

**English 381:**  
**Writing, Translation, and Foodways: Possibilities for Social Change**

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Fall 2022

Nancy Bou Ayash

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Class Meeting: TTh 1:30-3:20 pm

Virtual Office Hours: TTh 11:00-1:00 and by appointment

Personal Room Link: <https://washington.zoom.us/my/bouayash>

*There is simply no better way for a writer to approach the fundamental subjects of the human condition than to talk about the food we choose to ingest.*

Mark Kurlansky

*A writing cook and a cooking writer must be bold at the desk as well as the stove.*

MFK Fisher

*Cooking has the power to transform more than plants and animals: It transforms us, too, from mere consumers into producers. Not completely, not all the time, but I have found that even to shift the ratio between these two identities a few degrees towards the side of production yields deep and unexpected satisfactions.*

Michael Pollan, *Cooked*

### **What's Cooking?**

Like writing and translation, foodways are all around us, and while we recognize the importance of food, and generally enjoy cooking and/or eating, we seldom recognize how suffused with meaning food habits are and how deeply embedded their symbols and practices are in our daily lives. Some of our strongest values and beliefs – about the universe, the world, other individuals and communities, our culture, and ourselves – are expressed, whether consciously or not, in the ways we prepare, consume, think about, and talk about food. Our task this quarter is to denaturalize this omnipresence of food and investigate its connection to language, both

spoken and written, through various writing genres on food, and the hierarchy of its contemporary production and consumption. In this writing course, we will closely read a wide array of popular and scholarly texts (e.g. stories, cookbooks, recipes, theory, food-related research studies, etc.) to illuminate the workings of those phenomena in personal, professional and/or civic life. Through careful analysis, extensive research, and a lot of writing, reading, rewriting, rereading and translating, we will attempt to uncover our own relationship with food, learn to articulate the basic trends in food studies, and identify and practice different writing techniques and styles.

The three key constructs that constitute our specific course theme are highly complex and interdisciplinary in nature. It is only natural then that this course will bring together theoretical and practical perspectives in writing studies, critical sociolinguistics, food studies, and translation studies, all relatively recent and promising in their contributions to issues of social activism. The readings in this class will draw on the burgeoning scholarship in these four areas of study and will cover various geographic contexts, such as the U.S.A, UK, the Middle East, Canada, Sydney, and Tokyo, all of which will be explored through the lens of linguistic and social justice. In our weekly deliberations, we will be addressing the following and other questions:

- How do seemingly mundane practices like writing, (trans)linguaging, translating, and (preparing, consuming or sharing) food function within complex ideological, social, and ecological systems?
- What is the role of writing, translation, and food in mediating conflict, communicating across (social, linguistic, and intellectual) differences, addressing political/ideological tensions, reflecting locale and/or global outlooks and sensibilities, and expressing public advocacy?
- How does food capture and sustain memories of home, belonging, displacement, or struggle? How do diverse writers communicate such memories in the genre of food memoir more broadly and newer/increasingly popular food-related genres, such as narrative-oriented cookbooks, Vlogs, tweets, Instagram slides and stories, etc.?
- How do the course readings critique the way race, racism and power operate in food discourses? What is authenticity in food-related contexts? What is cultural appropriation and what kinds of conversations should we be having about it?

- How has the food industry addressed issues of diversity, equity and inclusion? How have these issues shaped our collective food culture and social media world? What kinds of transformations do you think need to happen and how?

### **Course Outcomes**

The course goals are as follows:

- Engage with the course theme of food and its connections to and/or disjuncture from issues of language and social justice in critical and thoughtful ways.
- Articulate how various food habits, traditions and practices represent, co-produce, and sometimes intervene in social arrangements of power and categories of identity (such as race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexuality, and social class)
- Create a supportive space for inquiring about non-white foodways and their embeddedness within broader social and ecological arrangements
- Communicate clearly, persuasively, and with polished prose and style in writing assignments and oral discussions and presentations.
- Experiment with new forms of writing about food and foodways and develop a strong writerly voice.

### **Required Course Texts**

I have posted website links to and PDF files of all assigned readings on the course Canvas site.

### **Additional Resources**

I have provided for your own convenience, but do not require, the following list of relevant and important readings for further reflection and research:

Gass, Anna F. *Heirloom Kitchen: Heritage Recipes and Family Stories from the Tables of Immigrant Women*, 2019.

Kahn, Robin, and Federico Guzman. *Dining in Refugee Camps: The Art of Sahrawi Cooking = Cenando En Los Campamentos De Refugiados*. Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 2010.

Massaad, Barbara A. *Soup for Syria: Recipes to Celebrate Our Shared Humanity*, 2016.

Moushabeck, Leyla. *The Immigrant Cookbook: Recipes That Make America Great*, 2018.

Seattle Refugee Women's Alliance. *Recipes for Refuge: Culinary Journeys to America*, 2019.

Sherman, Sean and Beth Dooley. *The Sioux Chef's indigenous kitchen*. University of Minnesota Press, 2017.

Wallace, Siobhan, and Penny. Santos. *The Kitchen Without Borders: Recipes and Stories from Refugee and Immigrant Chefs*, 2021.

### **Translation or Cooking, Anyone?**

Based on the title of this course, speaking and writing in languages other than English is a plus but certainly not a necessary requirement to be able to successfully complete the work that is expected of you. We will be engaging with the concept and practice of translation in its broadest sense, as movement across languages, language varieties, media, and modes of communicating meaning. The same goes for your unique relationship with food. You do not need to know how to cook to be able to participate in the activities and writing assignments and projects designed for this class.

### **Recipes for Your Success**

- ***Active Labor and Engagement (10%)***

The purpose of our weekly class sessions is to encourage interaction, increase the awareness of our class as a learning and writing community, and provide access to the knowledge of others. During these meetings, you will be graded on your ability to demonstrate an active engagement with the weekly themes and readings through the thoughtfulness and quality of your (oral and written) comments, questions, and/or critiques.

- ***Reading Responses (15%)***

To demonstrate an active engagement with the weekly themes and readings, your weekly participation will take the form of critical responses to assigned readings through Canvas discussion board posts. Cultivating dynamic interaction with the course readings and your peers, these online posts will be more than just a summary and mere discussion of the assigned weekly readings. I intend these to demonstrate a critical engagement with the reading selections through reflecting on, complicating and putting into question some of the perspectives and arguments they represent.

Your weekly contributions to the Canvas Discussion board will take the form of: (1) Posting a **personal response** (400-500 words) that goes beyond the comprehension/content of the relevant reading(s) to raise further questions, critiques, and comments; **AND** (2) Reading through the thread and constructing a **response to at least one of your classmates' post(s)** in not more than 200-250 words. As you think through deep and focused responses to the readings and to your classmate's responses, I encourage you to bring in prior knowledge or outside sources in order to foster more complex thinking/synthesis. In your responses, you could be doing one or more of the following:

- *Reflection about potential implications:*

Describe thoughtfully what the reading(s) and/or your classmate's ideas seem to be pointing toward or any new insights you think these provide, or raise a follow-up question as a seed for clarification or further discussion.

- *Analysis:*

Discuss how the points raised in the reading(s) and/or your classmates' writing encourage us to think more (or less) critically about relevant course themes, concepts, main ideas, components, or relationships among ideas. Or, identify hidden assumptions or fallacies in reasoning.

- *Elaboration:*

Build on ideas of others or ideas found in the readings by adding details, examples, a different viewpoint, or other relevant information.

- **Collaborative Writing and Research Project (50%)**

Throughout the quarter, you will work with the same group (2-3 members) on a series of sequenced writing assignments. More specifically, you are asked to collaboratively work on a unified food-related topic with the goal of exploring and unpacking the complexity of the foodways of a racialized and language-minoritized community of your own choice. For example, you might chose to research the foodways of a nationally, locally, and/or regionally marginalized community or an area of the world undergoing conflict, struggle and transformation today.

For your writing, you will draw upon personal experience, course readings, published research articles, TV food shows or films, class conversations, Canvas discussion board posts, community engagement, etc. in order to

best document, analyze, and discuss how particular food traditions and experiences are personal and communal and connect to larger systems of power. As you will notice from the multi-modal nature of our assigned readings, you are encouraged to always supplement food-themed writing with visuals, audio, and/or video (i.e. not only in response to the last assignment prompt).

**Writing Assignment 1: Recipes in Translation (15%)**

“Recipes are simply creative variations of our hunger for justice.”

Cantelli and Shringarpure, “Resistant Recipes”, 434

Under this prompt, your group is asked to describe and elaborate on a recipe for a dish that is of significance to your research topic. You can do so either solely in writing or through adding a visual component showing personal mark-ups and annotations or also by filming the making of the recipe. In addition to the recipe description, explain why you chose this particular dish, what it means to the individuals and communities you are writing about, the occasion for which it is made, and if applicable, your findings (how the end results looked and tasted) and substitutions, omissions or modifications you would recommend or want to try next time. Your writing should include the history and origins of the dish, how and why it became popular (locally, nationally, or globally), and maybe the evolution of modern takes on the dish that stray so far from the original/classic recipe. Your group is expected to document— either through footnotes, endnotes, or in the body of the text— the origin and derivation of the recipe with explanations and comments.

Drawing on perspectives from your course readings and in-class activities and conversations, discuss what stories and micro-histories are woven into your translated recipe and how that provides an intimate lens into the ingredients, implements, cooking methods, techniques and rituals that are part and parcel of the foodways you are researching and writing about in this project in general and in your second writing assignment in particular.

If one or more group members are a multilingual and/or transnational writer who works across diverse language, cultural and geographic borders, I encourage you for this assignment to reflect on and write about the process of translating food-related vocabularies, phrases and

idioms to the English-speaking, U.S.-centric audience for your writing and the ethical implications of your translation process.

**Writing Assignment 2: Non-white Foodways in Translation (15%)**

"What people do with food is an act that reveals how they construe the world."

Marcella Hazan, *The Classic Italian Cookbook*

Your task in this assignment is to produce a hybrid description of the foodways that you have chosen for your project, combining more than one element of the craft (e.g. personal narrative, scholarly research, argumentation, translanguaged passages, chants, poetry, blend of English and non-English expressions or prose, etc.). Your description should specifically focus on savoring, preparing, producing, sharing, or growing of food. What kind of conversations, stories and/or activities take place and are shared around food and food practices? As various individuals come together to cook and eat, what memories, images, sensory metaphors, values, traditions and emotions are evoked? How are these tied to the material conditions, histories, hierarchies, and power dynamics that impact their daily lives? Make sure you draw connections in your writing to the specific linguistic, cultural, religious, racial, ethnic, and ethno-national identities of the individual(s) and/or group(s) involved.

Remember to also demonstrate critical reflexivity on your part as writers through acknowledging your own racial, linguistic and ideological positioning. In other words, how do you think your and your group members' personal identities and the food cultures you each identify with might have influenced the descriptions and perspectives you shared? Based on your experience working on this assignment, what thoughts do you have with regards to enacting equitable social change?

To go along with your writing, if appropriate, you might experiment with the rhetorical choice of including a detailed recipe of one or more dishes (including the recipe you developed for Assignment #1).

### **Writing Assignment 3: Collaborative Report and Collage (20%)**

For this assignment, much in the vein of Reiff and Bawarshi's brief yet deep reflections (see Week 9), you will compose a multimodal description and collage that best captures the concrete experience of working together this quarter and depicts the complexity of the "intra-action of text, material objects, and human and other-than-human actants" (48).

Writing Assessment: We will work together in class to design the grading rubrics for these sequenced writing assignments. Overall, you will be graded on the clarity, completeness, organization, and conciseness of your arguments and ideas, the quality and depth of your analysis, wealth of materials you've collected, the integration of themes and concepts learned in the course, and the degree of research you've done on your chosen topic.

- ***Mini Progress Presentations (5%)***

After week 5, you and your group partner(s) will each be sharing the results of your collaborations and deliberations on a weekly basis. Be prepared for questions and/or comments from myself and/or your classmates.

- **Writers' Banquet: Writing Workshops (20%)**

During the last of week of classes, your active participation will take the form of reading and giving useful, constructive criticism for fellow writers to inspire revision. You will be asked to provide feedback on your classmates' group projects in the draft stage and they will do the same. See Canvas file entitled "Writing Workshop Guidelines" for more specific guidelines.

### **Faculty Use of Student Writing:**

I may request copies of your work to be anonymously used for student samples in future writing classes. I will get your written permission prior to showing your work to others.



## **Below lies some course policies and guidelines:**

### **Communication**

You should check your email and Canvas regularly for any announcements about meeting plans. In case you need to individually discuss any aspect of the course or your own work, I recommend contacting me through my UW email address ([nbayash@uw.edu](mailto:nbayash@uw.edu)) and **NOT** Canvas. You can also use that email address to make arrangements to meet over Zoom. For any questions or inquiries via email, please allow at least 24 hours for me to respond. I also don't regularly check my email over weekends so please plan accordingly.

### **Academic Integrity**

Plagiarism can be defined as representing the words or ideas of someone else as one's own in any academic exercise. Thus, all writing you do for this course must be your own and must be exclusively for this course, unless the instructor stipulates differently. Please pay special attention to the quotes, paraphrases, and documentation practices you use in your papers. If you have any questions about plagiarism, please ask your instructor. If you plagiarize, your instructor reserves the right to grant you a failure for the course and your case may be reported to the College of Arts and Sciences for review.

### **Additional Writing Resources**

The Odegaard Writing and Research Center (OWRC) offers UW students free 45-minute tutoring sessions for any writing or research project, as well as for personal projects such as applications or cover letters and resumes. Tutors and librarians are trained to collaborate at any stage of the writing and research process, from brainstorming and identifying sources to making final revisions and tying up loose ends. I highly recommend that you use their services to get another point of feedback as you work on course assignments and projects.

For more information, or to schedule an appointment, consultants will be available via Zoom this quarter: <https://www.lib.washington.edu/ougl/owrc>.

### **Access and Accommodations**

Your experience in this class is important to me. It is the policy and practice of the University of Washington to create inclusive and accessible learning environments consistent with federal and state law. If you have already

established accommodations with Disability Resources for Students (DRS), please activate your accommodations via myDRS so we can discuss how they will be implemented in this course.

If you have not yet established through DRS, but have a temporary health condition or permanent disability that requires accommodations (conditions include but not limited to: mental health, attention-related, learning, vision, hearing, physical or mental impacts), contact DRS directly to set up an Access Plan. DRS facilitates the interactive process that established reasonable accommodations. Contact DRS at [disability.uw.edu](https://disability.uw.edu)

### **Religious Accommodations**

“Washington state law requires that UW develop a policy for accommodation of student absences or significant hardship due to reasons of faith or conscience, or for organized religious activities. The UW’s policy, including more information about how to request an accommodation, is available at [Religious Accommodations Policy \(https://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/religious-accommodations-policy/\)](https://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/religious-accommodations-policy/). Accommodations must be requested within the first two weeks of this course using the [Religious Accommodations Request form \(https://registrar.washington.edu/students/religious-accommodations-request/\)](https://registrar.washington.edu/students/religious-accommodations-request/).”

# Course Calendar

The instructor reserves the right to make changes to this syllabus in order to address scheduling conflicts and/or class needs.

## WEEK 1: Welcome and Introductions

**Th 9/29** Introduce course syllabus and requirements  
Discuss group assignments and potential project topics

## WEEK 2: Writing, Food and Translation on the Table: Definitions and Connections Explored

**T 10/4** Come having read and prepared to discuss:  
Roman Jakobson. "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation." (Canvas)

In-class application activities based on Jakobson's translation framework.

**Th 10/6** Come having read and prepared to discuss:  
Michael Cronin, "The Moveable Feast: Translation, Ecology and Food" (Canvas)

Finalize group assignments and potential project topics

**DEADLINE: Reading Response 1 due on Canvas Discussion Board on Monday 10/3 by 10:00 am**

## WEEK 3: Food, Identity, and Memory Making

**T 10/11** Come having read and prepared to discuss:  
Lynn Bloom, "Rhetoric of Food Writing" (Canvas)

**Th 10/13** Come having read and prepared to discuss:  
Barbara Waxman, "Food Memoirs" (Canvas)

Guided group work (brainstorming, planning, discussing, researching, writing, revising, etc.)

#### **WEEK 4: Food, Identity, and Memory Making continued**

**T 10/18** Come having read and prepared to discuss:  
Amy Tan, “Fish Cheeks” (Canvas)

Minerva Orduno Rincon, “[The Authenticity Trap of Mexican Food in America](https://www.phoenixnewtimes.com/restaurants/the-authenticity-trap-of-mexican-food-in-america-7538626)”  
<https://www.phoenixnewtimes.com/restaurants/the-authenticity-trap-of-mexican-food-in-america-7538626>

**Th 10/20** Come having read and prepared to discuss:  
Boris Fishman, *Savage Feast: A Memoir with Recipes* (select chapters on Canvas)

**DEADLINE: Assignment 1 Draft due on Sunday 10/23 by 5:00 pm**

#### **WEEK 5: A Bite of Translation in Refugee and (Im)migrant Food Narratives**

**T 10/25** Come having read and prepared to discuss:  
Veruska Cantelli and Bhakti Shringarpure, “Resistant Recipes”  
Mansour, “The Rise and Folly of the Refugee Cookbook”  
<https://thecounter.org/the-rise-and-folly-of-the-refugee-cookbook-food-media-tropes-conflict/>

In-class group activity

**Th 10/27** Continue group writing activity and discussion

Begin Mini Progress Presentations of group work and writing progress

#### **WEEK 6: Translanguaging and Translation in Metrolingual Food-related Settings**

**T 11/1** What is translanguaging? Why does it matter?

Come having read and prepared to discuss:  
Creese, Blackledge, and Hu, “Translanguaging and Translation: The Construction of Social Difference across City Spaces” (Canvas)

**Th 11/3** Guided group work (brainstorming, planning, discussing, researching, writing, revising, etc.)

**DEADLINE: Reading Response 2 due on Canvas Discussion Board on Monday 10/31 by 10:00 am**

### **WEEK 7: Translanguaging and Translation continued**

**T 11/8** Come having read and prepared to discuss:  
Pennycook and Otsuji, “Metrolingual Multitasking and Spatial Repertoires” (Canvas)

**Th 11/10** Continue Mini Progress Presentations of group work and writing progress  
Attend Peer Review Workshop (by Odegaard Writing & Research Center staff)

**DEADLINE: Assignment 2 Draft due on Sunday 11/13 by 5:00 pm**

### **WEEK 8: Gender, Racial, and Ethnic Equity in Food-themed Writing**

**T 11/15** Continue Mini Progress Presentations of group work and writing progress

Come having read and prepared to discuss:  
Barrett, “Language Ideology and Racial Inequality”

**Th 11/17** Come having read and prepared to discuss:  
Giorgis, “The Table Stays White”  
<https://www.theatlantic.com/culture/archive/2020/06/bon-appetit-and-why-table-stays-white/613093/>

Equity at the Table (EATT) Database  
<https://equityatthetable.com>

The Racist Sandwich podcast  
<http://www.racistsandwich.com>

**DEADLINE: Reading Response 3 due on Canvas Discussion Board on Monday 11/14 by 10:00 am**

**WEEK 9: Food-themed Collaborative Writing and Collage**

**T 11/22** Continue Mini Progress Presentations of group work and writing progress

Come having read and prepared to discuss:  
Bawarshi and Reiff “Collaborative Writing, Collage, and Cooking: From Humanist to Post-Humanist Assemblages” (Canvas)

**Th 11/24—No Class; Thanksgiving**

**Suggested Deadline: Drafts of Assignments 1, 2, and 3 to be posted on Canvas Discussion Board under “Final Collaborative Projects” by 5:00 pm on Monday 11/28**

**WEEK 10: Writers’ Banquet: Re-vision and Re-writing**

**T11/29** Writing Workshop 1

Closely read and be ready to discuss classmate’s working drafts

**Th 12/1** Writing Workshop 2

**WEEK 11: It’s a Wrap: Food for Thought and Social Action?**

**T 12/6** Writing Workshop 3

**Th 12/8** Last Day of Classes; Concluding Reflections  
Writing Workshop 4

**Final Projects are due on Sat. December 10th, 2022 by 10:00 am.**