

# SOCI 137: Sociology of Food

MWF 3:00 – 3:50

Center Hall 105

**Instructor:** Ayumi Matsuda-Rivero ([aematsud@ucsd.edu](mailto:aematsud@ucsd.edu))

**Office hours:** Wednesday, 11 am- 1 pm via Zoom (<https://ucsd.zoom.us/j/4087230146>)

**Teaching Assistant:** Joseph Hurr ([jhurr@ucsd.edu](mailto:jhurr@ucsd.edu))

**Office hours:** Tuesday, 9:30- 10:30 am via Zoom (<https://ucsd.zoom.us/j/95202849118>)

## Course Description from Course Catalog

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Topics include food as a marker of social differences (e.g., gender, class, ethnicity); the changing character of food production and distribution; food as an object of political conflict; and the symbolic meanings and rituals of food preparation and consumption.

## Course Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Describe key issues and concepts in the sociology of food
2. Apply sociological theories and concepts to personal identity, experience, and observations
3. Analyze the effects of power and systemic inequalities on food production, distribution, and consumption
4. Evaluate how mass and social media affect our food meanings, rituals, and practices
5. Recognize pathways toward food justice and social change

## Course Policies and Disclaimer

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### Email Policy

Please do not hesitate to email me with questions or concerns about the course. As a courtesy, please include your name and course name in the subject line of any emails that you send. I will do my best to respond within 24 hours for emails received Monday-Friday (8 am – 5pm). For emails received during the weekend I'll do my best to get back to you within 48 hours. If something is urgent, please include "URGENT" in the subject line.

### Extensions on Assignments

If you email me **BEFORE** the deadline, I will give you the extension, no questions asked.

## Academic Honesty

Students are expected to do their own work to cite sources according to established norms as outlined in the UCSD Policy on Academic Integrity. The policy can be found here: <https://senate.ucsd.edu/Operating-Procedures/Senate-Manual/Appendices/2>.

## Statement on AI

It is a violation of university policy to misrepresent work that you submit or exchange with your instructor by characterizing it as your own, such as submitting responses to assignments that do not acknowledge the use of generative AI tools. Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions you may have about the use of generative AI tools before submitting any content that has been substantially informed by these tools. For more information on how to cite Chat GPT in APA format please refer to <https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt>.

## Course Materials and Tools

Materials will be posted to Canvas. There is no required textbook, but there are required readings. These will be posted under their corresponding week module.

## Assignments

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### Attendance & Participation (10%)

#### How will I grade your attendance?

- Attendance is required and will be recorded in the lecture
- There is a total of 29 lectures this quarter.
- If you attend at least 25 you will get full points
- If you attend 20-24 lectures you will get 8/10 points
- If you attend 15-19 lectures you will get 7/10 points
- If you attend fewer than 14 lectures you will get 0/10 points
- It is your responsibility to keep track of the number of lectures you have attended

### Short Responses/Reflections (50%)

Every two weeks (Week 2, Week 4, Week 6, Week 8, Week 10) you will submit a short reflection/response to the assigned questions listed below. These responses are due by the beginning of lecture on Monday aka by 3 pm on Mondays. Each response must be at least 250 words, and because an important part of food is its visual nature I encourage you to include pictures if applicable!

**Week 2: Tell me about the tastiest, unique, or worst meal you've ever had.**

**Week 4: What meal/food holds significance in your family? Why?**

**Week 6: What did you eat this week and why did you eat it?**

**Week 8: Tell me about your favorite meal/food.**

**Week 10: What's at least one topic that you were most interested in this quarter?**

### How am I grading you?

- Each response is worth 10 points and 10% of your grade.
- I can't judge your opinion or your experiences; therefore, as long as you share your experience in written form via your submitted assignments, you will earn 10 out of 10 points.
- However, if you don't turn in an assignment, I will have nothing to submit a grade for, and you will receive a 0 for that assignment.

### Food Pseudoscience Critique OR "One-Thing I Know" Essay

In place of a final exam, you will choose one of the two prompts below.

#### Sociological analysis of a popular food myths and pseudoscience:

From seed oils, MSG, ultra-processed foods, and red dye 40 food pseudoscience misinformation has exploded in visibility. Using the concepts discussed in class pick one of the topics below OR critique an article of your choice. Why is it pseudoscience? Why do you think its so popular? What are the social implications of scientific misinformation?

- MSG
- Ultra-processed foods
- GMOs
- Seed oils
- Supplements
- Food Babe
- Casey and Calley Means
- RFK
- MAHA

#### "One-Thing I Know" Essay

Arguably one of the most important aspects of academia is to explain concepts and social phenomena in a way that is accessible to general audiences. The American Sociological Association (ASA) publishes a quarterly magazine called "[Contexts](#)" with the goal of providing sociological analysis and research in a way that is easy to understand for non-sociologists. With this in mind, write an essay explaining one of the course concepts or themes that most interested you in class.

### How am I grading you?

- At least 1000 words (4 pages double-spaced)
- Double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12 pt font
- 1-inch margins all around
- Write the word count at the end of your paper
- Use a minimum of three sources
  - Two scholarly sources
  - One non-scholarly source

- APA format for in-text citations
- APA formatted reference page

Please refer to Canvas for more detailed instructions and rubric.

### Grade Breakdown and Due Dates

Assignment	Points	Weight	Due Date
Attendance & Participation	10	10%	
Short Response #1	10	10%	Monday of Week 2 (04/06/2026 at 3 pm)
Short Response #2	10	10%	Monday of Week 4 (04/20/2026 at 3 pm)
Short Response #3	10	10%	Monday of Week 6 (05/04/2026 at 3 pm)
Short Response #4	10	10%	Monday of Week 8 (05/18/2026 at 3 pm)
Short Response #5	10	10%	Monday of Week 10 (06/01/2026 at 3 pm)
Food Pseudoscience Critique OR "One Thing I Know" Essay	40	40%	Wednesday, (06/10) 3-6 pm
		<b>100%</b>	

### Grading Scale

A: 93-100%	B-: 80-82%	D+: 66-69%
A-: 90-92%	C+: 76-79%	D: 63-65%
B+: 86-89%	C: 73-75%	D-: 60-62%
B: 83-85%	C-: 70-72%	F: 59% and below

**Course Schedule and Readings**

<p>Week One (March 30, April 1, April 3): Sociological Approaches to the Study of Food</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neuman, Nicklas. 2019. "On the Engagement with Social Theory in Food Studies: Cultural Symbols and Social Practices." <i>Food, Culture &amp; Society</i> 22(1):78–94. doi:<a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/15528014.2018.1547069">10.1080/15528014.2018.1547069</a>.</li> </ul>
<p>Week Two (April 6, 8, 10): Food and Identity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fischler, Claude. 1988. "Food, Self and Identity." <i>Social Science Information</i> 27(2):275–92. doi:<a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/053901888027002005">10.1177/053901888027002005</a>.</li> <li>• <a href="https://www.phillymag.com/news/2018/08/11/mayonnaise-industry-millennials/">https://www.phillymag.com/news/2018/08/11/mayonnaise-industry-millennials/</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://www.theguardian.com/food/2018/aug/15/mayonnaise-millennials-identity-politics">https://www.theguardian.com/food/2018/aug/15/mayonnaise-millennials-identity-politics</a></li> </ul>
<p>Week Three (April 13, 15, 17*): Food and Culture  <b>*April 17 is Asynchronous</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clark, Dylan. 2004. "The Raw and the Rotten: Punk Cuisine." <i>Ethnology</i> 43(1):19–31. doi:<a href="https://doi.org/10.2307/3773853">10.2307/3773853</a>.</li> <li>• Allison, Anne. 1991. "Japanese Mothers and Obentōs: The Lunch-Box as Ideological State Apparatus." <i>Anthropological Quarterly</i> 64(4):195–208. doi:<a href="https://doi.org/10.2307/3317212">10.2307/3317212</a>.</li> </ul>
<p>Week Four (April 20, 22, 24): Food as Leisure/Entertainment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Szabo, Michelle. 2013. "Foodwork or Foodplay? Men's Domestic Cooking, Privilege and Leisure." <i>Sociology</i> 47(4):623–38. doi:<a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038512448562">10.1177/0038038512448562</a>.</li> <li>• de Solier, Isabelle. 2005. "TV Dinners: Culinary Television, Education and Distinction." <i>Continuum</i> 19(4):465–81. doi:<a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/10304310500322727">10.1080/10304310500322727</a>.</li> </ul>
<p>Week Five (April 27, 29, May 1): Food, Nutrition and Health</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monterrosa, Eva C., Edward A. Frongillo, Adam Drewnowski, Saskia de Pee, and Stefanie Vandevijvere. 2020. "Sociocultural Influences on Food Choices and Implications for Sustainable Healthy Diets." <i>Food and Nutrition Bulletin</i> 41(2_suppl):59S-73S. doi:<a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/0379572120975874">10.1177/0379572120975874</a>.</li> <li>• Zeng, Michelle, Jacqueline Grgurevic, Rayan Diyab, and Rajshri Roy. 2025. "#WhatIEatinaDay: The Quality, Accuracy, and Engagement of Nutrition Content on TikTok." <i>Nutrients</i> 17(5):781. doi:<a href="https://doi.org/10.3390/nu17050781">10.3390/nu17050781</a>.</li> </ul>
<p>Week Six (May 4, 6, 8): Food Insecurity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shostak, Sara. 2023. "Food and Inequality." <i>Annual Review of Sociology</i> 49(1):359–78. doi:<a href="https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-031021-112747">10.1146/annurev-soc-031021-112747</a>.</li> <li>• <i>Rotten</i></li> </ul>

<p>Week Seven (May 11, 13, 15): Food Consumption and Marketing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skibinsky, Mika. 2020. "Construction of 'Asian' Identity in Restaurant Menus: A Case Study." <i>Inquiries Journal</i> 12(10). <a href="http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/1829/construction-of-asian-identity-in-restaurant-menus-a-case-study">http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/1829/construction-of-asian-identity-in-restaurant-menus-a-case-study</a>.</li> <li>• Freedman, Joshua, and Dan Jurafsky. 2011. "Authenticity in America: Class Distinctions in Potato Chip Advertising." <i>Gastronomica</i> 11(4):46–54. doi:<a href="https://doi.org/10.1525/gfc.2012.11.4.46">10.1525/gfc.2012.11.4.46</a>.</li> </ul>
<p>Week Eight (May 18, 20, 22): Food Production and Distribution</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Rotten</i> Documentary</li> <li>• <a href="https://apnews.com/article/prison-to-plate-investigation-takeaways-5debda3b0222c5c7de8b8a485084f206">https://apnews.com/article/prison-to-plate-investigation-takeaways-5debda3b0222c5c7de8b8a485084f206</a></li> </ul>
<p>Week Nine (<b>NO CLASS ON MONDAY</b>, May 27, 29): Food and Politics</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Messer, Ellen, and Marc J. Cohen. 2007. "Conflict, Food Insecurity and Globalization." <i>Food, Culture, &amp; Society</i> 10(2):297–315. doi:<a href="https://doi.org/10.2752/155280107X211458">10.2752/155280107X211458</a>.</li> <li>• <a href="https://news.immunologic.org/p/chemophobia-the-fear-of-chemicals?utm_source=substack&amp;utm_medium=web&amp;utm_content=embedded-post&amp;utm_redirect=true">https://news.immunologic.org/p/chemophobia-the-fear-of-chemicals?utm_source=substack&amp;utm_medium=web&amp;utm_content=embedded-post&amp;utm_redirect=true</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://gnet-research.org/2023/09/27/milk-parties-and-soyjaks-understanding-the-alt-rights-metapolitical-appropriation-of-milk/">https://gnet-research.org/2023/09/27/milk-parties-and-soyjaks-understanding-the-alt-rights-metapolitical-appropriation-of-milk/</a></li> <li>• <a href="https://www.eatrightpro.org/news-center/practice-trends/nutrition-fact-check-ultra-processed-foods">https://www.eatrightpro.org/news-center/practice-trends/nutrition-fact-check-ultra-processed-foods</a></li> </ul>
<p>Week Ten (June 1, 3, 5): Food and Social Change</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• McLennan, Amy K., Stanley Ulijaszek, and Mariano Beguerisse-Díaz. 2017. "Diabetes on Twitter: Influence, Activism and What We Can Learn from All the Food Jokes." in <i>Digital Food Activism</i>. Routledge.</li> <li>• Motta, Renata. 2021. "Social Movements as Agents of Change: Fighting Intersectional Food Inequalities, Building Food as Webs of Life." <i>The Sociological Review (Keele)</i> 69(3):603–25. doi:<a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/00380261211009061">10.1177/00380261211009061</a>.</li> </ul>

## Additional Policies

### Students with Disabilities and Accommodations

Students with disabilities, or [disabled students \(depending on how you prefer to identify\)](#) are eligible for appropriate accommodations and should be approved for services. You can find out more information with the [Office for Students with Disabilities](#).

### Contesting Grades:

You may contest any grades by sending the assignment or exam to me. However, please be aware that this may result in a lower grade than the one given by the course TA.

**Subject to Change Policy**

I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus, ranging from the readings to the organization of the material, with notice. I will announce this in class should any changes occur and will do my best to ensure that we do not change the syllabus.

**Community Guidelines**

1. Listen respectfully
2. Be open to changing your perspective based on others
3. Recognize how your own social positionality (race, gender, class, sexuality, ability, etc.) informs your perspectives and reactions
4. Acknowledge that others will come to these discussions with different experiences from yours.
5. Be aware that your words have effects on others. Though your intentions might be good, you must be aware of the impact your words have on others.
6. Be mindful of any assumptions and generalizations you may make based only on your own experience
7. Accept that we are bound to make mistakes in this class and our job is to learn from them

<b>Learning and Academic Support</b>	
<p><a href="#"><u>Ask a Librarian: Library Support</u></a> <i>Chat or make an appointment with a librarian to focus on your research needs</i></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Course Reserves, Connecting from Off-Campus and Research Support</u></a> <i>Find supplemental course materials</i></p> <p><a href="#"><u>First Gen Student Success Coaching Program</u></a> <i>Peer mentor program that provides students with information, resources, and support in meeting their goals</i></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Office of Academic Support &amp; Instructional Services (OASIS)</u></a></p>	<p><a href="#"><u>Writing Hub Services in the Teaching + Learning Commons</u></a> <i>One-on-one online writing tutoring and workshops on key writing topics</i></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Supplemental Instruction</u></a> <i>Peer-assisted study sessions through the Academic Achievement Hub to improve success in historically challenging courses</i></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Tutoring – Content</u></a> <i>Drop-in and online tutoring through the Academic Achievement Hub</i></p> <p><a href="#"><u>Tutoring – Learning Strategies</u></a></p>

<p><i>Intellectual and personal development support</i></p>	<p><i>Address learning challenges with a metacognitive approach</i></p>
<p><b>Support for Well-being and Inclusion</b></p>	
<p><b><u>Basic Needs at UCSD</u></b>  <i>Any student who has difficulty accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live is encouraged to contact: <a href="mailto:foodpantry@ucsd.edu">foodpantry@ucsd.edu</a>   <a href="mailto:basicneeds@ucsd.edu">basicneeds@ucsd.edu</a>   (858) 246-2632</i></p> <p><b><u>Counseling and Psychological Services</u></b>  <i>Confidential counseling and consultations for psychiatric service and mental health programming</i></p> <p><b><u>Triton Concern Line</u></b>  <i>Report students of concern: (858) 246-1111</i></p> <p><b><u>Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD)</u></b>  <i>Supports students with disabilities and accessibility across campus</i></p>	<p><b><u>Community and Resource Centers Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion</u></b>  <i>As part of the <a href="#">Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion</a> the campus community centers provide programs and resources for students and contribute toward the evolution of a socially just campus            (858).822-.3542   <a href="mailto:diversity@ucsd.edu">diversity@ucsd.edu</a></i></p> <p><b><u>Get Involved</u></b>  <i>Student organizations, clubs, service opportunities, and many other ways to connect with others on campus</i></p> <p><b><u>Undocumented Student Services</u></b>  <i>Programs and services are designed to help students overcome obstacles that arise from their immigration status and support them through personal and academic excellence</i></p>

**Campus Policies**

- **[UC San Diego Principles of Community](#)**
- **[UC San Diego Policy on Integrity of Scholarship](#)**
- **[Religious Accommodation](#)**
- **[Nondiscrimination and Harassment](#)**
- **[UC San Diego Student Conduct Code](#)**