WGSS S263E **Rye: Cultural History and Embodied Practice**

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Meets T/Th 1-2:15 ET

July 4-August 5 2022

Based in methodology from gender and sexuality studies, we use the grain rye as a focal point to offer a highly interdisciplinary exploration of the biology, agriculture, changing cultural importance, culinary practice and mythology around “rye.”  Part of a collaboration between Yale and the Bread Lab at WSU, this class will include an examination of when, how and where desire for rye food products flourished and waned, how different knowledges co-exist about “rye” including the embodied practices of women who bake with rye as well as the knowledge that rye itself might contain.

Each week of class consists of two 75 minute discussions, approximately 70 pages of reading, and 3 hours of pre-recorded material some of which will be virtual field trips and some of which will ask you to engage in embodied practice (often baking) which may take another few hours.

This course will also offer WR credit. Each week will have a 4 page paper using a technique of historical, ethnographic or scientific writing. We will discuss these approaches in class and offer one-on-one paper consultations. In addition, for each weekly embodied practice, you will write a one page sensory ethnography on your experience.

Week 1: **Reconceptualizing plants and grasses**

Much recent scholarship invites us to rethink how we tell stories about plants, and particularly about how to de-center humans in our histories of plants. This week, we will consider some of these new historiographical approaches as well as encounter rye in real time and take a moment to use all of our senses in the encounter.

Embodied Practice: Take a selfie in a rye field near you or come to class in a rye field

Virtual Field Trip: Watching Yale Farm rye grow: Prerecorded

Video Introduction: Who we are and why we are teaching this: Prerecorded

Readings:

July 5 Michael Pollan The Botany of Desire Introduction

Robin Wall Kimmerer, Braiding Sweetgrass, “Mishkos Kenomagwen: The teachings of grass”

Francesca Bray, “Underground Inspirations: Tuber Sciences and Their Histories,” Isis 112, no. 3 (September 1, 2021): 548–63

July 7: Sarah Pink, Sensory Ethnography (2009), Ch 3 “Preparing for sensory research: practical and orientation issues” pp 51-70

Stanley Ginsburg The Rye Baker (2016) pp 8-25.

SE1 due July 8

Paper 1 due July 11

Week 2: **Cultures of Rye**

This week will explore how practices with rye became part of cultural identities in the ancient world and in early modern northern and eastern Europe.

Embodied Practice: Baking an Estonian rye bread: Prerecorded

Embodied Practice: Making porridge from old rye bread: Prerecorded

Virtual Field Trip: Atticus Bakery: Prerecorded

Virtual Field Trip: Stewards of the Land brewery and Rye IPA: Prerecorded

Readings:

July 12 Catherine Zabinski, Amber Waves: The Extraordinary Biography of Wheat from Wild Grass to World Mega-Crop (2020), Ch. 2 “The First Encounter” pp 23-43

Arranz-Ottegui, et al, “Archeobotanical evidence reveals the origins of bread 14,400 years ago in northeastern Jordan,” PNAS July 31 2018, pp 7925-7930.

Randi Haaland, “Porridge and Pot, Bread and Oven: Food Ways and Symbolism in Africa and the Near East from the Neolithic to the Present,” Cambridge Archeological Journal 17:2(2007), 167-83.

July 14 Paolo Squatriti's “Rye’s Rise and Rome’s Fall”in Late Antique Archaeology 12(1): 160-169 (October 2016)

Jim Scott Against the Grain Ch. 4

Gilgamesh, trans. Stephen Mitchell, Pp. 76-87

SE2 due July 15

Paper 2 due July 18

Week 3: **Russia and Rye**

How economic, political and social forces shape the agricultural and culinary roles of rye using the example of Russia.

Embodied Practice: Darra Goldstein shows us how to make Sofia Tolstaya’s rye bread crumb pudding

July 19 Darra Goldstein, The Kingdom of Rye, (2022)

July 21 Darra Goldstein visits our class

SE3 due July 22

Paper 3 due July 25

Week 4: **Rye** in **17-19th C.** **New England**

Rye was a widespread crop in colonial New England villages: we will explore how physiological and chemical properties of rye shaped its circulation in small towns and villages and get to explore some historical primary sources.

Virtual Field Trip: Historic Manhattan cocktail making at Ordinary: Prerecorded

Virtual Field Trip: Rye distilling at Litchfield Distillery: Prerecorded

Embodied Practice: Three grain bread baking from 1830 cookbook: Prerecorded

Embodied Practice: Laura, Jeremy and Maria re-enact 1800 dinner with rye whiskey

Readings:

July 26

MK Matossian, “Ergot and the Salem Witchcraft Affair,” American Scientist (1982)

Emerson Baker, A Storm of Witchcraft, (2015) Ch. 4 “The Afflicted”

July 28

Harris Cooper, American History through a Whiskey Glass (2021) Chapter 2.

Darwin P. Kelsey (1980) Early New England Farm crops

<http://resources.osv.org/explore_learn/document_viewer.php?DocID=779>

Diary of Horace Clark, 1836-67, farmer in Granby, CT

<http://resources.osv.org/explore_learn/document_viewer.php?DocID=1160>

Examination of 18th and 19th c. American cookbooks at <https://d.lib.msu.edu/fa>

SE4 due July 29

Paper 4 due August 1

Week 5: **Future of rye**

Rye and humans are currently rediscovering one another. What potential does rye offer for addressing some of our challenges in climate change, nutrition, and soil preservation?

Embodied Practice: Rye cookies: Prerecorded

Interview panel with rye farmers: Prerecorded

Interviews with bakers who use rye: Prerecorded

Reading:

August 2: “Rye and Health” review in Trends in Food Science and Technology (2018)

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tifs.2018.06.018>

Kaisa Poutanen, “What is so good about Rye? A Finnish and Nordic Perspective” (2021)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-MWjPA5UcDs&list=PLBAGLj4R2H5shuPidiLV82htDSOONAgvB&index=5>

“Cover Crops, a Farming Revolution with deep Roots in the Past,” NYTimes 2/7/2016

Basche, et al, “Simulating Long Term Impacts of Cover Crops on Climate Change and Crop Production and Environmental Outcomes in the Midwestern United States,” Agriculture, Ecosystems and Environment 218 (2016): 95-106.

August 4: Steven Jones, Founder of the Bread Lab as guest in class

SE 5 due August 5

Paper 5 due August 8