Course Description

The adage “you are what you eat” holds many truths. Not only does it directly suggest that our bodies are constructed through food, but it also implies that what we are as humans is a result of what we ingest into our bodies. This section of Perspectives on Inquiry will probe many questions that come from this most mundane of human activities, such as: Where does our food come from and what are the consequences of its various origins? How do different cultures view food? Is food merely something to keep us alive physically, or does it carry deeper philosophical and cultural meanings? For instance, is food magical? Is food spiritual? If so, then how and why has this come to be in different human cultures? What are the ethics of food? How do these ethical implications affect the economy, the environment?

To investigate these and other questions, we will read literature and some poetic works, investigate the history of agricultural practices, and study the language used to describe, grow, and market food. In addition, we will view several movies and even look into the arts of cooking.

Required Texts and Materials

*In Defense of Food: An Eater’s Manifesto* by Michael Pollan
*Rice as Self: Japanese Identities Through Time* by Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney
*Like Water for Chocolate: A Novel in Monthly Installments with Recipes, Romances, and Home Remedies* by Isabel Allende
*The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture* by Wendell Berry

Some photocopying of additional readings and written assignments

Writings and Other Assignments

1. Weekly responses (2-3 pages) to readings and films (20%)
2. A “cycle” of documents (a problem statement memo, a review of literature, a proposal, several progress reports) that lead to a final project. All of the documents in the cycle are drafted, peer reviewed, and then revised. (25%)
3. A final document (10-12 pages) that follows from the project cycle. (25%)
4. One or two oral presentations during the semester. (15%)
5. Attendance and Participation (15%)

Beginning the Semester

I will provide you with reading and other assignments as the semester progresses, but here are the readings for the first six weeks:

January 21 — Part I of *In Defense of Food*
January 28 — Part II of *In Defense of Food*
February 4 — Part III of In Defense of Food
February 11 — Like Water for Chocolate pp. 1-101
February 18 — Like Water for Chocolate pp. 102-end of book
February 25 — View Like Water for Chocolate: The Movie, in class

MTU Policies and Academic Assistance Documents

Academic regulations and procedures are governed by University policy. Academic dishonesty cases will be handled in accordance with the University's policies. If you have a disability that could affect your performance in this class or that requires an accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act, please see me as soon as possible so that we can make appropriate arrangements. The Affirmative Action Office has asked that you be made aware of the following:

Michigan Tech complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. If you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at Michigan Tech, please call the Dean of Students Office, at 487-2212. For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department head or the Affirmative Action Office, at 487-3310

Academic Integrity: http://www.studentaffairs.mtu.edu/dean/judicial/policies/academic_integrity.html

Affirmative Action:
http://www.admin.mtu.edu/aaoo/

Disability Services: http://www.admin.mtu.edu/urel/studenthandbook/student_services.html#disability