

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 roasin' 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

Alternative formats of the FIE Grading Rubric are available in the Student Resources area of MyStudy@FIE.

	Relevance Questions are interpreted correctly; Argument/thesis is clear and developed throughout; Discussion is focused on topic of the questions; Irrelevant content and discussion are not included	Knowledge and Understanding Recommended literature and/or research guidelines are used and interpreted appropriately; Selection and use of evidence shows understanding and insight; There is evidence of study beyond the recommended literature and that introduced in the module	Analysis, Critical Thinking and Integration of Experiential Learning Approach shows evidence of analysis and independent reasoning; Originality in argument; Evidence of critical insight and reasoned questioning of assumptions; Integration of connections and experiences outside of the formal classroom	Scholarship and Style Conclusions are well justified and complete; Facts reported and statements made are accurate; Writing is clear and fluent; All sources are appropriate, accurately acknowledged and formatted in recognised style; All work is the student's own
A 93-100%	Totally appropriate interpretation and relevant; Excellent and thorough thesis development	Comprehensive understanding and mastery of core evidence and extensive wider reading	Excellent analytical skills, outstanding evaluation of evidence, independent and original critical insight; Meaningfully integrates experiential learning where appropriate	Exceptional fluency and accurate writing using appropriate language, conclusions are well-justified; Accurate and thorough referencing
A- 90-92%	Almost wholly appropriate interpretation and relevant; Very strong thesis	Very strong understanding of evidence and clear evidence of appropriate wider reading	Well-developed analytical skills, excellent evaluation of evidence, shows strong critical insight; Effectively integrates experiential learning where appropriate	Almost wholly accurate and fluent writing using appropriate language, conclusions are full and justified; Accurate referencing

B+ 87-89%	Appropriate interpretation and relevant; Good thesis throughout	Strong understanding of evidence and appropriate wider reading	Very good analytical skills, strong evaluation of evidence; Shows critical insight; Acknowledges and compares experiential learning and other perspectives	Largely accurate and fluent writing using appropriate language; conclusions are justified; Accurate referencing
B 83-86%	Largely appropriate interpretation and relevant; Thesis is clear	Good understanding of evidence and some appropriate wider reading	Good analytical skills, good evaluation of evidence; Shows critical insight; Acknowledges and compares experiential learning and other perspectives	Largely accurate and fluent writing using appropriate language; Conclusions are justified; Accurate referencing
B- 80-82%	Mostly appropriate interpretation and relevant; Thesis is underdeveloped but clear	Sound understanding of evidence and some wider reading	Sound analytical skills; Sound evaluation of data; Shows some critical judgement identifies experiential connections	Sound level of accuracy and written fluency and some use of appropriate language; Conclusions are coherent; Sound use of referencing conventions
C+ 77-79%	Some appropriate interpretation and relevant;	Evidence is largely understood and some wider reading	Sometimes inconsistent analytical skills; Some evaluation of data;	Sound level of accuracy and written fluency and some use of appropriate language;

	Thesis is underdeveloped and lacks clarity		Shows some critical judgement though often descriptive; Identifies experiential connections	Conclusions are coherent but not fully supported; Sound use of referencing conventions
C 73-76%	May contain some misinterpretation and/or irrelevant material; Thesis lacks clarity	Evidence is largely understood; Limited reading beyond material introduced in module	Mostly inconsistent analytical skills; Some evaluation of data; Scant critical judgement mostly descriptive; Identifies experiential connections	Some level of accuracy and written fluency and some use of appropriate language; Conclusions are coherent but not fully supported; Sound use of referencing conventions
C- 70-72%	Limited interpretation and relevance; Thesis is inconsistent	Weak understanding of evidence; Limited reading beyond material introduced in module	Mostly inconsistent analytical skills; Some evaluation of data; Lacks critical judgement; Little integration experiential learning	Inconsistent written fluency; Weak use of appropriate language; Weak justification for conclusions; Adequate use of referencing conventions
D 60-69%	Limited interpretation and relevance; Lacks thesis	Weak understanding of evidence and limited, inappropriate wider reading	Inconsistent and weak analytical skills, poor evaluation of evidence, lacks critical insight; Little integration of experiential learning	Inconsistent written fluency; No justification for conclusions; Inaccurate use of referencing
F	Significant misinterpretation	Lacks understanding of evidence and	Lacks analytical skills, lacks	Poorly written with little fluency;

0-59%	and irrelevant material	inappropriate or no wider reading	evaluation of evidence, lacks critical judgement; Lacks integration of experiential learning	No justification for conclusions; Poor referencing; Evidence of plagiarism or inappropriate use of AI
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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 noted. 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 in advance of the due date from the course instructor. Late work will receive a 5% reduction in points for each 24-hour period handed in past the deadline, including each weekend day. Work submitted a week late will be marked at a C or lower. Any extensions made beyond the last class meeting must be requested in writing to the faculty and include any information on the 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

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 offers mental health support. If students wish to seek this support, including with FIE's counsellor, 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.