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, 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. Four weeks will require a 4 page paper using a technique of historical or ethnographic 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.

July 2 Class 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. Today, we will consider some of these new historiographical approaches.

Readings:
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 4 Class 2: Introduction to Sensory Ethnography
We invite you to engage all of your senses in your encounters with rye. Today, we read some theory and a sensuous example of rye writing, and then encounter rye in real time and take a moment to use all of our senses in the encounter.

Virtual Field Trip: Watching Yale Farm rye grow: Prerecorded
Embodied Practice: Exploration with rye grains and rye head
Readings:
Sarah Pink, Sensory Ethnography (2009), Ch 3 “Preparing for sensory research: practical and orientation issues” pp 51-70

SE1 due July 5
Paper 1 due July 7

July 9 Class 3: Cultures of Rye
Today, we will explore how practices with rye became part of cultural identities in the ancient world and in early modern northern and eastern Europe. We will also consider how bread and beer have become central to many societies.

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 11 Class 4 Rye and the Origins of Western States
Whether farmers grow rye and whether people eat rye bread and drink rye beer can depend on the organization of the state.

Readings: 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 12
Paper 2 due July 14

July 16 Class 5: Rye and the Modern State
We will explore how two different twentieth century states shape grain’s agricultural and consumption patterns.

Audio: Podcast with Darra Goldstein on the history of rye in Russia
Darra Goldstein, *The Kingdom of Rye*, (2022), Coda
Tae-Ho Kim, “The Good, the Bad, and the Foreign: Trajectories of Three grains in modern South Korea.”

**July 18 Class 6 Rye in Nineteenth C. New England**
In which we transport ourselves back to the hey-day of rye in New England with lots of primary sources and re-creations.

Virtual Field Trip: Rye distilling at Litchfield Distillery: Prerecorded
Virtual Field Trip: Skagit Valley Malting: Prerecorded
Embodied Practice: Making Porridge: Prerecorded
Embodied Practice: Laura, Jeremy and Maria re-enact 1800 dinner with rye whiskey:

Darwin P. Kelsey (1980) Early New England Farm crops
Diary of Horace Clark, 1836-67, farmer in Granby, CT
Examination of three 19th c. American cookbooks at [https://d.lib.msu.edu/fa](https://d.lib.msu.edu/fa)
“Introduction” to Samuel M’Harry, *The Practical Distiller* (1809)

**SE3 due July 19**
**Paper 3 due July 21**

**July 23 Class 7: Nutrition, Flavor and Contemporary Bakers**
Interviews with contemporary bakers who are passionate about rye will be our ethnographic primary sources.

Embodied Practice: Rye cookies: Prerecorded
Interviews with bakers who use rye: Prerecorded

Readings:
“Rye and Health” review in *Trends in Food Science and Technology* (2018)
[https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tifs.2018.06.018](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](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-MWjPA5UcDs&list=PLBAGLj4R2H5shuPidiLV82htDSOONAgvB&index=5)

**July 25 Class 8: Rye, Soil Health and Climate Change**
What challenges and opportunities face contemporary farmers as they decide how much of their fields to devote to growing rye?
Interview panel with rye farmers: Prerecorded
Virtual Field Trip to Chimacum Valley Grainery: Prerecorded

“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,

SE4 due July 26
Paper 4 due July 28

July 30 Class 9: Ergot, Rye and the Salem Witch Trial
We will use a trial format to consider the challenges of evidence and historical causality in
assessing rye’s role in witchcraft.

Embodied Practice: Three-Grain bread

“Pride and Prejudice: The Story of Ergot” J. W. Bennett, Ronald Bentley Perspectives in Biology
and Medicine, Volume 42, Number 3, Spring 1999, pp. 333-355

August 1 Class 10: Concluding Discussion
This class will be an opportunity to reflect on the development of your r(y)elationship and how
you fared maintaining the intellectual and personal commitments you wrote about in your first
paper.

SE 5 due August 1