Course Description
This semester is going to challenge you to think about food from a number of angles, and to consider how food can be narrated. There’s so much to cover! Too much! So we’ll be packing it in this semester. Buckle up...

Though we’ll primarily be focusing on writing, we’ll also dabble in radio, television and short films to think about how written and spoken words shape perceptions and emotions around food in contemporary society. Given that we live in New York City—one of the most vibrant and diverse food metropolises in the world, one that is, furthermore, going through an exciting moment in its food culture—we’ll make ample use of our surroundings as a larger “classroom” as often as possible. My goal in this class is several-fold.

1) I want you all to experiment. Good communication and, in particular, good writing takes a lot of practice. A lot! It also involves taking risks. I want to encourage you all to play.

2) I want you to begin to think of food as a lens as much as it is a subject. How does keeping food front and center in our consideration of the world alter how we see things? How can we use food to magnify issues, pleasures, memories, tensions, trends, etc.? How might food be problematic as a substrate for such views? Though we’ll occasionally read things that fit into the emerging academic arena of “food studies”, we will not be reading (or writing) academic writing. Instead, we’ll be looking at how messages are portrayed and conveyed in the world around us and in popular writing (including journalism, cookbooks, essays, radio and literature).

3) I want you all to become more comfortable with giving and taking critique and making revisions. Workshopping one another’s work will be a key component of this class, especially as we move towards our final assignment. From day one of the class, we will practice critical analysis of food writing (and food in the “real world”). My goal is to help you learn to apply that same critical (yet respectful) eye to one another’s work and, most importantly, to
Learning to edit yourself is one of the most important skills a communicator—or writer—can have. You must be your own harshest critic! Learn to 'kill your darlings'!

4) I want to reiterate again and again that the best food media finds a medium between the materiality and symbolic powers of food, be it in a market, home kitchen, restaurant, farm, etc. Markets, kitchens, memory and the table will be important sights of inquiry for this class. Come with an open mind and open palate, and—barring strict dietary restrictions or allergies—be prepared to be adventurous.

5) Learn to ask questions of, and challenge, your teachers! My job is not to be right, it is to help facilitate your process of inquiry and exploration. Don’t be afraid to speak up if you disagree or think I’m wrong. It helps make class interesting, and I’ll learn a lot from you!

Course Materials:
While involvement will be deep in this class, I know college is mighty expensive! Most readings will be available free of charge as photocopies or on NYU Classes under Resources as PDFs, or via online links (imbedded in the syllabus or accessible via search engine). You will be responsible for purchasing two (2) books (both available at the NYU Bookstore and widely available new and used elsewhere). Note: I want you to buy these books in part to encourage you to annotate, dog-ear, etc. your own copies, which, I find, is the best way to read critically.

• Ruth Reichl Tender at the Bone
• Bill Buford Heat

There are a couple of videos that I will assign to you as homework over the course of the semester. All of these are available online; if you can find them for free somewhere, that’s your prerogative, but each assigned video can be purchased or rented for just a couple of dollars. Given the low cost of course materials for this class, I do not expect cost to be a barrier to completing these viewing assignments. If it is, however, please speak with or email me and we will come up with a solution.

You will also be expected to look at the “Dining and Wine” section on Wednesdays in The New York Times and Tejal Rao’s new restaurant review column on Bloomberg.com (she’s a woman to watch—one of very few women to hold a prominent restaurant critic’s position in NYC, and the first non-Caucasian woman to do so). While I encourage you all to subscribe to the NYT (student rates are quite reasonable, especially if you only want the weekday edition—support journalism!), if you choose not to, check with friends, family who have an online account you can access or find a café (or NYU department) that reliably gets the print edition on a daily basis that you can peruse.
I expect you to have one notebook that you use for class and homework, to respond to readings, jot down thoughts and questions, responses to guest teachers, etc. I’m looking for you to jot down thoughtful questions and responses to readings, and take notes during class and guest lectures/field trips. I will not collect these notebooks; however, there will be frequent in-class writing reflections, some of which you may be asked to hand in (though none will be formally graded).

Course Structure
• For the first two thirds of the semester, we will be steeping ourselves in as much material—written and exploratory/experimental—as possible. The best way to improve your writing is to be constantly gathering material and **reading, reading, reading.** Plan your time wisely!
• The final third of the course will be devoted to honing in on individual projects, workshop and critique, revisions and editing, and class-wide collaboration.
• The course will culminate in a final potluck and reading, sort of a “salon” to celebrate the work of the term.

Assignments
I. We will be working on several short assignments over the course of the semester that encourage you to try on different forms of food writing. By 2/3 of the way through the term, you will have chosen **one of these assignments to develop into a revised—and perhaps longer— piece as a final project.** The short assignments will be as follows:

1. Essex Street Market Sensory Essay: Sight, Sound, Taste, Feel, Smell (750-1000 words)
2. Memoir/personal essay (apx. 1000 words)
3. Recipe w/ headnotes (Headnote no more than 300 words, as much room as you need for recipe/informational boxes).
4. Critical review (restaurant, street cart/food truck, farmers market produce/stand, dollar slice, spaghetti-O’s, you name it) (500-750 words)
5. An opinion piece on food and social change (positive or negative-- food movement, gentrification, “revision” of old/traditional foodways, gender, etc.) (appx. 1000 words)
6. Final Reflection: 1000-1500 words (*ungraded, but still mandatory—will count towards class participation grade)*

** All short written assignments, including revisions of your final project (with the exception of the final reflection) **are due in hard copy in class.**

The final weeks of the semester will be spent intensively workshopping one another’s writing and preparing as a group for our final project and presentation.
The semester will culminate in two “capstone” moments, one a product and one an experience.

II. We will compile everyone’s final projects into a prototype for a journal/zine/website/blog to document the journey of the class and all of your work. You will work collectively as a class to determine whether the journal will be analog (printed) or electronic (online), title the project, insert graphics (video, audio, photos, etc.).

Second, we will wrap up the semester will a potluck meal (locating and date TBD). Everyone will be responsible for preparing (not purchasing, though, *note, if your project involves a co-narrator or “subject”, you are welcome to prepare your dish collaboratively with them) their own dish. We will all come together, read our work aloud, and feast to celebrate the end of the semester.

III. Short Author Presentations/Reading Discussions: Because we only have a short semester in which to work, we will not be doing an extensive unit on profile writing or any in-depth food history reading. Rather, we will learn as we go. Each of you will be responsible for researching and presenting mini biographies about the authors we read. Compile a short description (2-4 minutes) of who we’re reading and some of their most important/notable accomplishments in the world of food. In this way, we’ll get a bit of a tour through the “who’s who” of food writing/media, as well as a bit of a history lesson. Feel free to integrate short media clips if it’s helpful to your presentation. You’ll also be responsible for preparing a few questions to help guide our discussion around your particular reading(s).

IV. ALWAYS FEEL FREE TO BRING FOOD TO CLASS. As long as you clean up after yourself, I encourage you to eat and, especially, to bring food to share (even better if it’s thematically appropriate to the week’s readings…). This is, after all, a course about food!

Grading
If you participate fully and work hard, you will do VERY WELL here. Period. Writing assignments will not be awarded letter or percentage grades. Instead, they will be graded on a check (assignment completed adequately), check plus (shows hard work, experimentation with techniques discussed in class and diligent pursuit) or check minus (work submitted in but fails to show initiative or does not fully adhere to the task at hand). Final assignments will be given a grade from 1-20%, and will be based largely on how much work in terms of risk-taking, revisions and editing you’ve put into your pieces. Class participation will be evaluated over the span of the semester.

Short writing assignments = 35% total (5 at 7% apiece)
**Final Written Project** (including integration of constructive criticism from classmates and professor in revisions) = 20%

**Final Presentation** = 10% (including your live reading—basically I want to see that you’ve practiced reading your work aloud and mastered a *performance* of it—and the connection between the dish you prepare and your final written work, you will *not* be graded on the quality of your cooking!!)

**Class participation** = 25% (including active participation in discussions of readings; reading response questions; attention and participation during trips/guest lectures; insightful and respectful participation in workshops and critique; and regular, thoughtful entries writers notebook)

**Author Presentations/Discussion Leadership** = 10% (includes preparedness for class on your day(s) to present, information you’ve gathered and engaging, thoughtful questions and comments to help direct the class discussion; though we do not have any formal research papers in this class, this will represent the research or “reporting” component of our work together)

**Final Grades** will be calculated by tallying the grades above out of 100%. Your final grade will correspond to a standard numerical → letter grade conversion (see below)

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**Class Participation:**

- Please note that in-class time is as important as the work you turn in. I expect everyone in the class to come to class **on time. Being late is disrespectful of my time, and, even more so, of your classmates’**.
- I expect everyone to do **all of the readings**. While I will not assign specific reading evaluation questions for each reading, I expect you all to come **prepared with thoughts and questions** during every class in which we are discussing the week’s readings.
• We will cover a lot of ground in each course. I expect you to be present for every session. Please email me or let me know in advance if you know you need to miss class. More than two unexcused absences (without a legitimate personal or family emergency, religious absence or doctor’s note) will result in a deduction of three points off your final grade. Every unexcused absence after that will mean a further reduction by three more points from your class participation grade.

• You are responsible for handing work in on time via email even if you miss a due-date in class, barring severe illness or family emergency (which must be accompanied by a note).

• Electronics policy: We all (including me, trust me) know how distracting screens and the temptations of the internet and texting can be. While we are in class and on field trips, there will be NO CELL PHONES, LAPTOPS OR TABLETS in class. While I know some people prefer to take notes on a computer, I have found that when it comes to attentively reading, writing and critiquing, electronics are more distracting than helpful. (If you think this is harsh, trust me, it's good practice for your writing. If you can't learn to break away from the ‘net for an hour and fifteen minutes twice a week while we're in class, you’re going to have a tough time shutting out distractions long enough to put any serious thought or concentration into your interviews, reporting and writing).

** Students interested in a food or agriculture-related tutorial (as a group) or individual study for the spring semester, note that the deadline for submitting all forms/applications is December 1. Please speak to me if you’re interested in something for the spring so we can discuss/plan/write early on.

Academic Integrity:
“As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website [www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html] for a full description of the academic integrity policy.”

Course Schedule
*Note: Readings and writing assignments are to be completed by the date they are listed.

Week 1: Introductions
9/2: In Class: Introductions, expectations, sign ups for author presentations, short writing exercise, discussion of readings for Thursday

9/4: In Class: Introducing Food Across Genres, and Writers on Writing
Due: 1) “Several Short Sentences About Writing” by Verlyn Klinkenborg, Ecotone Vol 13. (126-133) (photocopy)
2) Jane Kramer “Reporter’s Kitchen” The New Yorker August 2, 2002 (photocopy)

Week 2: Food and Travel in the U.S. (can we ever really separate them?)
9/9: Due: CALVIN TRILLIN! “The Walt Whitman of American Food” – Craig Claiborne
**If you haven’t already, read the interview of Trillin I assigned for Day 1 of class, please read it for this week: [http://www.guernicamag.com/interviews/never-enough/](http://www.guernicamag.com/interviews/never-enough/)

- Calvin Trillin “The Mozzarella Story” The New Yorker December 2, 2013
  [http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/12/02/mozzarella-story](http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2013/12/02/mozzarella-story)
- Calvin Trillin “By Meat Alone” The New Yorker November 24, 2008
- Calvin Trillin “An Attempt to Compile a Short History of the Buffalo Chicken Wing” The New Yorker August 25, 1980
- Calvin Trillin “No Daily Specials” The New Yorker November 22, 2010

In Class: Discuss Trillin’s approach to chronicling “Vernacular” American food and the use of humor in food writing.

9/11: Due: 1) Kiss My Grits John T. Edge Gourmet October 2000
2) “What is Southern” by Edna Lewis Gourmet January 2008
In class: Discuss travel writing and food memoir.
3) “True Grits” by Burkhard Bilger The New Yorker October 31, 2011
4) **(NOTE: Addition to online syllabus) WATCH Anthony Bourdain “No Reservations” Mississippi Delta episode
In Class: Discuss portrayals/memories of the food of the American South in these writings/TV episodes.

Week 3: An Interlude: Food Media with the Senses
9/16 Due: Chapters 1-4 (p. ix-71) of Tender at the Bone
In Class: Guest, Felicia Campbell (Associate Editor/Travel Editor at Saveur)

9/18: Due: Chapters 5-8 (p. 72-133) of Tender at the Bone
In Class: Narrating American Food: NO CLASSROOM CLASS TODAY- Essex Street market "dive-bomb documentary" sensory exploration project (*note different morning hours of different shops, feel free to visit anytime between today and when the assignment is due BUT this class time is reserved for visits.)

**Week 4: Traveling & Memory: Going Places that Stir Something...**

9/23: Due: Chapters 9-18 (p. 134-282) of Tender at the Bone
In Class: Discuss Tender at the Bone and the food memoir as a form.

9/25: Due: Sensory Piece on Essex St. Market
1) Maricel Presilla “Orinoco Flows:
2) Ann Patchett on Maine
3) Joseph Mitchell “A Mess of Clams” The New Yorker 1939 (PDF)

In Class: Discuss, in brief, Essex Market sensory “travel” project and the importance of sensory engagement in food writing. Discuss travel food writing and sense of place. Look briefly at two women who helped pioneer this form in the U.S.

**Week 5: Memory and Nostalgia in Food Journalism**

2) Excerpt from Mastering the Art of Soviet Cooking by Anya Von Bremzen (PDF)
3) Susan Orlean “The Homesick Restaurant” The New Yorker January 15, 1996 (PDF)

In Class: Discuss how foreign/immigrant cuisines are portrayed by these writers. Does being a “native” to somewhere other than where one currently lives inherently shape the writing? Is the goal different in this case?

10/2: Due: 1) Watch Haiti Episode of Anthony Bourdain’s “No Reservations” 2) read Heat Chapters “Dinner With Mario”-“Line Cook” (p. 1-174)


**Week 6: Restaurants, Chefs, Reviews**

10/7 Due: Heat Chapters “Apprentice”- “Dinner With Mario” (175-315)
In Class: Discuss Heat and depictions of restaurant life and contemporary chefs.

(Visit from Bloomberg critic Tejal Rao this week or 10/16?)

10/9: Due: Read A Smattering of Restaurant Reviews:
7) Ruth Reichl’s NYT Review of Tabla  
   http://events.nytimes.com/mem/nycreview.html?res=9C03EFDA103DF937A15751C0A96F958260
8) Ruth Reichl’s NYT Review of Aquavit  
9) (extra fun reading: Bad Reviews: http://www.buzzfeed.com/emofly/10-most-scathing-new-york-times-restaurant-reviews#s1gkzh)
   Reviewing comes to Brooklyn...
10)Frank Bruni Franny’s Review:  
11)Pete Wells Marco's review:  
12)Pete Wells scathing review of Guy’s American Kitchen and Bar:  
13)Pete Wells 4-star review of Nakazawa:  
14)Frank Bruni Waverly Inn:  
15)Sam Sifton on Per Se  
16)Frank Bruni revisits Gramercy Tavern  
    http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/06/dining/reviews/06rest.html?pagewanted=all
17)Sam Sifton “The Reviewing Life”  
18)Sam Sifton on Roberta’s  

In Class: Discuss Reviews and Review the Reviewers
Week 7: Restaurants, Chefs, reviews (continued)
10/14—No class (Fall Recess)

10/16 Due: Critical Review AND
1) Joe Dolce ” Kitchen Cowboy” Gourmet August 2001
2) Larissa Macfarquhar “Chef on the Edge” The New Yorker March 24, 2008
   http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2008/03/24/chef-on-the-edge
3) Alan Richman “The Rise of Egotarian Cuisine” GQ March 18, 2014
   http://www.gq.com/life/food/201403/alan-richman-dude-food
4) Time’s fall 2013 “Gods of Food” controversy:
   Articles imbedded here: http://time.com/729/the-gods-of-food/
In Class: Discuss gender politics and portrayal in food media

Week 8: Food Politics: Gender, Labor and the Systematically Underprivileged
10/21 Due: 1) Gabrielle Hamilton “The Lamb Roast” January 7, 2011 (excerpted from Blood, Bones and Butter)
   http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/01/17/the-lamb-roast
2) Chapters 14-16 of Blood, Bones and Butter (PDF)
3) Jonathan Gold on Odessa Piper of L'Etoile
In Class: Discuss female chefs and their portrayal (self v. male journalist, tones, realities)

10/23 Due: 1) Barry Estabrook “The Politics of the Plate: The Price of Tomatoes”
2) Rowan Jacobsen “The Gumbo Chronicles” Rowan Jacobsen Outside April 2012
In Class: Discuss Estabrook’s and Jacobsen’s pieces. Talk about “labor” as it pertains to those less visible in our current food media (women, migrant workers, and environmentally vulnerable populations) vs. portrayals of male superstar chefs.

Week 9: Food Politics: Agriculture and the Environment
10/28 Due: 1) excerpt from Helen and Scott Nearing’s The Good Life (PDF)
2) Wendell Berry’s “The Unsettling of America”
   http://www.asu.edu/courses/aph294/total-readings/berry--%20unsettlingofamerica.pdf
   http://michaelpollan.com/articles-archive/the-food-movement-rising/
In Class: Discuss the roots of our current farm-to-table sensibility around food and how it comes through in writing. Where are politics made explicit? Where are they muted?

10/30 Due: 1) excerpts from Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall’s Meat and Veg (both PDFs)
In Class: Discuss different ways writers approach environmental ways of eating and the cookbook as a venue for political writings/messaging

Week 10: Cookbooks: Narrating Places, Narrating Self
11/4 Due: Opinion Piece AND
1) excerpt from Patience Gray’s Honey From a Weed (PDF)
2) excerpt from Jane Grigson’s English Food (PDF)
3) excerpt from The Country Cooking of Ireland by Colman Andrews (PDF)
4) excerpt from Maricel Presilla’s Gran Cocina Latina (PDF)
5) MFK Fisher’s introduction to Japanese Cooking: A Simple Art
In Class: Discuss narrations of food cultures/place through cookbooks. How does it affect the writing if it is one’s “own” culture being written about?

11/6 Due: 1) Explore Molly Wizenberg’s “Orangette” http://orangette.blogspot.com
2) excerpt from Edna Lewis’s The Taste of Country Cooking (PDF)
3) excerpt from Nigel Slater’s Tender (PDF)
In Class: Discuss the use of the personal/memory in recipe/cookbook writing.

Week 11:
11/11—Due: readings/listenings TBD to prepare for Kathy and John’s visit
In Class: Guests, food writer/radio personality Kathy Gunst and radio documentarian John Rudolph

11/13—Due: Recipe with Headnotes
In class: class visioning for final project (Sara traveling)

Week 12:
11/18—Due: Choose which of your five short pieces you’d like to workshop/revise as your final project.
In Class: Present results of Thursday’s visioning process. Discuss workshopping/critique format, sign up for workshops.

11/20 Due: Workshop readings for the day
In Class: Workshop/Critique

Week 13:
11/25 Due: Workshop readings for the day
In Class: Workshop/Critique

11/27—No Class (Thanksgiving)

Week 14:
12/2 Due: First round of revisions, workshop readings for the day
In Class: Workshop/Critique

12/4 In Class: Group Work

Week 15:
12/9 Due: Second round of revisions
In Class: Group Work

12/11 In Class: Group Work—Final day of class

Final Project Presentation, Readings & Potluck (location and time TBD—lunchtime Sunday, December 14?)

Final Revised Writing and Reflection Assignments Due via Email by Midnight on 12/16
Saturday 12/20—Winter Recess Begins!