FOOD ACROSS GENRES
Advanced Writing Seminar
Class # 19932, WRTNG-UG 1110 & Section 001
Sara B. Franklin
Spring 2016
Monday and Wednesday, 9:30-10:45 am
Location: Global Center for Academic and Spiritual Life, 238 Thompson St (at Washington Square South), Room 265
Sf1563@nyu.edu
Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 11-2, Gallatin 608
** I prefer if you make an appointment if you need to speak with me. Drop in hours or quick conversations are always fine right after class, but I need to ensure that I clear adequate time if you have something that demands more than a brief chat. I strongly encourage you come to office hours at least once during the semester to discuss your writing and progress in the class.

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, and, conversely, what can be said through food.

Though we’ll primarily be focusing on writing, we’ll also dabble in other media forms to think about how written and spoken words shape perceptions and emotions around food in contemporary society.

My goals in this course are several-fold:

• 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.

• 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 speak to the emerging academic arena of “food studies,” we will not be reading (or writing) in an academic style. 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).

• I want you all to become more comfortable with giving and taking critique. Workshopping one another’s work will be a key component of this class. From day one of the class, we will practice critical analysis of food writing.
My goal is to help you learn to apply that same critical (yet respectful) eye to one another’s work and, most importantly, to your own. 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’!

• *Learn to ask questions of, and challenge, your teachers and peers!* This course will take us into realms of discomfort as we consider the role, and narration, of race, gender, ethnicity, religious and class in food writing. My job is to help facilitate your process of inquiry and exploration, and to encourage bravery in your critical thinking and writing. Don’t be afraid to speak up if you disagree or think I’m wrong. It helps make class interesting, and a good debate often sparks the most interesting writing.

Learning Goals and Objectives:
• We will practice expressing sensation, a key component of culinary experiences, through written word.

• We will analyze popular writing (and, in a more minor role, other forms of media) about food to examine various narrative devices and to explore voice, style, scene and the uses of dialogue in popular writing.

• We will learn about many strategies and techniques used in “reporting,” and learn how to use observation, interviewing and research in combination to create narrative.

• We will experiment with how to write with various goals, and various audiences, in mind.

• We will examine how inclusivity and exclusivity can be both perpetuated and interrupted by narrative media.

• We will deepen our knowledge of emerging movements in and around food culture, and inquire as to what sorts of stories are being told— by and for whom— to narrate those movements.

**Required Texts**
While involvement will be deep in this class, I know college is mighty expensive! Most readings will be available free of charge 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 widely available new and used online and in many brick and mortar bookstores). 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*

All readings marked with PDF are posted to NYU Classes.

• Please note: some of the links provided here will have changed by the time we get around to doing those readings. Please search thoroughly with the information I have provided before emailing me about a broken link.
• 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.

**Course Structure**
Class time will be a mix of discussing assigned materials and workshopping one another’s writing.

For each assignment of the term, we will have two types of workshops: 1) a full class workshop, in which everyone in the class reads and responds to select pieces (*everyone will have their writing workshopped via a whole class workshop once during the semester*) and 2) small group workshops. The class will be divided into groups A-D on the first day of the semester. You will meet with the same small group over the course of the term.

**EVERY TIME we have a whole class workshop, you are responsible for**

**handing in a print (paper) copy** (UNLESS you have just workshopped in small group that week) of your work to me in class. **Consider group workshop dates the due dates of your drafts.** Failure to turn in your work on time may result in not getting comments from me to use towards your final, revised work.

**You are responsible for posting your drafts on NYU Classes for your peers to read and respond to at least 24 hours before the start of the class in which your piece is to be workshopped.**

**Graded Assignments**
Over the course of the semester, you will hand in **four peer- and instructor-critiqued, and revised, pieces of writing**, each worth 20% of your final grade. They are:

1. Memoir/personal essay 1000-1200 words
2. Critical review (restaurant, street cart/food truck, farmers market produce/stand, dollar slice, spaghetti-O’s, you name it). After reading many examples of restaurant criticism, you will try to this form yourself. The
objective is to paint as clear a scene as possible, using the City as your backdrop. Far from just examining the food on offer, you will examine ambience, décor, audience/clientele, food/food culture on display, and think about how the restaurant you’re reviewing fits into the larger puzzle of New York City culture at the moment at which you write your review. 750 words

3. Reported journalistic-style piece. This piece will require you to research some aspect of food culture of interest to you. This can be a person, restaurant, food product, or movement. You will be required to gather evidence from a variety of thinkers, writers and evidence you collect through reporting (interviews, observation, etc.). Your evidence will help you come up with an organizing principle, and also support ideas of your own. You will work to integrate techniques we have studied, and to focus on character, scene, sensory detail, creating tension, and narrative arc. This piece may draw upon any piece of writing you have done earlier in the semester, but may not use any of your word-for-word material from previous essays. 2,500-3,000 words.

4. Recipe with headnotes. The goal of a recipe with a headnote is threefold: to convince a reader why they should be interested in cooking the dish (historical importance? Pillar of culture? Playful? Fascinating technique? Resonant memory?); to teach the reader how to prepare a dish; and to detail an inherently hands-on process through the written word in such a way that a reader can follow your instructions to the intended result. Headnote no more than 300 words (as much room as you need for recipe/informational boxes).

Grading
If you participate fully, listen carefully and work hard, you will do VERY WELL here.

On written drafts, I will provide you with in-depth comments. In workshops, your classmates will do the same. This feedback, together with the development of your own thinking and style, will be the bases upon which your revisions will be based. Final grades on written work are based upon creativity, clarity of thought and language, the work you put in to revisions. If a full overhaul of a piece is needed, I expect you to do it. Final grades for written pieces will be out of 20% and will encompass effort put into first draft as well as your final product. *A note: Shorter pieces do not demand less attention or time; it is often more challenging to write short pieces that are concise, clear and meaningful than it is to write longer pieces. I expect your full effort in drafts and revisions for each of the four pieces.

** All writing is expected to conform to the accepted standards of English grammar and syntax. Careless typos or grammar errors in your final pieces due to a failure to carefully spellcheck and proofread your work will automatically reduce your grade on that written piece.
Class participation will be evaluated over the span of the semester. Class participation grades are NOT negotiable at the end of the semester.

- 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’. Arriving more than 10 minutes late twice without giving me advance notice is equivalent to one unexcused absence.

- 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 may not get to the assigned material in class discussion; you are still responsible for all the material assigned, as it has all been placed into the course for a reason. I WILL KNOW IF YOU ARE NOT READING, and this will affect your class participation grade.

- 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 exemption 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.

- Electronics policy: We all know how distracting screens and the temptations of the Internet and texting can be. While we are in class, there will be NO CELL PHONES, LAPTOPS OR TABLETS in class. Failure to comply with this policy, or having to be repeatedly reminded to put electronics away, will result in a reduction in your class participation grade. 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). While I know it can get expensive, I encourage you to print out PDF or online material so that you can take notes on the pieces themselves; this will help you optimally engage in class discussions. Whether or not you decide to print out readings for class, I STRONGLY encourage each of you to keep a notebook specifically for this course, in which you jot down quotes, favorite lines, questions, ideas, etc. related to class readings and discussions. These will come in handy as you work on your pieces.

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.

** Any writing shared in workshop or posted to NYU classes is the property of the author only and is not to be treated as published work. You may not share your classmates’ work verbally, online, or in any print forum without the author’s explicit permission

**Final Grade**

**Writing assignments= 20% each (80% total)**

**Class participation= 20%** (includes attendance; active participation in discussions of readings; attention during guest lectures; insightful and respectful participation in workshops and critique)

**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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** I encourage everyone to come to office hours at least once over the semester, whether to discuss your writing, or larger concerns about class. I do not give midterm grades. Therefore, particularly if you are concerned about your grade, or have a period of extended absences or latenesses (even excused ones), a meeting with me is a good idea so that there are no surprises when final grades are posted at the end of the term.
Course Schedule

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

**Monday, January 25:** Introductions, review of syllabus

**Wednesday, January 27: Foundation Essays, Food for Thought**
- Excerpt from Adam Gopnik, *The Table Comes First*, “How Does Taste Happen” (PDF, *The Table Comes First*, 87-113)
- Betty Fussell “Eating my Words” from *Eating Words* (PDF from *Eating Words*)

**Monday, February 1: Calvin Trillin, The “Walt Whitman” of American Food**

**Wednesday, February 3**
Chapters 1-4 (p. ix-71) of *Tender at the Bone* by Ruth Reichl

**Monday, February 8**
Chapters 5-8 (p. 72-133) of *Tender at the Bone*

**Wednesday, February 10: Memories of Taboo, Shame and Secrecy**
John Birdsell “America, Your Food is So Gay,” *Lucky Peach* [http://luckypeach.com/america-your-food-is-so-gay/](http://luckypeach.com/america-your-food-is-so-gay/)

**Monday, February 15—President’s Day, University Holiday, No Class**

**Wednesday, February 17**
Workshop group A—memoir/personal essay

**Monday, February 22**
Workshop whole class—memoir/personal essay

**Wednesday, February 24: Complicated Memories: Longing and Belonging**
- Excerpt from *Mastering the Art of Soviet Cooking* by Anya Von Bremzen (PDF)
Monday, February 29: Restaurant Criticism as Cultural Reporting (case: NYT)

- Ruth Reichl's NYT Review of Aquavit
- Pete Wells scathing review of Guy's American Kitchen and Bar:
- Frank Bruni Waverly Inn:
- Sam Sifton on Per Se
- Pete Wells on Per Se [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/13/dining/pete-wells-per-se-review.html?_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/13/dining/pete-wells-per-se-review.html?_r=0)
- Sam Sifton on Roberta's

Wednesday, March 2: Chef Culture in the 21st Century
Due: Memoir/Personal Essay

  [http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2008/03/24/chef-on-the-edge](http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2008/03/24/chef-on-the-edge)

Monday, March 7: Women in the Trenches, Personal and Analytical

- Chapters 14-16 of *Blood, Bones and Butter* by Gabrielle Hamilton (PDF)

Wednesday, March 9: Marketing/Fetishizing “Authenticity”: Case Study
Marketing Ethnicity in Contemporary Food Media and Restaurant Culture
Watch Naples Episode of Anthony Bourdain's “No Reservations”
Case study: Torrisi Italian Specialties (promo video, reviews of Torrisi Italian Specialties in NYT and The New Yorker). Compare reviews alongside Bourdain’s episode.

**Monday, March 14 and Wednesday, March 16—SPRING BREAK, NO CLASSES:**
(While on break: Start reading Heat; work on your restaurant review; begin research for your reported piece)

**Monday, March 21**
Workshop group B—restaurant review

**Wednesday, March 23**
Whole class workshop—restaurant review

**Monday, March 28: Heat**
Due: *Heat*, entire book
**Due: Topic for reported piece**

**Wednesday, March 30: Food, Nostalgia & Politics**
**Due: restaurant review**
- “The Chef vs. the Octopus” by Alex Perry
- “Ride on, Texas Ranger” by Travis Putnam Hill

**Monday, April 4: Ethnic Mash-ups: Changing Meaning in a Changing world**
- “The Land of Pork and Honey” by Shira Rubin
- Jay Caspian Kang “Roy Choi’s Master Plan”, *The California Sunday Magazine*

**Wednesday, April 6: Recipes & Cookbooks: What Can Cookbooks Do?**
Intro & Excerpt from Edna Lewis’s *The Gift of Country Cooking* (PDF)
Jane Grigson, Introduction & Vegetables from *English Food* (PDF)
MFK Fisher’s introduction to *Japanese Cooking: A Simple Art* (PDF)

**Monday, April 11: Recipes & Cookbooks, Cont’d: Politics & Prose**
Excerpt from Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall’s *Tender* with recipes (PDF)
Bryant Terry (PDF)
Nigella Lawson (PDF)
If time, explore favorite websites/blogs with recipes

**Wednesday, April 13**
Group C workshop—recipe with headnote

**Monday, April 18**
All class workshop—recipe with headnote

**Wednesday, April 20: The “Good Food” Movement, A Whirlwind Survey**
Excerpt from Helen and Scott Nearing’s *The Good Life* (PDF)** Read intro and chapter one, “We Search for the Good Life,” (chapter 5, “Eating for Health,” is optional)
Wendell Berry’s “The Unsettling of America”
http://www.asu.edu/courses/aph294/total-readings/berry--%20unsettlingofamerica.pdf
Michael Pollan “The Food Movement Rising” *New York Review of Books*
http://michaelpollan.com/articles-archive/the-food-movement-rising/
Bren Smith “Don’t Let Your Children Grow Up to be Farmers” *New York Times*

**Monday, April 25: The Forgotten in Our Food System**
Due: recipe with headnote
Barry Estabrook “The Politics of the Plate: The Price of Tomatoes”
Rowan Jacobsen “The Gumbo Chronicles” Rowan Jacobsen *Outside* April 2012

**Wednesday, April 27**
Group C workshop—reported piece

**Monday, May 2**
All class workshop—reported piece

**Wednesday, May 4: Modern “Moral” Eating & Concepts of Health**
**Our last class meeting**
“Against the Grain” by Michael Specter, *The New Yorker*
http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/11/03/grain
“Elite Meat” by Dana Goodyear, *The New Yorker*
http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/11/03/e%C2%89lite-meat
“Grub” by Dana Goodyear *The New Yorker* August 15, 2011.
http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/08/15/grub

**Monday, May 9—LAST DAY OF CLASSES* (Sara may be traveling—stay tuned!)
Final reported piece due via email to sf1563@nyu.edu by midnight

**Wednesday, May 11**
**If you’re looking for extra reading, just for fun or, particularly, to help you with your reported pieces, here are some favorites I’d suggest:**

Profiles:
“The Missionary” by Dana Goodyear, *The New Yorker*
http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/01/30/the-missionary-dana-goodyear
“Kitchen Cowboy” by Joe Dolce, *Gourmet*
“The Philosopher Chef” by Jane Kramer, *The New Yorker*
http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/12/03/the-philosopher-chef
“England’s It Girl” by Joe Dolce, *Gourmet*
“Hungry Travelers” by Jane Kramer, *The New Yorker*
http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2008/11/24/the-hungry-travellers
“Suddenly Seymour Disappeared,” Kat Kinsman, *Tasting Table*
“I’m Sammy Hagar, and I Learned to Cook Before I Learned to Rock” by Rebecca Flint Marx, *San Francisco Magazine*,
Francis Lam, “Edna Lewis and the Black Roots of American Cooking” *New York Times Magazine*
“The Scavenger” by Dana Goodyear, *The New Yorker*

Restaurant/Chef Culture:
“Fear and Loathing in Charleston,” by Nathan Thornburgh in *Roads and Kingdoms*
http://roadsandkingdoms.com/author/nthornburgh/
“The Toxic, Abusive, Addictive, Supportive, Codependent Relationship Between Chefs and Yelpers” by Rebecca Flint Marx, *San Francisco Magazine*
“True Grits” by Burkhardt Bilger, *The New Yorker*
http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/10/31 true-grits
“Toques for Underground” by Dana Goodyear, *The New Yorker*
http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/12/03/toques-from-underground
“How to Read a Menu” by John T. Edge, *The Oxford American*
http://www.oxfordamerican.org/magazine/item/671-how-to-read-a-menu
“Guy Fieri is the Hero We Need” Jeremy Repanich, *Playboy*
Criticism
Robert Sietsema, “Everyone Eats, but that Doesn’t Make You a Restaurant Critic,” Columbia Journalism Review
http://www.cjr.org/feature/everyone_eats.php?page=1
Ruth Reichl’s 2nd memoir, Garlic and Sapphires
Raymond Sokolov’s Steal the Menu (also takes you through a whirlwind history of food culture in the U.S.)
Wednesday is the day for restaurant reviews; check out The New York Times (Pete Wells) & Bloomberg (Tejal Rao)
Jonathan Gold is the only restaurant critic to win a Pulitzer. His writing on the wildly diverse restaurant culture in LA is wonderful.
http://www.latimes.com/food/jonathan-gold/

Travel
“Into the Vines” by Gabrielle Hamilton, Afar
Page through the archives of Gourmet online, particularly from 2000 until they folded in 2008
So many of Calvin Trillin’s pieces. I’d recommend his “Tummy Trilogy,” which is old, but not at all dated.

Food Politics
“Fighting Slavery in the Food Supply Chain” by Jimmy Sherfey, Eater Longform
“The Corn Wars” by Ted Genoways, The New Republic
https://newrepublic.com/article/122441/corn-wars
“Why is Chipotle Off the Hook in the Fight for Better Pay?” Helaine Olen, The Atlantic
Kevin Young, “Repast” Virginia Quarterly Review
http://www.vqronline.org/essays-articles/2015/04/repast

Great resources for great food writing:
Check out Roads and Kingdoms (online)
Secret Ingredients (The New Yorker’s compilation of best food writing over the years, up until 2007 or so)—there are many wonderful reported and memoir-y pieces, such as Chang-Rae Lee’s “Magical Dinners: An Immigrant Thanksgiving,” The New Yorker http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/11/22/magical-dinners
Eater Longform (they also do an annual roundup of best longform; see 2015’s greatest hits according to editor Helen Rosner here)
“The Best Food Writing” series is released every year and compiles a mix of excellent, and less excellent, food writing. I happen to think the 2015 volume is particularly good.
For roundups of great food writing over time, check out Molly O’Neill’s *American Food Writing* and Gilbert and Porter (eds) *Eating Words*.