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.

**Readings:**

*July 4* 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 6* Sarah Pink, *Sensory Ethnography* (2009), Ch 3 “Preparing for sensory research: practical and orientation issues” pp 51-70
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
Virtual Field Trip: Atticus Bakery: Prerecorded
Virtual Field Trip: Stewards of the Land brewery and Rye IPA: Prerecorded

Readings:

July 13 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

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: Making porridge from old rye bread: Prerecorded

July 18 Darra Goldstein, *The Kingdom of Rye* (2022), Intro and Chapters 1 and 2
July 20 Goldstein, Coda, and Tae-Ho Kim, “The Good, the Bad, and the Foreign: Trajectories of Three grains in modern South Korea.”

SE3 due July 21
Paper 3 due July 23
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:**
Virtual Field Trip: Rye distilling at Litchfield Distillery: Prerecorded
Embodied Practice: Three grain bread baking from 1836 cookbook: Prerecorded
Embodied Practice: Laura, Jeremy and Maria re-enact 1800 dinner with rye whiskey

**Readings:**
July 25

July 27
Darwin P. Kelsey (1980) Early New England Farm crops
Diary of Horace Clark, 1836-67, farmer in Granby, CT
Examination of 18th and 19th c. American cookbooks at https://d.lib.msu.edu/fa

SE4 due July 28
Paper 4 due July 30

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
Virtual Field Trip to Chimacum Valley Grainery: Prerecorded
Interviews with bakers who use rye: Prerecorded

**Reading:**
August 1: “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

August 3: “Cover Crops, a Farming Revolution with deep Roots in the Past,” NYTimes 2/7/2016

SE 5 due August 4
Paper 5 due August 6