murcott, A. *Food Consumption in Global Perspective : Essays in the Anthropology of Food in Honour of Jack Goody*. NY: Palgrave MacMillan 2014: 25-44

Read also:

- Cheung, S.W "A desire to eat well: rice and the market in 18th century China" in Bray, F. et al eds., *Rice: Global Networks and New Histories*. Cambridge University Press 2015: 84-98
- Lee, Seung-joon, "Taste in Number: Science and the Food Problem in Republican Guangzhou", *Twentieth Century China* 35.2 (2010): 81-103
- 王連錚 郭慶元 《現代中國大豆》 北京: 金盾出版社 2007: 1-17

3. February 4 Food-making – artisanal (Class ends at 4:15)

Food-making environment

- Ingold, Tim. *The Perception of the environment*. Routledge 2000. Chapters 1
- Robert Scott, W Sullivan “Ecology of fermented foods”, *Human Ecology Review*. 15/1, 2008: 25-31.
- Hesseltine & WL Wang, “Traditional fermented foods”, *Biotechnology and Bioengineering* IX, 1967: 275-288
- Huang, HT, *Fermentations and Food Science. Science and Civilization in China*. 6: V. Cambridge University Press 2000: 275-288
- Victoria Lee “The Microbial Production of Expertise in Meiji Japan”. *Osiris* 33 (2018):171-190
- Groff, Elizabeth “Soy-sauce manufacturing in Kwangtung, China”, *Philippines Journal of Science*, no.3 , 15, 1919: 307-316
- Sabban, F. “Insights into the problem of preservation by fermentation in 6th century China”. Riddervold, A. & Ropeid, A., *Food Conservation*. Prospect Books 1988:45-55

Read also:

- Daniels, Christian, “Sugar production as a rural handicraft industry”. *Agro-industries: Sugarcane technology Science and Civilization in China*. 6: III: 123-128

February 11, 18 : No class

4. February 25 Food Making : Industrial

State technoscience and globalization

- Goody, Jack. “Industrial Food- Towards the Development of a World Cuisine” in *Food and Culture: A Reader*. Third edition. C. Counihan & P. Van Esterik eds., NY: Routledge 2013: 72-90.
- Heath, D. & Meneley, A., “techne, technoscience, and the circulation of comestible commodities: an introduction”, *American Anthropologist*, 109/4 (2007): 593-602.
- Heller, C., “Techne versus Technoscience: Divergent (and Ambiguous) Notions of Food “Quality” in the French Debate over GM Crops”, *American Anthropologist*, 109/4 (2007): 603-615.
- Cwierka, K. and Moriya, A. “Fermented soyfoods in S Korea: The Industrialization of Tradition” *World of Soy* 2008: 161-181.
- Lee, Victoria, “Mold Cultures: Traditional Industry and Microbial Studies in Early 20th Century Japan” in D.Philips & S. Kingsland eds., *New Perspectives on the History of Life Sciences*. Springer, 2015: 231-252.
- Sabban, F “The taste for milk in modern China 1865-1937” in Klein & Murcott, 2014: 182-208
- Fu Jia-chen. “Confronting the cow: soybean milk and the fashioning of a Chinese dairy”. *Moral Foods* 2019:47-65.

Read also:

- Sidney Mintz. *Sweetness and Power. The Place of Sugar in Modern History*. NY: Elizabeth Sifton Books. Viking 1985: chapter 2: “Production”.

5. March 4 Embodiment

Food as Medicine

- Mote, F. "Yuan and Ming", in Chang, K.C. *Food in Chinese Culture. Anthropological and Historical Perspectives*. New Haven: Yale University Press 1977. chapter 5: 193-258
- Scheid, Volker "From civilizing foods for nourishing life to a global traditional Chinese medicine dietetics: changing perceptions of foods in Chinese medicine". Leung & Caldwell, *Moral Foods*, 2019: 241-261
- Farquhar, Judith, "Medicinal Meals" in *Appetites. Food and Sex in Post-Socialist China*. Duke University Press 2002: 47-78
- Lei, Sean H-I, "Housewives as Kitchen Pharmacists: Dr Chuang Shu Chih, Gendered Identity, and Traditional Medicine in East Asia", in Leung & Nakayama eds., *Gender, Health and History in Modern East Asia*. Hong Kong University Press, 2017: 166-192.
- Leung, A. "To build or to transform vegetarian China: two republican projects". Leung & Caldwell, *Moral Foods*, 2019: 221-240.
- Zhang, Lawrence. "Becoming healthy: changing perception of tea's effects on the body" Leung & Caldwell, *Moral Foods*, 2019: 201-220
- Yang, Young-Kyun "Well-being discourse and Chinese food in Korean society" in Kim, K. ed, *Re-orienting Cuisine. East Asian Foodways in the twenty-first Century*. Berghahn 2015: 203-220.

Read also:

- Gao Hua "Food Augmentation Methods and Food Substitutes During the Great Famine" in Manning, KE & Wenheuer, F. eds., *Eating Bitterness, New Perspectives on China's Great Leap Forward and Famine*. UBC Press 2011: 171-196
- Anderson, E.N. "Traditional medical values of food", "Food in society". *The Food of China*. New Haven: Yale University Press 1988: 229-261.

March 11: Reading Week: No class

6. March 18 Presentation of think piece

7. March 25 *Food and Self, Rituals/ Politics*

- Fischler, Claude, "Food, self and identity", *Social Science Information*, 27.2 (1988): 275-292
- Hahn, B., Saraiva, T., Rhode, P., Coclanis, P., Strom, C., "Does crop determine culture?", *Agricultural History*, summer 2014: 407-439
 - Bray, Francesca, "Health, wealth, and solidarity: Rice as self in Japan and Malaysia". Leung, A. & Caldwell, M., *Moral Foods*. 2019 :23-46.
 - 王明珂 "青稞、蕎麥與玉米" *中國飲食文化* 3 . 2007: 23-71
 - Sterckx, Roel. *Food, Sacrifice, and Sagehood in Early China*. Cambridge University Press 2011 "Introduction", "Customs and Cuisine": 1-48
 - Watson, James "From the Common Pot: Feasting with Equals in Chinese Society" *Anthropos* 82 (1987):389-401
 - Watson, James, "Feeding the Revolution: Public Mess Halls and Coercive Commensality in Maoist China", in Klein, J. & Watson, J. eds, *Handbook of Food and Anthropology*. London: Bloomsbury, 2016:308-320.

- Oxfeld, Ellen “The moral significance of food in reform-era rural China”. Jung, Y., Klein, J., & Caldwell, M. eds, *Ethical Eating in the Postsocialist and Socialist World*. UC Berkeley Press 2014: Chapter 2.

Read also:

- Ohnuki-Tierney, Emiko, *Rice as Self: Japanese Identities thru Time*. Princeton: Princeton University Press 1993

April 1 : No Class (individual discussion on final paper)

8. April 8. Food and Memory

Collective memory of Food

Introduction:

-Sutton, David. *Remembrance of Repasts: An Anthropology of Food and Memory*. New York: Berg 2001.

-Holtzman, J. “Food and Memory”. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 35, 2006: 361-378

- Ingold, 2000 chapter 5 “Making things, growing plants, raising animals and bringing up children” Use”: 77-88.

Read also:

-Hobsbawm, Eric & Ranger, T. eds., “Introduction: inventing traditions”, *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge University Press 1083: 1-13

- Halbwachs, M., “Preface”, “Conclusion” *On Collective Memory*. U of Chicago Press 1992.

-Shils, E., “Tradition”, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 13.2, 1971: 122-159

9. April 15: Endurance of the Past

-Dove, Michael, “The Agronomy of Memory and the Memory of Agronomy” in V.Nazarea ed., *Ethnoecology. Situated Knowledge/Located Lives*. University of Arizona Press 1999: 45-69.

- Schmalzer, Sigrid “Chinese peasants: ‘experience’ and ‘backwardness’” in *Red Revolution, Green Revolution. Scientific Framing in Socialist China*. University of Chicago Press 2016: 100-128

-Schmalzer, Sigrid. “Layer upon Layer: Mao-era history and the construction of China’s agricultural heritage” *EASTS* 13.3 2019: 413-442.

- Mark Swislocki “Thinking about food in Chinese history”, *Culinary Nostalgia. Regional Food Culture and the Urban Experience in Shanghai*. Stanford Press 2009: 1-28

-魯肇元, 唐娟娟 “傳統工藝與醬油行業的發展”, 《中國釀造》 11. 2009:5-10.

10. April 22 Local Knowledge: The past in the future

Book:

-Trubek, Amy. *The Taste of Place. A Cultural Journey into Terroir*. University of California Press, 2008.

- Nazarea, V. "Local knowledge and memory in biodiversity" *Annual Review of Anthropology* 35, 2006: 317-335.
- Schmalzer, Sigrid. "Breeding a better China: pigs, practices, and place in a Chinese county, 1929-1937". *Geographic Review*. 92/1, 2002: 1-22
- Tracy, Megan, "Pasteurizing China's Grasslands and Sealing in *terroir*" *American Anthropology* 115.3, 2013: 437-451
- Mak, S-W. "The revival of traditional water buffalo cheese consumption: class, heritage and modernity in contemporary China". *Food and Foodways* 22/4, 2014: 322-347
- Eric SK Cheng "Return migrants, mini-tours and rural regeneration. A study of local food movement in Taiwan" *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 57. 3, 2016: 338-350
- Tsing, Anna. Chapter 16 "Science as translation" in *Mushroom at the end of the World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015: 217-225.
- Di Lu "Local Food and Transnational Science: New Boundary Issues of the Caterpillar Fungus in Republican China", *Osiris* 35, 2020: 249-267
- Jansa et al, "Future Food Production as Interplay of Natural Resources, Technology, and Human Society", *Journal of Industrial Ecology* 14. 6, 2010: 874-877.

Read also:

- 陳建源 "擺盪在傳統、記憶與食安之間: 醬油觀光工廠裡的文化與身體經驗" 《中國飲食文化》 14. 2018:15-70

11. April 29. Presentation of final papers