FOLK 3601: English Material Culture

TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE

An examination of English material culture with special attention on material objects related to the production and consumption of foods. Regional foodways traditions will be used to examine current theoretical issues in material culture research.

Text

Course Outline

Weeks 1-2 (St John’s campus)

Class 1: Introduction to Material Culture
What is material culture and how is it studied? What are the important themes and issues in material culture studies? How does food fit into material culture?

Reading:

145-60.

Classes 2-4: English Foodways
How have foodways in England evolved over time?
From the Medieval Larder and Tudor Kitchen, through the Elizabethans and Stuarts to nineteenth century and war-time Britain, we will survey the major development in foodways in England.

Reading

Class 5: Re/presentation
How do museums re/present foodways?

Reading:


**Weeks 3-6 (Harlow campus)**

**Fieldtrips**

**Day 1 Harlow to Chichester (approx. 170 km; 2 h 10 min each way)**

i) Fishbourne Roman Palace & Gardens (near Chichester)


Museum and archeological site of the largest Roman domestic building in northern Europe. We will see what life was like at the Palace by visiting the museum as well as take a look behind the scenes in the Collections Discovery Centre. Our visit will include a guided tour and a workshop or demonstration and tasting session of food cooked to Roman recipes.

Distance: 2 h 7 min  
Cost: Adult - £6.80 ea & £72 for presentation  
Time for visit: 2 h

ii) Weald & Downland Open Air Museum (near Chichester)

[http://www.wealddown.co.uk/](http://www.wealddown.co.uk/)

Traditional buildings in a rural landscape that tell the story of the men, women and children who lived and worked in them over a 600-year period. The 50-acre site has exhibit houses that are furnished to recreate historic domestic interiors from 1300-1910. We will have a guided tour of the museum and take in the cooking demonstration in their Tudor kitchen.
iii) Medieval market Cross, Chichester
Distance: 2 h 7 min
Time for visit: 1 hr

Enroute we will stop at Chichester, a thriving medieval market town. We will visit Chichester Cross, a late medieval covered English market cross, and take a short walking tour to explore architectural evolution around the market cross.

Day 2  Harlow to Reading (approx. 119 km; 1 h 20 min each way)

A) Half Day: MERL

(Half Day Wednesday--To have a guided tour of the collection, we may have to visit at 3:00 on Wednesday).

Museum of English Rural Life MERL (Reading)

http://www.reading.ac.uk/merl/about/merl-about.aspx - sthash.cZKO4w06.dpuf

The Museum of English Rural Life houses the most comprehensive national collection of objects, books and archives relating to the history of food, farming and the countryside. We will visit the museum and have a behind the scenes guided tour of the stores where the collection is kept.

Distance: 119 km; 1 h 20 min
Cost: No admission but donations are welcome.
Time for visit: 2 h

B) Half Day: Harlow to London; approx. 35-40 min by train

i) Museum of London, 150 London Wall
London EC2Y 5HN

http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/london-wall/

We will explore the role of food in London’s history as we visit this innovative and comprehensive museum dedicated to telling the story of the city.

Distance: 35-40 min by train
Cost: Free
Time for visit: 2 h

ii) Twinings Tea Shop and Museum
216 The Strand

http://twinings.co.uk/our-stores/twinings,-216,-strand,-london

We will visit this small museum or “heritage site, “as Twinings bills it on their website, to view its display devoted to tea. It is located on the site that Twinings was founded in 1706 and has been selling tea for over 300 years as tea merchants.

Cost: Free
Time for Visit: 1 h

Day 3 Harlow to Bath; approx. 2 h 32 min; 238 km

ii) No. 1 Royal Crescent

http://visitbath.co.uk/things-to-do/no-1-royal-crescent-p25441

We will have visit No. 1 Royal Crescent, a Georgian town house. This was the first house to be built in the Crescent and originally provided luxury accommodation for the aristocratic visitors who came to take the waters and enjoy the social season. Reopened in 2013 after a major restoration project, No. 1 now provides visitors to the Crescent with an opportunity to see what life was like for the wealthy and their servants in 18th century Bath. Rooms include the original kitchen and scullery, coal-holes and servant’s corridors, the Housekeeper’s Room and Servants’ Hall.

Cost: £6.00 per ticket
Time for visit: 1 h

ii) Sally Lunn’s Historic Eating House and Museum

http://www.sallylunns.co.uk

We will visit Sally Lunn’s, the famous tea and eating house in the centre of Bath Housed in one of the oldest houses in Bath with the actual kitchen used by the legendary young Huguenot baker Sally Lunn in Georgian Bath to create the first Bath bun – a regional specialty. We will tour the museum and have Bath Cream tea at the restaurant that specializes in historic regional English dishes.

Cost: £7.08 per person
Timer for visit 1 h 15 min
**Course Assignment**

Write an approximately 800-1000 word review of the presentation of food at one of the museums we visited:

You have been asked to write a review of a museum presentation of food for the food section/lifestyle section of a local newspaper. Your goal is to tell a potential audience about the exhibition or presentation and to provide some context for it so you will need to both describe and critique the exhibit or presentation and its rationale. This is NOT a research paper so you do not need to conduct outside research, but you can provide context by relating the food presentation to what we have covered in our course readings and discussions.

Questions to consider (but you don’t need to confine yourself only to these questions):

1. What are your initial impressions?

2. What seems to be the main goal of presentation or exhibit? What story does it tell?

3. How does the food presentation compare with exhibits in the rest of the museum?

4. What objects are showcased? Grouped? To what purpose?

3. Does the display or presentation make you aware of where the objects were originally and the purposes that they served? Is this aspect important to a museum?

4. What can you learn about the food of a specific historical period though this presentation or exhibit?

5. How is the presentation interpreted? What do labels or interpreters add?

8. Is there one or more aspect that you find particularly effective? Is there a particularly weak aspect?

**Selected Bibliography**

**General**


Development of Foodways in England


**Representation**


**Selected Video Resources from BBC**

BBC. Tales from the Green Valley. Episodes 1-12. 29 min. each.
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLrYzzr8yja6FUA6S_xLEwRkc6ygmij5xQ

BBC. The True History of English Food. 58 min.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZ3JGxfHFCA

BBC. A People’s History Breakfast, Lunch, and Dinner. 58 min.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KrpTSIMA7wM

BBC. Clarissa and the King’s Cookbook. 29 min.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=803rjwGlS-U&list=PLMQ94-7VaifUnNUzmQySBH-gnVqlAo31u