

**SOCIOLOGY OF FOOD AND NUTRITION**  
**SOC 4551 FA**

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Welcome to **SOC 4551 Sociology of Food and Nutrition**! In this course, we will deepen our understanding about the relationships between food, health and bodies through our exploration of the Sociology of Nutrition. We will examine beliefs about 'eating right' and 'eating healthily' as these are constructed through socio-cultural discourses about proper or scientific nutrition. We will look historically at the development of Nutrition as a field of science, and its' sister discipline, public health nutrition, for its development of dietary guidance where we will seek to unpack the universality of food guides. We will explore how bodies (individual and collective *or* social) are created, maintained and resisted through these highly scientized views of health and nutrition. Finally, we will ask critical questions about the question of 'what to eat' given our highly complex and dynamic food systems and the beliefs that accompany these food systems about eating right in our contemporary society.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- Understand the relationship between food, nutrition, health and bodies;
- Appreciate the socio-historical development of nutrition science;
- Unpack the socio-cultural politics of dietary advice;
- Explore the moral responsibility embedded in citizenship to eat 'right';
- Learn facilitation and presentation skills; and
- Learn university-level research, analytical and writing skills.

**REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS**

1) *Eating Right In America*, 2013. by Charlotte Biltekoff (paperback \$27.32)

2) *Nutritionism*, 2013, by Gyorgy Scrinis. (paperback \$27.99)

\* Available through the online bookseller amazon.ca

**Please note:** Additional readings will be made available through D2L

## HOW THE COURSE IS ORGANIZED

This course is offered via distance learning (D2L) and as such, is geared towards independent study. Nothing is 'live' and you can engage with the course materials when it is convenient for you.

We will be reading both required books over the 12 weeks of term so it is suggested you begin as soon as you can. I highly recommend you take detailed notes of your readings (with page number references) in order to be able to anchor your Forum Discussion Posts, written assignments and presentations in the course material.

Upon your independent reading of course material, you will post a critical response in the Discussion Forum 2x per week, **whereby** at least one (1) post must be new, and the other post (2) will respond to another student's post. Discussion posts will be graded as your Participation Mark. I will also be posting, reading posts and responding, perhaps posing questions back to you to encourage discussion about the readings.

\*Please note that the Discussion Forum will be 'open' Monday to Monday.

Week 2 Discussion Post due: Monday Sept 17th at 11:59pm

Week 3 Discussion Post due: Monday Sept 24th at 11:59pm

Week 4 Discussion Post due: Monday Oct 1 at 11:59pm

READING WEEK OCTOBER 10-14th

Week 6 Discussion Post due: Monday Oct 15 at 11:59pm

Week 7 Discussion Post due: Monday Oct 22 at 11:59pm

Week 8 Discussion Post due: Monday Oct 29 at 11:59pm

Week 9 Discussion Post due: Monday Nov 5 at 11:59pm

Week 10 Discussion Post due: Monday Nov 12 at 11:59pm

Week 11 Discussion Post due: Monday Nov 19 at 11:59pm

Week 12 Discussion Post due: Monday Nov 26 at 11:59pm

Week 13 Discussion Post due: Monday Dec 3 at 11:59pm

To begin the Term, we will introduce ourselves in the Discussion Forum. Post an introduction to share who you are and what your interest is in the class. INTRODUCTIONS are due: Monday Sept 17th at 11:59pm \*Last day to add class

If you have questions, at any time during this course, please visit me in my Office Hours (as listed above) or contact me through email at: [barbara.parker@lakeheadu.ca](mailto:barbara.parker@lakeheadu.ca)

Please note: I will only respond to emails sent from a Lakehead university email account. When emailing me, please put **SOC 4551** in the Subject Heading. I will do my best to reply to your emails within 48 hours.

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**D2L ETIQUETTE:** As a courtesy to your peers and the instructor, please ensure you post an Introduction in the Discussion Forum. I also ask that we each be respectful in our interactions with one another in the Discussion Forum and in our Group Work activities.

**LEARNING ACCOMODATIONS:** Lakehead University is committed to achieving full accessibility for persons with disabilities. Part of this commitment includes arranging academic accommodations for students with disabilities to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to participate in all of their academic activities. If you think you may need accommodations, you are strongly encouraged to contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) and register as early as possible. For more information, please visit: <http://studentaccessibility.lakeheadu.ca>

**PLAGIARISM & ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT:** Plagiarism is a serious academic offence. Please take the time to familiarize yourself with what it means to plagiarize the words or ideas of others and your responsibilities as a student at Lakehead University. From the Course Calendar: <http://navigator.lakeheadu.ca/Catalog/ViewCatalog.aspx?pageid=viewcatalog&catalogid=21&chapterid=3506&loaduserredits=False>

If you have questions, consult the professor.

## **COURSE EVALUATION**

Participation (Discussion Forum Posts) .....	40 % (ongoing)
Group Presentation: Food Guidelines .....	20 % (Due: Oct 22nd – 9am)
Critical Reflection Paper.....	10 % (Due: Nov 5th – 11:59pm)
Final Research Paper .....	30 % (Due: Dec 5th – 11:59pm)

## **EVALUATION INFORMATION**

**Please note:** Your assignments must be typed in 12 font, double-spaced with 2.54 cm margins. You must have a title page with the course number/name, title of the assignment, your name, the due date, and the Instructor's name. All written work will be evaluated on (1) substance (content) or your ability to demonstrate understanding of the material; and (2) organization, presentation, grammar and clarity.

All assignments will be discussed on the Course Site and you will have the opportunity to ask questions about expectations. It is expected that you will reference in ASA style or the American Sociological Association Referencing style (see ASA Guide on D2L course site)

**Late Penalties:** Assignments received after the due date will be penalized 5% per day. Requests for extensions must be made prior the due date and will only be given if there are extenuating circumstances and may require documentation (eg. a doctors note).

For your own protection, keep a hard copy of all work submitted for this course.

## 1. Participation – 40%

4<sup>th</sup> Year Seminar Courses require a significant amount of class discussion and participation. This is the time for you to work through your ideas and questions in a group setting, with the insights of your classmates. Participation from all members of the class are crucial if a discussion is to be both interesting and instructive.

Discussion requires preparation, which includes completing the assigned reading and thinking critically about the content before posting in the Discussion Forum. It is necessary that students critically read the materials so they are fully prepared to speak about and ask questions about the readings. Participation marks are based on the content of your response in the Forum and on active involvement in the Discussion Forum generally. From my experience, I highly recommend you compose your Forum Posts in Word and then cut and paste them into the Discussion Forum when you are ready to post. This will ensure that you don't lose your work should something go wrong with the D2L course site while you are in the throes of composing a thoughtful Post.

Participation marks are broken down into two categories: your Weekly Discussion Posts and active engagement in the Forum. Forum posts can be original or 'new' or they can be a response to a classmate. Please note that you are required to post minimum one (1) new post per week (minimum total of **11 new posts** over the course of the term) and one (1) post which is a response to another student's post (minimum **11 response posts**) for a **total of 22 posts over the course of the Term**.

Each post will be worth 5 points for a total of 110 points, which will count for 40% of your final grade.

Active engagement is participating in the Forum through active discussion of the course readings such as asking questions, responding to your peers, making connections with other material or experiences. A seminar class only works when we are all participating!

When preparing your Discussion Posts, consider:

- Think about the background of the chapter, readings and what is most interesting to you in the particular piece under focus (a brief summary and analysis of author's main points). Remember: you will not be able to cover the entire chapter in one (1) Post! Therefore, choose an aspect or element of the chapter that you want to explore in further depth through your Forum Post.
- Are there questions you have that can stimulate class discussion (thoughtful questions that engage with the key points of the readings)
- Is there related materials, relevant to the topic/discussion such as newspaper articles, websites, blog posts, video, etc. that you might want to consider sharing with your classmates?

## **2. Group Project: Food Guidelines – 20%**

This assignment requires you to work in small groups (assigned) to undertake research on current Food Guidelines in one of four countries: Canada, USA, Brazil and the UK. As a group, you are to undertake research to assist you in the preparation of a powerpoint presentation to share with the class that explains and analyzes the assigned food guideline.

- Describe briefly the context and give some background on the country under study
- If there is historical information available, consider how this fits with the current guidelines
- Describe the goals / objectives of the Food Guide
- Provide critical analysis / interpretation of guidelines based on what we have learned through the Readings and Course Discussions

Each group will be required to email me one copy of their presentation by **9am on Monday October 22nd**. I will subsequently post all 4 Presentations under Content on the D2L Course site after I have received them. These will form the basis of your Critical Reflection Paper (see #3 below).

More details to follow in class.

## **3. Critical Reflection Paper – 10%**

The Critical Reflection paper will be a 5-8 page paper (double spaced), which assesses and compares the 4 food guideline powerpoint presentations through careful consideration of what we have learned in class and through the readings. This paper requires you to find 3-4 Sociology / Social Sciences external references that are peer reviewed in addition to the course materials. This paper will be handed in via the Assignment's Folder on D2L.

More details to follow in class.

## **4. Final Research Paper – 30%** **Due Dec 5th at midnight**

The final research paper will be organized around a course related topic of your choice. This paper is an opportunity for you to critically engage with the concepts covered through the course. The final research paper will be 8-10 pages and use course readings in addition to four (6) external peer-reviewed sources. Further details will be provided in class.

## READINGS BY WEEK

\* Schedule of readings may change with notice from the Instructor

### **Week 1 - Introduction & Course Overview**

Introductions & Review Syllabus

\*Post an Introduction on the Discussion Forum

### **Week 2 – Introduction to the Social and Cultural Politics of Nutrition and Dietary Health**

**Read:** Ch 1 “The Cultural Politics of Dietary Health” (2013), *Eating Right In America*, by Charlotte Biltekoff

Guthman, J. 2014. “Introducing Critical Nutrition: A Special Issue on Dietary Advice and its Discontents”, *Gastronomica: the Journal of Food & Culture* 14(3):1-4

\*Week 2 Discussion Post due: Monday Sept 17th at 11:59pm

### **Week 3 – Nutrition as Ideology: A Moral Imperative**

**Read:** CH 1 “A Clash of Nutritional Ideologies”, 2013, in *Nutritionism: The Science and Politics of Dietary Advice*, by Gyorgy Scrinis.

CH 2: “Scientific Moralization and the beginning of Modern Dietary Reform”, In *Eating Right In America*, 2013, by Charlotte Biltekoff

\*Week 3 Post due: Monday Sept 24th at 11:59pm

### **Week 4 – Unpacking a Socio-Historical Framework: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Dietary Advice**

**Read:** CH 2: “The Nutritionism Paradigm”, in *Nutritionism: The Science and Politics of Dietary Advice*, 2013, by Gyorgy Scrinis.

CH 3: “Anxiety and Aspiration on the Nutrition Front”, in *Eating Right In America*, 2013, by Charlotte Biltekoff

\*Week 4 Discussion Post due: Monday Oct 1 at 11:59pm

**Week 5 - Fall Reading Week**

**Week 6 – Quantifying Nutrition and Increasing Anxiety**

**Read:** CH 3: “The Era of Quantifying Nutritionism”, in *Nutritionism: The Science and Politics of Dietary Advice*, 2013, by Gyorgy Scrinis.

CH 4: “The Era of Good-and-Bad Nutritionism”, in *Nutritionism: The Science and Politics of Dietary Advice*, 2013, by Gyorgy Scrinis.

\*Week 6 Discussion Post due: Monday Oct 15 at 11:59pm

**Week 7 – Dietary Advice: The Food Pyramid & Good and Bad Nutrients**

**Read:** “The Food Pyramid: Visualizing Quantification”, in *Measured Meals: Nutrition in America*, 2009, by Jessica Mudry.

“Scaling the Pyramid”, in *Measured Meals: Nutrition in America*, 2009, by Jessica Mudry.

\*Week 7 Discussion Post due: Monday Oct 22 at 11:59pm

**Week 8 – Dietary Advice: A Reductivist Science**

**Read:** CH 5: “The Macronutrient Diet Wars: From the Low Fat Campaign to Low Calorie, Low Carb and Low GI Diets” in *Nutritionism: The Science and Politics of Dietary Advice*, 2013, by Gyorgy Scrinis.

CH 6: “Margarine, Butter, and the *Trans* Fats Fiasco” in *Nutritionism: The Science and Politics of Dietary Advice*, 2013, by Gyorgy Scrinis

\*Week 8 Discussion Post due: Monday Oct 29 at 11:59pm

**Week 9 – Introducing a World of Functional Foods**

**Read:** CH 7: “The Era of Functional Foods: Functional Nutrients, Superfoods, and Optimal Dietary Patterns”, in *Nutritionism: The Science and Politics of Dietary Advice*, 2013, by Gyorgy Scrinis.

Lakehead University  
Department of Sociology

CH 8: "Functional Foods: Nutritional Engineering, Nutritional Marketing and Corporate Nutritionism", in *Nutritionism: The Science and Politics of Dietary Advice*, 2013, by Gyorgy Scrinis.

\* Week 9 Discussion Post due: Monday Nov 5 at 11:59pm

**Week 10 – Alternative Food Systems & New Dietary Advice**

**Read:** CH 4: "From Microscopes to 'Macroscopes' ", in *Eating Right In America*, 2013, by Charlotte Biltekoff

CH 9: "The Food Quality Paradigm: Alternative Approaches to Food & the Body", in *Nutritionism: The Science and Politics of Dietary Advice*, 2013, by Gyorgy Scrinis.

\* Week 10 Discussion Post due: Monday Nov 12 at 11:59pm

**Week 11 – Dietary Advice, Health, the Body & Citizenship**

**Read:** CH 5: "Thinness as Health, Self-Control and Citizenship", in *Eating Right In America*, 2013, by Charlotte Biltekoff

"Beyond the Sovereign Body" in *Gastronomica: the Journal of Food & Culture* 14(3):46-55.

\* Week 11 Discussion Post due: Monday Nov 19 at 11:59pm

**Week 12 – The Future of Dietary Advice**

**Read:** CH 6: "Connecting the Dots: Dietary Reform Past, Present and Future", in *Eating Right In America*, 2013, by Charlotte Biltekoff

CH 10: "After Nutritionism", *Nutritionism: The Science and Politics of Dietary Advice*, 2013, by Gyorgy Scrinis.

\*Week 12 Discussion Post due: Monday Nov 26 at 11:59pm

**Week 13 – Wrap Up**

\* Week 13 Post due: Monday Dec 3 at 11:59pm