

# **History 2158A**

## **Food in World History**

### **Fall 2025**

Instructor: **Dr. Sara Morrison**

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Office: Department of History, Stevenson Hall 2124

Office Hours: Monday 1:00-2:00; Tuesday 11:00-12:00

This is a **draft** outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.

### **Course Description**

This course explores the role of food in world history with an emphasis on international exchange and cultural interaction following the discovery of the Americas. Students will consider the impact and influence of food upon politics, trade, conflict, and other aspects of society and culture.

### **Course Syllabus**

What do vegetarians and cannibals have in common? What is the link between sugar and slavery? How did an African beverage cultivated in South America end up being sold by Tim Horton's as a distinctly Canadian product? In an age of globalization why are we so concerned with sourcing local food products? These are some of the questions that History 2158A will address by looking critically at the place of food in world history.

We all require food to survive, and we all have our favourite foods. Some foods are staples and others are luxuries. In this course you will learn where many of the staple foods originated, how they were grown, and how they came to influence global tastes, thereby entering food production, and arriving on your dinner table. Through lectures, readings, films and discussions, students will consider the impact and influence of food upon politics, trade, conflict, and other aspects of society and culture. Upon the successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Think historically about food and understand how tastes and perspectives have changed over time and recognize that the past may be interpreted from different perspectives.
2. Outline the historical development of key concepts in the history of food (industrialization, globalization) and how this impacted economic development and social and cultural change.
3. Critically read, summarize, and analyze secondary sources.
4. Connect food-related issues with their historical roots.

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*In preparation for students to do well in this course, read the assigned text and articles (freely available on Weldon's Course Readings for History 2158A) before attending class lectures; use the opportunity to take part in class discussions and in-class exercises; also think about questions raised during the lectures within the wider context. Attendance and participation are important to success. You cannot participate if you don't attend, so there is a small attendance and participation mark to encourage engagement with the subject. Students attending weekly lectures and discussions are better prepared for the evaluations; note students are responsible for signing the weekly class sheet. If you miss a class, you are responsible for accessing any notes related to missed classes; if you require further clarification, I am happy to answer questions after class and during office hours.*

*Students will write a mid-term and a final exam reflecting materials presented during class lectures, discussions, any films as well as printed course materials. Each student brings a unique experience, contributing to our universal understanding of food and its history. Please ask questions and share your knowledge.*

### **Methods of Evaluation**

Students must complete two exams to pass this course:

Mid-term exam	40%	21 October 2025	In-Class
Attendance/ Participation	10%	Ongoing	
Final exam	50%	Date & Locations:	TBA -December Exam Period

### **Exams**

Students must take two exams: one two-hour in-class mid-term during class time on Tues 21 October 2025, and a three-hour final exam, to be scheduled during the Final Exam Period by the Registrar's Office. Both exams will feature a selection of short written answer questions and a choice of essay questions (one essay for the midterm and two essays for the final). Electronic devices of any kind (e.g., phones) are not permitted to be carried, or near to the student during exams.

### **Accommodation for Missed Exams:**

Students seeking academic accommodation or consideration regarding the mid-term or final exam must contact their home Academic Advisory office and provide formal supporting documentation. The History Department will set the re-sit date and times for missed exams, only if academic accommodation is granted.

Make-up tests, midterms, and exams can only be approved by Academic Advising. Please see [https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program\\_module\\_information/policies.html](https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html) for department procedures and requirements involving make-up tests and exams.

## Course Materials

Jeffrey Pilcher, *Food in World History*, 3rd ed (2023).

The E-book and paper copies are available from the UWO Library. All additional materials, consisting of book chapters, articles, and illustrations will be available through **the Western Libraries Course Readings for History 2158**, or on the Brightspace course website.

Purchase is also available at <https://bookstore.uwo.ca>. See HIS 2158A:  
[https://bookstore.uwo.ca/textbook-search?campus=UWO&term=W2025A&courses%5B0%5D=001\\_UW/HIS2158A](https://bookstore.uwo.ca/textbook-search?campus=UWO&term=W2025A&courses%5B0%5D=001_UW/HIS2158A).

## Course Schedule and Readings

### 9 September **Food in World History; Vegetarians and Cannibals**

- “Why Food Matters”; Corn soup video;
- “Why don’t we eat Swans anymore?”; “
- The Argument for Eating Dog”; “To Save the World, eat Bugs”;
- “Why do People Hate Vegans?”;
- “Holiday foods hold some of our strongest memories”

### 16 September **The Labours of the Months/How to Read for History**

- Pilcher, *Food in World History*, pp. 1-17, 32-36
- Clifford Wright, “The Medieval Spice Trade and the Diffusion of the Chile”.
- Please read “How to read an academic article”

### 23 September **The Spice Trade/ The Columbian Exchange**

- Pilcher, *Food in World History*, pp.19-31
- Aboriginal Canada in the Era of Contact: The Columbian Exchange (website)

### 30 September **National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. No class**

### 7 October **How the Potato Changed the World/Drug Foods: Chocolate**

- Beth Marie Forrest & April L. Najjaj, “Is Sipping Sin Breaking Fast? The Catholic Chocolate Controversy and the Changing World of Early Modern Spain.”

### 14 October **Drug Foods: Coffee & Tea**

This is a draft outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.

- Pilcher, Food in World History, pp.45-45
- Serdar Öztürk, “The Struggle over Turkish Village Coffeehouses (1923-1945)”

21 October **Mid-term exam (40%)**

28 October **Sugar and Slavery**

- Pilcher, Food in World History, pp.36-39, Ch.8
- Empire’s Crossroads – Sugar

4 November **READING WEEK**

11 November **Industrial Food/The Calorie and the Rise of Nutritional Science**

- Pilcher, Food in World History, Ch.6
- Cristina Loureiro de Mendonca Couto, “The Chemistry of Diet: Medicine, Nutrition and Staple Foods in Imperial Brazil.”

18 November **Food and the World Wars**

- Pilcher, Food in World History, pp. 99-101, Ch.10
- Aaron William Moore, “An Insatiable Parasite – Eating and Drinking in the Armies of the Asia-Pacific Theatre, 1937-1945.”

25 November **National Cuisines and National Identities**

- Pilcher, Food in World History, Ch’s. 7 & 9
- Reem Kassis, “National Cuisine is a Useful Illusion”
- James C. McCann, “Taytu’s Feast: Cuisine and Nation in the New Flower, Ethiopia, 1887”

2 December **Famine and Hunger/ The Green Revolution**

- Pilcher, Food in World History, Ch2. 5 & 11
- Teklehaymanot G. Weldemichel, “Inventing hell: how the Ethiopian and Eritrean regimes produced famine in Tigray”

9 December **Summary and Review**

- Pilcher, Food in World History, pp. 121-146.

Final Exam **December exam period (50%)**

**Additional Statements**

***Communication policies:*** The best way to contact is via email, in class, or during office hours.

***Use of electronic devices:*** No use of audio or video recording devices in classes.

***Use of generative artificial intelligence (AI):*** You may not make any use of generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, in this course. Any use of such tools for assignments in this course may be considered a form of academic misconduct.

Please review the Department of History's shared policies and statements for all undergraduate courses at: [https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program\\_module\\_information/policies.html](https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html) for important information regarding accessibility options, make-up exams, medical accommodations, health and wellness, academic integrity, plagiarism, and more.

1 June 2025