

Food, Society and Culture in Britain: From Traditional Tastes to Contemporary Concerns



[Faculty Contact Information](#)

Name:

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[Course Information](#)

Course Description

I grew up in Iowa and I knew what to do with butter: you put it on roastin' ears, pancakes, and popcorn. Then I went to France and saw a Frenchman put butter on radishes. I waited for the Cosmic Revenge – for the Eiffel Tower to topple, the Seine to sizzle, or the grape to wither on the vine. But that Frenchman put butter on his radishes, and the Gallic universe continued unperturbed. I realized then something I hadn't learned in five years of language study: not only was speaking in French different from speaking in English, but buttering in French was different from buttering in English. And that was the beginning of real cross-cultural understanding.

This course focuses on the complex relationships between food, cuisine, society and culture and how they shape and influence each other. Drawing from the disciplines of food studies, intercultural communication, anthropology and sociology, students have the opportunity to engage with food as culture – in theory and in practice.

Course Goals

Through this course, students examine major contemporary issues around food, the history and forms of cuisine in the UK, and food as an important cultural phenomenon in all societies. Britain is the main example, with London as a particular lens.

Student Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, students will:

1. Recognise and explain the ways in which culture and society influence food and cookery and vice versa
2. Identify key themes for food and cookery in the United Kingdom in the 20th and 21st centuries, including the role of social class, the media, government, and business
3. Describe the salient elements of British cuisine and food cultures

4. Analyse major national and global food issues, such as obesity and waste, environmental impacts, animal welfare, and human health

Course Assignments, Grading, and Assessment

Assignment	Percentage	Grading Requirements
Attendance and Participation	20%	
Ethnographic Report	15%	Please see rubric on MyStudy
Food Ethics Essay	30%	Please see rubric on MyStudy
Final Exam (multiple choice & short answer)	35%	Please see rubric on MyStudy

Brief Assessment Overview

Assessment 1: Ethnographic Report (1,500 – 2,000 words)

Due:

Students complete a task involving observation of people, products and space at Borough Market, London, conducting interviews with at least two market stallholders and/or customers and taking relevant illustrative photographs. Students are provided with the framework for collecting ethnographic data and for compiling a brief report format that examines: culture and values of the market, its stall-holders, customers and overall organisation; products and pricing compared to regular supermarkets and other grocery outlets; and the relationship between markets like Borough and other farmers' markets and British class identities.

Assessment 2: Food Ethics Essay (1,500 words)

Due:

Students are required to write a clearly structured social science essay on a research question related to food and ethics. Students must identify 5 scholarly texts (journal articles, reports and book chapters) on which to base their claims.

Assessment 3: Final Exam

Due:

Lectures, visits, tastings and the readings form the basis for a final multiple choice and short-form essay exam.

Grading

Grade	Knowledge & Content	Methodology & Structure, Language & Style	Understanding, Reflection & Critique	Integrative thinking & demonstration of experiential learning
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A (93- 100%) A- (90-92%)	Interesting topic handled with intelligence, originality, and depth; wealth of supporting material, smoothly integrated into the text; tone is evident and maintained throughout; no factual inaccuracies	Material is unified and well focused; organization is clear, logical and purposeful throughout the essay; well-chosen examples. Uses sophisticated sentences effectively; usually chooses words aptly; observes conventions of written English and manuscript format; makes few minor or technical errors	Well-chosen examples; persuasive reasoning used to develop and support thesis consistently: uses quotations and citations effectively; causal connections between ideas are evident	Gives full insight into the nature of an event, experience, or artifact; achieves complete integration of knowledge from diverse disciplines to interpret an issue. Shows clear understanding of cultural impact through appropriate examples
B+ (87-89%) B (83-86%) B- (80-82%)	Content is above average; worthwhile topic; satisfactory depth of development; supporting details for the thesis and topic sentences are specific, concrete, and plentiful; has only minor factual inaccuracies	Material is unified and well focused; pattern of organization is clear, logical, and well executed; makes an effort to organize paragraphs topically. Some mechanical difficulties or stylistic problems; may make occasional problematic word choices or awkward syntax errors; a few spelling or punctuation errors or cliché; usually presents quotations effectively	Pursues thesis consistently: develops a main argument with clear major points and appropriate textual evidence and supporting detail; makes an effort to organize paragraphs topically	Gives some insights into the nature of an event, experience, or artifact; achieves partial integration of knowledge from diverse disciplines to interpret an issue; some understanding of cultural impact through appropriate examples
C+ (77-79%) C (73-76%) C- (70-72%)	Worthwhile topic; supporting material for thesis and topic sentences is general and abstract rather than specific and concrete; most information is correct	Organization is clear, logical, and coherent; some ideas unsupported; fails to integrate quotations appropriately. More frequent wordiness; several unclear or awkward sentences; imprecise use of words or over-reliance on passive voice; one or two major grammatical errors	Only partially develops the argument; shallow analysis; some ideas and generalizations undeveloped or unsupported; makes limited use of textual evidence; fails to integrate quotations appropriately	Able to explain to a limited extent, the quality of a performance, event, or artifact; gives few insights into event, experience; discusses few qualities of an experience; a limited understanding of cultural impact with few examples
D (60-69%)	Trivial subject; very few supporting details for the thesis and topic sentences; has some correct & incorrect information	Not logically organized; digresses from one topic to another; no clear organizational pattern. Some major grammatical or proofreading errors (subject-verb agreement; sentence fragments); language marred by clichés	Frequently only narrates; digresses from one topic to another without developing ideas or terms; makes insufficient or awkward use of textual evidence	Little integration of experience and narrative; limited insight of issues and insufficient understanding of cultural impact

F (0-59%)	Consists of unsupported generalities and/or the repetition of commonplace ideas; lacks originality and insight; information is inaccurate or absent	Does not follow the instructions; rambling, disorganized and incoherent. Numerous grammatical errors	Little or no development; may list incorrect facts or misinformation; uses no quotations or fails to cite sources or plagiarizes	Little or no integration experience and narrative; lack of insight and fails to understand cultural impact
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Policies specific to this course

- **Co-curricular Activities and Field Trips:** Field trips for your FIE courses have been planned to help students achieve the learning objectives of the course and are required. They take place during class time unless otherwise notes. Details about required visits appear on the class by class schedule below. Please note that any make up for missed co-curricular activities are at the personal expense of the student.
- **Late submission of work:** Written work may be submitted later than the due date only with express permission from the faculty. Credit is not given for work received late, except in exceptional circumstances of personal illness or similar (which must be made known to FIE at the time). Documentation of exceptional circumstances from a third party, such as a doctor's note, may be required. Any extensions made beyond the last class meeting must be committed to writing and include information on the exceptional circumstances that require the extension, the nature of work yet to be submitted, and the date by which the work will be received. If said work is not received by the agreed extension date, barring further exceptional circumstances, the work will not be given credit.
- **Late arrivals to class or site visit:** Please arrive on time. Lateness, particularly on days with co-curricular visits, results in missed course material. Faculty may use their discretion to mark a student as 'Absent' if they feel the student has arrived too late or left too early to be considered 'Present' for that session.
- **Trigger Warnings:** Some topics covered in class may expose students to past traumas and evoke a negative reaction. Sensitive topics can vary, such as sexual violence, death, racism, or xenophobia. I want this to be an inclusive space where every student feels comfortable; therefore, I will provide content warnings before lectures for sensitive subject matters. Content warnings are meant to give students a forewarning so they can prepare for their emotional safety. It is important to note that anything in the environment could be a trigger for someone's trauma, such as smell, sound, or texture; it is impossible to account for all possible triggers, and ask for grace as I do my best as an educator to warn students of potentially distressing content during lectures, assignments and/or discussions.

Attendance and Participation

- Regular attendance is essential in order to pass a course. A class constitutes lectures, student presentations, discussions, seminars, co-curricular activities, tests, and examinations. In addition, under UK Home Office regulations class attendance is mandatory.
- Class attendance and participation is formally recorded and incorporated into a student's final grade.

- In addition to physical presence in class, a student's participation in a class is evaluated on the mastery of assigned course readings as reflected in a consistent, valid contribution to class discussions, in-class exercises, and in asking questions that enrich the on-going discourse. Consistency and validity in participation is expected in every class. Limited participation will have a negative impact on a student's participation score.
- When unexpected events cause students to miss a class, it is the student's responsibility to initiate contact with the faculty member to notify them in advance, or as soon as is reasonably possible.
- Absence from class does not relieve a student of responsibility for assignments. Students bear the ultimate responsibility for all missed class material and assessment.
- If a student misses 25% or more of a course, then they may be awarded a failure for the course and/or not permitted to finish the course.
- [See the full attendance policy here](#)

Required Readings

There is no single key text for the course. Students access a reading pack of contemporary articles and book chapters on MyStudy@FIE that will be used throughout the course. Additional materials (handouts and additional readings) may be provided in class. Students are responsible for ALL this information for the final exam.

Some foundational texts include:

Belasco, Warren. (2008). *Food: The Key Concepts*. Bloomsbury.

Mason, Laura. (2004). *Food Culture in Great Britain*. Greenwood Press.

James, A. (2005) Identity and the global stew. In: *The Taste Culture Reader: Experiencing Food and Drink* (ed C. Korsmeyer), pp. 372–384. Oxford, Berg.

Counihan, C., Van Esterik, P., Julier, A. (2017). *Food and culture: A Reader*. Fourth Ed. Routledge.

Additional Resources and Readings

Students are encouraged to read newspapers, British cooking magazines, and visit bookshops (recommendations provided). In addition:

Recommended Readings:

Anderson, E. (2014). *Everyone eats*. NYU Press: New York.

Blythman, J. (2004). *Shopped: The shocking power of British supermarkets*. Fourth Estate: London

Blythman, J. (2006). *Bad food Britain: How a nation ruined its appetite*. Fourth Estate: London

Counihan, P. & Esterik, P. (Eds.). (2008). *Food and culture: A reader*. Oxon, UK: Routledge

Lawrence, F. (2004). *Eat your heart out: Why the food business is bad for the planet and your health*. London: Penguin

Lawrence, F. (2004). *Not on the label: What really goes into the food on your plate*. London: Penguin

Roth, K. (2001). Material culture and intercultural communication. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 25(5), 563-580

Watson, J. I. & Caldwell, M. I. (Eds.). (2005). *The cultural politics of food and eating: A reader*. Oxford: Blackwell

[TV/Radio:](#)

[The Food Chain – BBC Podcasts](#)

[The Food Programme – BBC Radio 4](#)

Channel 4, 5, ITV and BBC ‘catch-up’ TV.

[MyStudy@FIE](#)

MyStudy@FIE is FIE’s virtual learning environment based on the open-source platform Moodle. Students are required to access MyStudy@FIE for course information, readings, link to resources, assignment submissions and communication with faculty.

[FIE’s Values in the Curriculum](#)

A unique aspect to FIE’s curriculum is our courses reflect an engagement with values of 1) knowledge and inclusivity, 2) ethics and human rights, 3) social and cultural engagement, and 4) sustainability. For information about each of these values and how each of FIE’s courses aligns with them, please see [Our Values](#).

[Topics](#)

- Food and Culture *in theory*
- 18th and 19th century perspectives on food and cooking in Britain
- What is British food?? Meals, celebrations and regional cuisine
- London and Food – past and present
- Into the 20th century, WWII to present
- Ethical issues: the environment, human welfare and animal welfare
- From Immigration to Gentrification
- Indian Food Culture in Britain
- The Story of Cheese
- Food and Identity: Do our foodways define us?
- Diet, health and social issues

[Possible co-curricular activities](#)

- Borough Market walking lecture
- Afternoon tea at the Royal Garden Hotel
- Brixton Market walking lecture

- Southall walking lecture
- Cheese lecture and tasting with Tom Badcock
- In class tastings
- Pub lunch
- TATE Britain

Academic Integrity

By enrolling at FIE, you have joined an academic community and you are expected and required to act honestly regarding the work you submit for assessment in your courses. Academic integrity is closely related to the concept of good academic practice.

Any attempts to Cheat; Fabricate; Plagiarise; Collaborate without Authorisation; Participate in Academically Dishonest Activities; and/or Facilitate Academic Dishonesty will be viewed as a breach of this regulation.

[Please see FIE's Academic Integrity Policy in full.](#)

Most students do not have any problems understanding the rules and expectations about acting honestly at university. If you have any questions you must talk to your faculty or a member of FIE's Academic Team.

Writing and Language Support

FIE's Writing Support Tutors are available to assist students of all levels of expertise with all phases of the writing process. Available year-round and to all students. To book an appointment or for more information visit www.fie.org.uk/wst.

Please note that FIE allows the use of a foreign language/English dictionary in exam situations for students where English is not their primary language UNLESS the use of the dictionary would give the student a significant advantage (e.g. where the exam is aimed at getting the students to define terms that might be found in the dictionary).

Accommodations for Students

Students who wish to use academic accommodations at FIE can register to do so via FIE's Administration Team, by providing the appropriate supporting documentation. Students who have approved FIE academic accommodations should discuss them directly with their faculty member(s) within or around the first few class sessions, or via email. Exams are facilitated by FIE faculty and students should give 2 weeks' notice to faculty members if use of approved exam accommodations is required. The Administration team can assist students and faculty with liaison and facilitation as needed.

Additional Policies and Resources

Mental Health and Stress Management Support

FIE's qualified and accredited counsellor is Dr Deborah Hill, who offers appointments via video call and over the phone. The first three appointments are free of charge and ongoing sessions

can be arranged directly with Dr Hill. To make an appointment with Dr Hill, simply email studentlife@fie.org.uk.

If you have a counsellor from back home that you are seeing, we strongly encourage you to maintain contact with them throughout your time studying abroad with FIE.

Diversity and Inclusivity

FIE regards its housing and classroom facilities as safe spaces to live, study, and work with students, faculty, and staff who are understanding, supportive, and trustworthy. Inappropriate, derogatory comments and/or actions, harassment, bullying, victimisation and discrimination are not tolerated. Any such behaviour will be investigated and dealt with appropriately. Students must be respectful of diverse opinions and of all class members regardless of personal attribute and use inclusive language in written and oral work.