

VASSAR LONDON PROGRAM IN MEDIA AND CULTURE  
Director's Seminar, Spring of 2019

**Food, Culture, and Globalization in London**  
(Wednesday, 1-3 pm & 3-6 pm)

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Office Hours: Tuesday 2 – 4 pm & by appointment

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*Course Description:*

As much as food is necessary for human survival, it is essential to our collective life in society. Through eating and drinking, we construct, maintain, and remake collective identities (class, gender, ethnicity/nationality, and race) and status distinctions. Approaching food as *material and symbolic media*, this course critically examines how colonial and postcolonial conditions of the British Empire have shaped such mundane practices of producing, preparing, and consuming food in London. Topics will include tea, meat, fruits and vegetables, politics of authenticity in ethnic food and restaurants, culinary nationalism and cosmopolitanism, urban farming, and inequality and food consumption. Throughout the semester, students will learn how different forms of food have functioned as *mass media* for social identities and status distinctions among diverse groups of people living in London as the capital of the colonial empire and postcolonial global city.

The seminar has four thematically organized sections that illuminate London's shifting position in the global history. The weekly seminar will be followed by a field trip to specific sites in London pertinent to the topic.

**Week 1: Situating London in the Global History of Colonialism & Decolonization**

For the first class, we will study political and social histories of London as larger contexts of the following thematic exploration.

**Week 2-5: Eating and Drinking in the Imperial Capital**

During these four weeks, we will focus on the production and consumption of tea, fruits and vegetables and other food items, "curry" (Anglo-Indian food), and eating & drinking in the Pub in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This historical approach is complemented by field trips to specific sites in London, which allow us to appreciate temporal and spatial changes.

**Weeks 6-10: Eating and Drinking in the Postcolonial City  
(no class on week 7)**

For the next four weeks, we will explore the postcolonial migration and the spread of ethnic food and restaurants, the production and consumption of meat as quintessentially British food against the emergence of vegetarianism, and the development of urban

farming in postcolonial and contemporary London. This analytical approach is also complemented by field trips to specific sites in London.

### **Weeks 11-12: Explosive Inequality in Food Consumption Now in the Global City**

For the remaining two weeks, we will examine the impact of economic inequality exacerbated by the contemporary globalization on the consumption of food in London. These critical studies are also complemented by field trips to specific sites in London.

#### Required texts:

Paxman, Jeremy. 2012. *Empire: What Ruling the World Did to the British*.

Rappaport, Erica D. 2017. *A Thirst for Empire: How Tea Shaped the Modern World*.

Crystal, Paul. 2014. *Tea: A Very British Beverage*.

Jennings, Paul. 2007/2011. *The Local: A History of the English Pub*.

Winder, Robert. 2004/2013. *Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration to Britain*.

Fairle, Simon. 2010. *Meat: A Benign Extravagance*.

Cockrall-King, Jennifer. 2012. *Food and the City: Urban Agriculture and New Food Revolution*.

#### Required articles and book chapters (available in the Moodle site of this course)

These readings are marked with (e-reading) in this syllabus.

Look for “e-reading” file in the Vassar College Moodle.

#### Recommended films (available freely in Youtube)

Five episodes of documentary, *Empire* (produced by BBC and Open University in 2012; each episode is about an hour long. It is based on Paxman’s book and he is the narrator.)

Episode 1: A Taste for Power

Episode 2: Making Ourselves at Home

Episode 3: Playing the Game

Episode 4: Making a Fortune

Episode 5: Doing Good

#### Course Requirements:

1. Concise biweekly papers responding to class readings (2 to 3 pages each):  
You will write five short papers throughout the semester. They will account for 25% of your grade. Detailed guidelines will be handed out. These papers are due by 10 pm on each Monday. You need to e-mail them directly to me.
2. Collaborative project on field trip sites (25% of your grade): one project per a group of two throughout the semester; detailed guidelines will be handed out.
3. Final research paper: Due by Noon, Wed. 4/10.  
You need to examine an aspect of the politics of food production and consumption in London substantially informed by the seminar (11 to 12 pages exclusive of references; 30% of your grade)
4. Class participation, including the level of engagement in field trips (20 %)

## IMPORTANT NOTES ABOUT CLASS

1. Plan your time in advance for class assignments: It is much better to *prevent* a problem than to *lament* it once it happens. It is also easier to *prevent* a problem than to *undo* it once it is done. So please be in touch with me early if necessary.
2. Electronics in class: Electronic gadgets have become almost the extensions of our bodies and many people are addicted to them. Hence, computers are not allowed at all in this class except for reading course materials on line. Please write notes by hand; hand writing enhances your ability to remember and understand. Equally, you are not allowed to use cell phones, PDAs, or other communication devices in class. Please turn them off if you have to carry them with you. They do distract you and reduce the quality of your engagement and participation.
3. E-mail communication: While e-mail can be very effective and convenient for our communication, it is not an appropriate medium for highly confidential or personal matters. So be judicious in using e-mail communication.
4. Back-up your work: Computers do fail. So please save your work to an external drive or email it to yourself after each working session or consider saving your work in “the cloud.”

### 5. Policy on Collaboration

Discussion and the exchange of ideas are essential to academic work. For assignments in this course, you are encouraged to consult with your classmates on the choice of paper topics and to share sources. You may find it useful to discuss your chosen topic with your peers, particularly if you are working on the same topic as a classmate. However, you should ensure that any written work you submit for evaluation is the result of your own research and writing and that it reflects your own approach to the topic. You must also adhere to standard citation practices and properly quote and cite any books, articles, websites, lectures, etc. that have helped you develop your work. If you received any help with your writing (feedback on drafts, etc.), you must also acknowledge this assistance.

### 6. Disabilities Statement:

"Academic accommodations are available for students registered with the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity. Students in need of ADA/504 accommodations should schedule an appointment with me early in the semester to discuss any accommodations for this course that have been approved by the Office for Accessibility and Educational Opportunity, as indicated in your AEO accommodation letter."

### 7. Sexual harassment and violence Statement:

[Note: Of course, because you are studying here in London, you can make use of supports and facilities at Goldsmiths College as an initial step.]

“Vassar College is committed to providing a safe learning environment for all students that is free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, relationship abuse, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences any of these incidents, know that you are not alone. Vassar College has staff members trained to support you in navigating campus

life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more.”

“Please be aware all Vassar faculty members are “responsible employees,” which means that if you tell me about a situation involving sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship abuse, or stalking, I **must** share that information with the Title IX Coordinator. Although I have to make that notification, the Title IX office will only provide outreach by email. You will control how your case will be handled — you don’t have to read or respond to the email, and it is completely up to you whether to pursue a formal complaint. Our goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and have access to the resources you need.”

If you wish to speak to someone privately, you can contact any of the following on-campus resources:

- Counseling Service ([counselingservice.vassar.edu](http://counselingservice.vassar.edu), 845-437-5700)
- Health Service ([healthservice.vassar.edu](http://healthservice.vassar.edu), 845-437-5800)
- Nicole Wong, SAVP (Sexual Assault and Violence Prevention) director ([savp.vassar.edu](http://savp.vassar.edu), 845-437-7863)
- SART (Sexual Assault Response Team) advocate, available 24/7 by calling the CRC at 845-437-7333 and asking for SART

The SAVP website ([savp.vassar.edu](http://savp.vassar.edu)) and the Title IX section of the EOAA website ([eoaa.vassar.edu/title-ix/](http://eoaa.vassar.edu/title-ix/)) have more information, as well as links to both on- and off-campus resources.

## *Course schedule*

### *I. Situating London in the Global History of Colonialism and Decolonization*

Week 1, Wed., January 16, 2019

*Readings:* Jeremy Paxman, *Empire*, Chs. 1 through 5; Chs. 7 & 8; Chs. 12& 13.

[You can skim through these chapters to have a sense of broad pictures, rather than dwell on meticulous details.]

Recommended: Documentary, *Empire* (BBC & Open University)

*Field Trip:* Museum of London Docklands to see the current exhibition on Slavery, Culture, and Collecting, focusing on George Hibbert, a prominent member of London society who was also slave owner and art collector.

Recommended visit to the Royal Geographical Society in Kensington Gore

### *II. Eating and Drinking in the Imperial Capital*

Week 2, Wed., January 23

Tea Drinking in London and its global context

*Readings:* Rappaport, *A Thirst for Empire: How Tea Shaped the Modern World*, Chs. 1, 5, & 10

Chrystal, *Tea: A Very British Beverage*, Chs. 2, 3, 5, & 6

*Field trip:* Guided visits to historic and contemporary examples of noteworthy tea houses in London, including Hornimans, Twinings, and Browns. Our guide will be Paul Chrystal, author and journalist.

Recommended lecture: “Bittersweet Brexit: Where are we heading with our food system and farming?” Wed. Jan. 23, 5:30 – 7:00 pm at the Center for Food Policy, University of London. **NOTE: Due to its schedule conflict with our field trip, I asked Lizzie to see if we can get a video recording of this lecture. I will let you know.**

Week 3, Wed., January 30

Food in Imperial Technology of Ruling

*Readings:* Imperial Fruit Show of 1922 in Crystal Palace (October 27 through November 4), archival documents (e-reading)

Peter Ackroyd, *London: The Biography*, Voracious London, Chs. 32 through 36 (e-reading)

Lauren Janes, *Colonial Food in Interwar Paris: the Taste of Empire* (2016), Ch. 5 Food and Taste at Colonial Exposition of 1931 (e-reading)

*Field trip:* Covent Garden near Chinatown and Borough Market under London Bridge railway arches in Southwark.

Week 4, Wed., February 6

“Curry” in London: British Indian cuisine invented through colonialism

*Reading:* Lizzie, Collingham, *Curry: A Tale of Cooks and Conquerors*,

Ch. 5 Madras Curry: The British Invention of Curry (e-reading)

Ch. 6 Curry Powder: Bringing India to Britian (e-reading)

*Field trip:* Brick Lane Market in East London, including a stretch of Indian food shops known as “Curry Capital”

Recommended visit to Veeraswamy’s, the oldest Indian restaurant in London, which opened in 1926.

**[COLLABORATIVE PROJECT 1:** East India Company in London now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century]

Week 5, February 13

The Pub and drinking in London

*Readings:* Paul Jennings, *The Local: A History of the English Pub*, Ch. 1,

Chs. 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, & 12

[You can skim through these chapters for broader pictures rather than meticulous details.]

Recommended: Diane Kirkby, *Barmaids: A History of Women’s Work in Pubs* (selected chapters are available in e-reading)

*Field trip:* Historical and popular pubs in London, including George Inn, Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese, and Ye Olde Mitre: Hatton Garden.

**[COLLABORATIVE PROJECT 2:** History and evolution of these three surviving Pubs]

### *III. Eating and Drinking in the Postcolonial City*

Week 6, February 20 [modified: No class due to students’ travels; move to March 6th]

Postcolonial migration and the spread of ethnic food and restaurants

*Readings:* Winder, *Bloody Foreigners: The Story of Immigration to Britain*,

Introduction, Chs. 20, 21, & 22

*Field trip:* Guided visit to Brixton neighborhood and markets by Victoria Stuart, food journalist in London.

Recommended visit to Golders Green station area where diverse ethnic shops are clustered.

**[COLLABORATIVE PROJECT 3:** History and evolution of Golders Green area]

Week 7, February 27: **NO class** due to the director’s travel for a research workshop in Melbourne, Australia.

**[COLLABORATIVE PROJECT 4:** Emergence and spread of vegetarianism in London]

Week 8, March 6 [Move to the first week of April]

“Ethnic” Chef/Restaurateur in London: a case study of Saiphin Moore, a woman who was born and grew up in Thailand and immigrated to London

*Readings:* Winder, *Bloody Foreigners*, Ch. 26;

Johnston & Baumann, *Foodies*, Ch. 2 *Eating Authenticity*

recommended: *Bloody Foreigners*, Chs. 23, 24, & 25

*Field trip:* Lao Café, one of Saiphin’s restaurant in Covent Garden

Week 9, March 13

Globalized production and consumption of meat in London

*Reading:* Fairlie, *Meat: A Benign Extravagance*, Chs. 2, 4 & 5.

*Field trip:* Smithfield meat market housed in monumental Victorian buildings on Charterhouse Street in London.

Week 10, March 20

Urban Farming in London: constructive responses to industrialized food production and consumption

*Readings:* Cockrall-King, *Food and the City: Urban Agriculture and the New Food* Chs. 5 & 7

Recommended: Les Levidow, "London's Urban Agriculture: Building Community through Social Innovation" (e-reading)

*Field trip:* Guided tour of Mudchute Farm in East London

[**COLLABORATIVE PROJECT 5:** a study of Edible Estates, an initiative to promote the regeneration of green space in public housing projects]

#### *IV. Explosive Inequality and Food Consumption in the Global City*

Week 11, March 27:

Food Shops in London: Low-brow, Middle-brow, and High-brow Food Consumption

*Readings:* Johnson & Baumann, *Foodies: Democracy and Distinction in the Gourmet Foodscape*, Ch. 5 Class and Its Absence (e-reading)

Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, Chs. 4, 5, & 6 (selected pages in e-reading)

Recommended: Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, "Pecuniary Cannons of Taste"

*Field trip:* Harrods' Food Halls on Brompton Road, Tesco Superstore in Kensington or Old Kent Road, and easyFoodstore, a discount food store in Park Royal in London, selling all produces for 25 pences each.

Week 12, April 3:

Culinary Cosmopolitanism in London and its Limits

*Readings:* Brettner, "Going for an Indian": South Asian Restaurants and the Limits of Multiculturalism in Britain (e-reading)

Walkowitz, *Nights Out: Life in Cosmopolitan London*, Chs. 1, 4, & epilogue  
Johnson & Baumann, *Foodies*, Ch. 3 The Culinary Other: Seeking Exoticism

*Field trip:* Visit to Soho District

Your final research paper is due by Noon, May 10th.

Use the Moodle box for your submission.