

Boston College
Office of International Programs
Summer 2018
Food Writing in Paris (ENGL 3335)

Instructor: Lynne Christy Anderson

Office Hours: Tuesdays 2 to 3:30, Thursdays 9:30 to 11, and by appointment.

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“It seems to me that our three basic needs, for food and security and love, are so mixed and mingled and entwined that we cannot straightly think of one without the others. So it happens that when I write of hunger, I am really wiring about love and the hunger for it, and warmth and the love of it and the hunger for it...and then the warmth and richness and fine reality of hunger satisfied...and it is all one.”

--M.F.K. Fisher, *The Gastronomical Me*

Course Description: In this creative writing seminar where the culture and rituals around food, cooking, and eating will be considered from market to table, students will be asked to immerse themselves in a variety of writing tasks. These will range from food memoir and essay to journalistic profiles and literary recipes. Drawing on the city of Paris, its deeply rooted culinary traditions, and the diverse groups of immigrants that have made the city their home, students will write daily, bringing their own reflections and experiences with food into their work as they mine the rich culture that surrounds them. The works of noted food writers, both past and present, will be used as models for student writing. These include MFK Fisher, deemed “the poet of the appetites” by John Updike, as well as journalists covering France and its food culture, from the first half of the twentieth century to the present, including Elizabeth David, Waverly Root, Jane Grigson, Craig Claiborne, and Adam Gopnik. The readings will span a wide time period, beginning with Brillat-Savarin’s classic nineteenth century treatise on the pleasures of eating, *The Physiology of Taste*, excerpts from Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time*, and delving into contemporary pieces, including profiles and reviews by journalists covering the Middle East, Asian, and North African diaspora influencing Parisian cooking today. Finally, we will spend several class meetings exploring the way the food culture of France (and beyond) has shaped the way Americans eat today. We will consider the farm to table movement within the realm of food politics and read the works of Alice Waters, Michael Pollan, Erik Schlosser, and Barry Estabrook.

Text: Fisher, M.F.K. *The Art of Eating*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. 2014

Teaching Procedures: You are expected to write daily. The emphasis will be on the production of fresh, innovative writing and frequent revision through workshops, and conferences with me.

Typically, morning sessions will be devoted to a discussion of the assigned readings with daily group critiques of student drafts and in-class writing assignments. You are expected to print copies of supplemental readings (scans will be emailed to you) and bring these along with the Fisher text to class each day. You should annotate readings ahead of time so that you are prepared to discuss them in a meaningful way. Occasionally, you will be responsible for leading a discussion on one of the assigned readings. Please prepare carefully for this. You should also bring a hard-backed notebook to class each day where you can complete writing activities (both in the classroom and, on occasion, in the Jardin Luxembourg, across the street.) Typically, afternoons will be set aside for you to explore the city on your own on the days we do not have field trips scheduled. Occasionally, I will assign small groups to visit a particular market, neighborhood, etc., write a reflective piece about the trip, and report back to the group during our next class session.

Field Trips: Weekly fieldtrips will be scheduled throughout the month. These will include visits to food markets, walking tours to experience the diverse neighborhoods of Paris, cooking activities, a day-long trip outside of the city to visit a cheesemaker and a vintner, group meals at Paris restaurants, food shopping expeditions and picnics, and writing activities in different locations in the city.

Manuscripts: Always title your essays (even if it's a working title). All writing must be typed, double spaced, 12- point font, and 1-inch margins. Pages must be numbered. On the days we are doing group critiques, you must bring the appropriate number of copies to class. Although much of your writing will be works-in-progress, you should proofread carefully so that your readers are not stumbling over careless errors.

Grading: I am most interested in your development as a writer over the term. I will not grade individual pieces of work. Rather, you will receive a portfolio grade: at the end of the session, you will submit three finished pieces (approximately twelve to fifteen pages in total that have been revised several times) along with ALL drafts for those pieces and a completed self-evaluation for each piece. Portfolios are due during our last class meeting. We will have a student reading that day where you will share a finished work of your choice. Your portfolio will also be comprised of a reflective essay you will complete after the session has ended as well as several posts you will contribute to our class blog during our time in Paris.

The course grade will be calculated as follows:

- *Participation (50%):* arriving to class on time fully prepared to discuss readings, share your work, and actively participate in the workshopping of your peers' writing, engaging fully with in-class writing exercises; arriving to field trips on time and actively participating by asking questions of our guides when something interests you, and taking notes when necessary.
- *Writing Portfolio (50 %):* your portfolio should reflect writing that is ambitious and thought-provoking. It will include formal essays you will work on in class, blog

postings, and one essay that will be completed after the term has ended. The formal essays should be revised several times based on feedback you've received in workshops and conferences with me. Finished pieces should reflect the elements of clear, carefully edited prose.

Academic Integrity: By now, you should all be familiar with BC's academic integrity policy. If you have questions, please ask me. www.bc.edu/integrity

Information about Class Meetings, Assignments, and Field Trips:

- Assignments will be posted daily on Canvas. Supplemental readings (marked with an asterisk *) will be emailed several weeks before we leave for Paris. Please print these before leaving the US! (Photocopying is expensive in Europe.) Bring copies of any readings we'll be discussing to class with you along with our text, *The Art of Eating*, each day. On rare occasions, you will bring your laptop to class to discuss on-line readings. We will not discuss all of the on-line readings. Some are included to enrich your understanding of Paris food culture as you navigate through the city during your stay in June.
- Writing assignments will include a personal essay (to be completed before arriving in Paris), a market profile (completed in Paris), an ingredient profile and literary recipe (completed in Paris), a final reflection (to be completed after you have returned home), and contributions to our class blog. You will spend a significant amount of time during the month revising the first three of these pieces many times, based on daily in-class critiques.
- We will meet most mornings for approximately 2 ½ hours. Certain days will be devoted to field trips, in which case we will not meet in the classroom. The first week will be a light week because our first class meeting will be held at BC in early May. There will be one long weekend for those who would like to travel outside of Paris. On class days, we will meet at Foyer International des Etudiantes (FIE), 93, Blvd Saint-Michel 75005 Paris (RER B: Luxembourg at 9:30 AM. Your dorms are located here so you will not need to travel.
- On field trip days, we'll be meeting in various locations throughout the city. I will let you know where as soon as I know. Please check Canvas updates and your BC email regularly.