Experiencing Food through the Senses  
ML 715 (A1) Fall 2012

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tel. 617-358-6291  
Office: Room 110, 808 Commonwealth Ave.  
Office hours: Mondays 5-6pm and Wednesdays 4:30-5:30, by appointment

Wed, 6-9pm  
Fuller 133 (808 Comm. Ave –unless otherwise stated)

Course Description

This course is an interdisciplinary exploration of the sensory foundations and implications of food. We will study the senses as physical and cultural phenomena, sensory perception and function, and the sensory and scientific aspects of food preparation and consumption. We will look at the processes by which taste and other sensorial experiences occur and circulate in society, and how they shift from being an individual experience to social phenomena. Students will gain the essential vocabulary and frameworks to think and talk about, describe, compare, assess and debunk sensory assertions, effects and perceptions about food.

Objectives & Goals

• Develop sensory analysis skills  
• Learn a language through which to articulate sensory experience  
• Explore cultural difference with regards to sensory perception  
• Analyze the underlying culture, economic, politic and social forces that shape sensory experience  
• Develop critical analytical skills—reading & writing

Books:


New York: Columbia UP 978-0-231-15910-4

Smith, Mark. 2007. Sensing the Past: Hearing, smelling, tasting and touching the past. Berkeley:
Boston University Metropolitan College

UC Press.


All books are available at the BU Bookstore (Barnes & Noble) and articles through the BU Library eReserves.

Courseware

This course will use Blackboard extensively: [http://blackboard.bu.edu](http://blackboard.bu.edu).

Class Policies

1) **Attendance & Absences** – students with more than three unexcused absences will receive an F grade.

2) **Assignment Completion & Late Work** – the method of assignment delivery will be indicated for each individual assignment. Please see the course outline below. Late assignments will be docked 20% for each day they are late. Incomplete grades will not be assigned without a medical excuse.

3) **Academic Conduct Code** – Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated in any Metropolitan College course. They will result in no credit for the assignment or examination and may lead to disciplinary actions. Please take the time to review the Student Academic Conduct Code: 

Assignments

All written assignment should be handed in via e-mail Blackboard before midnight of the due date.

- Use the following file naming convention: LASTNAME_ML715_readingresponse1.docx.
- Submit Word files only.

**Participation:** You are expected to demonstrate your mastery of the course readings. You should also engage and encourage your fellow classmates in discussion.

**Leading class discussion:** You should offer a brief summary of the main themes of the course readings and attempt to bring them together in a structured way. You may want to be creative with the form of the discussion you will facilitate or you may choose a more classic seminar style. You will be assigned a set of readings at the start of the course.

Paper outline + initial bibliography: This should include a working title, thesis statement and the main points the paper will cover. It can be in point form but you should demonstrate how you intend to develop your argument. You should also include an initial bibliography that demonstrates that you have been to the library and done research beyond the course readings. Due Nov. 14.

Term Paper: You should choose a topic that deals with food and the senses from a theoretical perspective. You may want to dig deeper into one of the course themes or cover a topic that is not on the syllabus. The final paper should be 17-20 pages double-spaced (12-point font) with citations and bibliography in APA style. Due Dec. 15

Reading Responses: Students must submit two reading responses in the course of the semester. The responses should be short (approximately 500-750 words). Do not summarize the course readings. Choose a topic that is introduced by the readings and use it as a springboard for further reflection. You may choose to focus on one reading or film, or you might address several. Due Sept. 26 & Nov. 28

Sensory lab: At the beginning of the semester each student will be assigned to a group. Each group will be given a different week and topic for which they will create a sensory lab. By week 3 all groups will submit a lab proposal outlining the learning objectives, procedures, equipment needed, budget and supporting research. Students are responsible for the preparation of the label, preparing a tasting sheet, and presenting the pedagogical foundations of the lab after it has run. Each group should submit a written report the week after their lab. A base budget of $50 will be allotted to each group for the purchase of lab supplies.

Grade Distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation (Leading discussion)</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Readings responses (5%×2)</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sensory lab assignment</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper outline and bibliography</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term paper</td>
<td>35%</td>
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# Class Meetings, Lectures & Assignments

*Lectures, Readings, and Assignments subject to change, and will be announced in class as applicable within a reasonable time frame.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
<th>Due Dates</th>
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</table>
Film: *Tampopo* (1985) – in class | | |
| Week 2-Sept. 12 | The Human Body and Sensory Experience  
Guest lecture: Sarah Kark  
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<tr>
<th>Week 3-Sept. 19</th>
<th>History of the Senses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Themes:</td>
<td>Historical method; sensing the past; anachronism</td>
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<th>Week 4-Sept. 26</th>
<th>Smell</th>
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<tr>
<td>Guest lecture:</td>
<td>Dr. Ian Davison, Boston University, Biology/Neuroscience</td>
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<tr>
<td>Themes:</td>
<td>Chemical senses; cultural construction; Otherness; Olfaction</td>
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Meet in room 117
Lab #1

**Reading Response #1 Due**

**Home work for next class:** a one-page review of the sensory lab


Lab #2
**Homework for next class:** a one-page review of the sensory lab |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 6 – Oct. 10</th>
<th>Touch</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meet in room 117</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lab #3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Homework for next class: a one-page review of the sensory lab (to be e-mailed to lab group # 3)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 7 – Oct. 17</th>
<th>Skilled bodies</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fieldtrip to Taza Chocolate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Homework for next class: one-page sensory description of Taza visit.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 8 – Oct. 24</th>
<th>Sight</th>
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<tr>
<td>Meet in room 117 (after the lecture)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lab #4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper Proposal Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Homework for</td>
<td></td>
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Meet in room 117  
Lab #5  
Home work for next class: a one-page review of the sensory lab |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Week 10 – Nov. 7 | Language & Connoisseurship  
Guest lecture and wine tasting - Bill Nesto, MW  
Lab #5  
Home work for next class: a one-page review of the sensory lab |
**Paper outline due**  
**Second Reading Response Due** |


|------------------|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Sensory dinner. | Meet in room 116
Lab #6

**Final Papers Due Dec. 15** |