This course will examine the concepts of sustainability and culture in relation to food production. Students will study aspects of sustainability and ethics in the context of cultural, social, economic and environmental considerations in which food is produced, prepared and consumed.

Food is a powerful teacher. Everyone must eat to survive no matter where they are on the planet. Yet we also consume and use food for various other purposes than survival such as ceremonies, pleasure, leisure and in all of these food is associated with a rich and diverse set of values, meanings, and symbols. Therefore, it is desirable that informed citizens have some understanding of the ecological, cultural, and ethical aspects of sustainable food production and consumption. Many of today’s most serious environmental problems are linked to food production activities and some conclude that many of the world’s most productive agricultural systems cannot be sustained indefinitely as they are managed today.

Food systems and culture are inseparably intertwined. In this course, students will gain an understanding and will be able to intelligently discuss how cultural food choices can have ethical, environmental, economic, and health consequences through the lens of the food system.

Food systems have evolved over many hundreds if not thousands of years and they developed in very unique ways in different places creating strong regional cultures. Students will be immersed in the ancient and rich food culture of Turkey. Through experience, reflective exercises, group projects and course activities, students will develop new insights into the different ways of thinking about sustainability, food, and cultural development.

In Istanbul, not only do two continents come together, but diverse food cultures with different religious, ethnic and national backgrounds meet and blend with one another. Having hosted several world empires in various stages of its long life course, Istanbul has always been accustomed to fine quality and exotic foods in its markets from all corners of the world. Mostly for political and economic stability concerns one of the first priorities of the Porte, in the times of the Romans, Byzantines and, later, Ottomans, has always been the well provisioning of the city. Let us remember that cheapness and abundant supply of food decreases social tensions within the population and facilitates economic development. This is mainly why Istanbul has historically been a very rich city in terms of food cultures, systems of food production and, concomitantly, food choices that were available to its residents. This still is the case today. Migrant communities from different parts of Turkey, unleashed by waves of internal migration since the 1950s, have come to Istanbul and settled here with their own culinary and gastronomic traditions. Kebabs from Eastern regions, olive oil dishes from the Aegean coast, corn-based staples and seafood from the Black Sea all meet in Istanbul and melt in millions of pots around the city. Therefore, Istanbul continues to have a vibrant food scene formed by various regional and ethnic culinary cultures and food products at homes, in public restaurants and market places. The tastiest and most fresh of all kinds of food including cheese, fish, meat, vegetables, fruits, nuts and spices are readily available not only in supermarkets but also weekly held neighborhood markets. The liveliness of Istanbul food scene has intensified in the recent decades when many foreign cuisines have begun to penetrate into the city through cafes, restaurants and imported food products on the heels globalization. In short, Istanbul has the potential to equip students with fresh insights, observations, and ideas about the sustainability of food systems and culinary traditions both in cultural and environmental terms.
Similarly Turkey, too, provides lots of hints and clues to the curious observers who are in search of answers for today’s burning questions about food and sustainability. This is the case mainly for two reasons. First of all, Turkey is one of the leading biodiversity hot spots in the world. It hosts unusually rich varieties of both animal and plant varieties. Secondly, Turkey is a late comer to the world of high-tech intensive agriculture. Therefore, there still exist vast amounts of land that are suitable for developing environmentally friendly food and agricultural systems in all parts of the country. Hence it is no surprise that organic farming has been one of the fastest growing agricultural sub-sectors in the country in the recent decades. Turkey is also one of the leading exporters of fresh vegetables and fruits to European markets. Even in the surrounding areas of cities like Istanbul whose economy has largely been urban and industrial for a very long time it is still possible to find plenty of communities who engage in sustainable farming practices including animal husbandry. People in Turkey love to talk about food and appreciate the care given to cooking. In other words, food is a social cement that holds the diverse culture of this country together. Therefore, students of this course will be provided with unique opportunities to converse directly with people who produce, sell and cook good food with abundant variety and to enrich their knowledge of sustainable food systems with first hand observations and experiential learning.

INSTRUCTOR

Dr. Zafer Yenal

COURSE GOALS

Upon completion of this course students will be able to:

- Describe and discuss concepts of sustainability and engage in ethical debate as it applies to food systems and their cultural role historically and in contemporary society

- Work in a group setting to develop reports and presentations describing the historical development, function and sustainability of food systems in Istanbul and Turkey.

- Locate and critically evaluate information about a food system, its sustainable production philosophies, ecological and socioeconomic characteristics

- Identify and reflect on aspects of intercultural sensitivity and development.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Through experiential learning, classroom discussion and case studies, group work and individual reflections, students will learn to locate and critically evaluate information in order to identify, define, and solve problems involving sustainability, food systems in the context of regional and national culture and the environment. Students will master a body of knowledge about agro-ecosystems and concepts of sustainability, using research, cooperative learning and ethical debate as modes of inquiry. This will enhance student understanding of diverse philosophies and cultures within and across societies. Students will be required to communicate effectively in class discussions as well as in group and individual assignments. Through the perspective of food systems, culture and sustainability using a comparative framework, students will enhance their understanding of the role of creativity, innovation, discovery, and expression across disciplines and cultures, and acquire skills for effective citizenship and life-long learning.
ASSESSMENT

Students in this course will obtain points toward their final grade from tests/quizzes on readings, lectures and classroom discussions, from individual writing assignments, journaling and reflecting, from group projects and presentations, as well as from class participation.

ASSIGNMENTS AND PROJECTS

There are two sets of assignments in this course: individual assignments and group assignments. The assignments are described in detail in the following.

*Individual assignments:*

- **Reflection papers on readings.** Students are expected to write reflection papers (which shall not exceed double-spaced 2 pages) on the readings of some weeks (of students’ choice) when there are not any scheduled site excursions. The reflection papers are not expected to be summaries of the readings. Rather, they will critically discuss and highlight the important points of the readings in a comparative framework (with the help of other weeks’ readings, classroom discussions and students’ own experiences). They are expected to be well organized and analytically well thought. Ideally each reflection paper will end by raising new questions about the subject matter in hand.

  The students will submit 4 reading reflection papers and they will be graded by the best 3 among the 4. Each paper is due on the day of the readings. I will not accept late papers without legitimate excuses.

- **Reflection papers on site excursions.** Students are expected to write reflection papers (which shall not exceed double-spaced 2 pages) on the site excursions. The reflection papers on excursions are intended to offer a critical evaluation of the student’s experience on the site. These will include the highlights of the visit (from the point of view of the student) as well as the student’s thoughts, feelings, and findings about the excursion. These reflections are expected to be informed by our classroom discussions and readings from other weeks.

  The students will submit 4 site reflection papers and they will be graded by the best 3 among the 4. Each paper is due for the consecutive meeting following the excursion. I will not accept late papers without legitimate excuses.

- **Class participation.** Attendance is mandatory. Furthermore, I strongly recommend you to participate in classroom discussions and actively engage with the lectures with your questions, comments, and criticisms. Participation involves not only coming to class but completing all of the required readings. On ordinary class days, I also encourage you to bring to class relevant materials (short readings, comestibles, etc.) that might enhance the discussions.

*Group Projects:*

In the second week of the classes I will provide you with a list of five problem (research) areas in relation to studying food, culture and sustainability issues (such as street foods, organic farming in Turkey, eating-out scene in Istanbul, “Turkish cuisine”, etc.) and ask you to pick your top 3. I will then arrange groups of 3-5 based on your topic choices. Note that I am not expecting you to have a thorough knowledge about the research areas (questions) that you pick for your group assignments. This exercise is intended to encourage your intellectual curiosity and sociological imagination.
about issues related to food and culture. I hope that with the help of readings, classroom discussions and site excursions you will already be developing a sense of awareness and a will to know more about food in the course of the semester.

- **First group assignment:** The groups develop an outline of their group project that includes an introductory paragraph for each major section of the project (such as history, current structure, sustainability analysis including economic, sociopolitical and environmental sustainability). This exercise will help you to formulate and systematically explore some of your emerging interests in this field. This may also be an incentive and a motivation for you to start thinking about your final projects.

- **Midterm assignment:** This is going to be a power point presentation prepared by the groups to be delivered to the class (and turn in to me) that describes what they have developed to date on their final project. This will include your thoughts on: why you find this particular research area important to study; how this question links not only with other questions of food, culture and sustainability but also with larger social and cultural issues; what you hope to learn after studying these issues. This assignment is due in class on the 8th week.

- **Final assignment:** This is a final group paper or other creative work (such as a video or a poster presentation) of your group project. Based on your performance in your presentation for the mid-term assignment, I reserve the right to incorporate a peer-review process of your draft work to improve the final project.

**GRADING**

**CRITERIA FOR GRADING AND GRADING STANDARDS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Grading Rubric</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95+</td>
<td>Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-94</td>
<td>Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>86-89</td>
<td>Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>76-79</td>
<td>Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>66-69</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60-65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>&lt;59</td>
<td>Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary of how grades are weighted:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflection Papers on Readings</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection Papers on Site Excursions</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Group Written Assignment</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-term Project</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Project</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Grade</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## WEEK 1

### Is it really “what you eat is who you are”?

*Eating involves more than nourishment; it is never purely biological. Eating practices and food are loaded with cultural and symbolic meanings that often change across time and space. Class, gender, and race shape and structure food choices. This section deals with the social and cultural aspects of food consumption and introduces students to a sociologically and historically informed approach to food.*


## WEEK 2

### What is Turkish food?

*Food cultures show a great versatility across Turkey as anywhere else in the world. Diverse climatic conditions, rich ethnic differences and local culinary traditions all define what are considered to be local/regional foods in different parts of the country. This section problematizes the concept of Turkish food and draws attention to the difficulties of naming culinary traditions in national terms. It also approaches the question of sustainability from a historico-cultural perspective.*


## WEEK 3

### Can you find pork in Istanbul?

*Kadıköy is the oldest settlement in Istanbul. It has been home to many civilizations including Persians, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, and Ottomans. Fortunately, contemporary Kadıköy neighborhood still carries the marks of this rich history. The neighborhood offers a glance of its multi-religious and multi-ethnic past. This week we are going to visit Kadıköy market place to explore the traditional market places and its food scene and have a chance to relate these to its rich history.*

WEEK 4

Does food matter politically?

There is a strong relation between food and power. How do social and political processes shape food habits and their perceptions among people? This is the fundamental question that we are going to explore in this section through the example of seafood culture in Turkey and döner kebap trade among Turkish migrants in Germany.


***First written group assignments are due.***

WEEK 5

Can kokoreç be European?

Street food is very popular in Turkey with all kinds of varieties including döner, stuffed mussels, grilled meatballs, grilled intestines, tripe soup and kokoreç. Kokoreç is grilled version of sheep’s intestines soaked in fat. During public discussions on Turkey’s accession to the European Union, the question of whether kokoreç can survive under high hygiene standards in EU countries has been a hotly debated issue in Turkey. That is to say even street food can be highly politicized. We are going to make street food excursions in Taksim and observe how different varieties of street food are cooked and traded.


WEEK 6

How does one define cuisine?

What does it take to have a cuisine? How does it evolve historically? Does it really matter to have a cuisine? We are going to explore these and similar questions in this class to see that “to have a cuisine” is a multidimensional and a complex process that involves cultural, historical, and ecological elements and processes.


### WEEK 7

Study Tour to Rome

### WEEK 8

**Are spices good for thought?**

*Many people argue that the thirst for spices in the old world led to the discovery of the New World. Istanbul has always been an important node in the flows of food and people from one corner of the world to the other. Perhaps, there is no better place than the Spice Market in Istanbul, a place that has been a witness to these flows for centuries. This week we are going to visit the *Spice Market in Eminönü* for exploring spice culture and older ways and venues for food shopping.*


### WEEK 9

**Does agriculture have anything to do with gambling?**

*Agricultural structures are currently undergoing a significant transformation. Older ways of producing food are replaced by the newer ones with significant global connections. This section explores the ways in which Turkish agriculture is changing and the implications of these changes for sustainability of rural livelihoods.*


### WEEK 10

**Is organic farming an alternative to conventional farming?**

*This week we are going to meet on a Saturday at 10 in the *organic market* that is regularly held on Saturdays in *Şişli* neighborhood. This is the first and the largest organic market in Istanbul. Since spring is the richest season in terms of the availability of fresh produce, there we will have the chance to observe and explore the range of vegetables and fruits available in Turkey. Necessary arrangements will be made for your transportation to the market.*

What does a Turkish village look like? Or, is there a Turkish village?

This is a follow-up class to the discussions of the previous two weeks. We are going to look at the consequences of transformations in Turkish agriculture for village structures.


---

**WEEK 11**

Are food co-ops sustainable?

Being aware of the ongoing problems in Turkish agriculture and rural areas, many people are exploring new ways of accessing to good quality food. Food co-ops are one of them. For many eliminating intermediaries in the food chain render them both producer and consumer friendly and is a means to address various problems arising from the growing distance between the table and the farm. We are going to be visiting a **food co-op at Boğaziçi University** and talk to co-op people (students and staff) about their take on the questions of sustainability and just fair trade degil miydi bu trade.


---

**WEEK 12**

Is development always desirable? At what cost?

*Rural areas in Turkey are facing hard challenges in terms of environmental sustainability. We are going to explore environmental problems and different approaches to these problems. The role of the state and its developmentalist policies in creating substantial environmental stress on land resources will also be examined.*


“Dwindling farm water threatens Turkish disaster,” The Independent. 24 September 2007.

What does it mean to have fair trade?

We are going to make an excursion to the Gündönümü farm in Silivri (for some pictures, see [http://berceste.blogspot.com/2011/06/gundonumu-2011.html](http://berceste.blogspot.com/2011/06/gundonumu-2011.html)) This farm is a good example of environmentally and socially responsive animal husbandry. It is also well known for its novel ways of distributing and trading milk.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Regular attendance and punctuality are mandatory in order to earn full marks. The final grade will take into consideration preparation required for class (i.e. readings) and participation in class discussions. If you miss any meetings without an excused absence from the on-site director, your final grade will be dropped accordingly. In the case of absences, it is the student’s responsibility to find out what information was given in class including any announcements made.

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else’s work as your own, can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:

SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY:
Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.

Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an “F” or “N” for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

STUDENT CONDUCT
The University of Minnesota has specific policies concerning student conduct and student needs. This information can be found on the Learning Abroad Center website.