A Guide to Queer World-Making
What is Queering Food?

This zine shares some of the work completed by students in GSFS 430: Queering Food, taught by Prof. Carly Thomsen in the spring of 2017 at Middlebury College. This zine is, in part, a response to Elliott Hamilton’s article “5 Courses at Middlebury College That Will Send Your Face Through a Desk,” which was published on a conservative website in the wake of Charles Murray’s visit to campus that put Middlebury in the national spotlight. The article targets the Program in Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies and connects — with no evidence whatsoever — GSFS to the protests around Charles Murray. The goal of the article is to tear down GSFS and to make its courses seem “categorically insane.” Queering Food not only made the list of top fives most useless classes, but many of the 51 reader comments on the article were directed at our class. These included, for example, “#blacklivesmatter,” and “let’s not even get into the plight of black beans” — comments that simultaneously mock our class as well as broader attempts to name and eradicate racism. This is our attempt to share some of the insights we developed through our class and to counter the attacks on our class.

Within this class, we worked to articulate a feminist/queer/crip/racially just/pro-worker food justice politics. To do so, we drew from a wide range of scholarship, including that which focuses on race, sexuality, gender, class, disability, and geography. We discussed food justice in terms of: embodiment and excess, production and consumption, home, toxicity and “the natural,” reproductive futurity, borders, animal/human relations, incarceration, globalization, and alternative food movements’ reliance on discourses of local/organic/sustainable — among many other topics. Our goal was to develop a finer grain understanding of dominant food systems, alternative food movements, and food justice. Our projects reflect some of these themes:

- **Food + Porn** (Caroline, Aliza, and Hana): A research paper that examines the ways in which food functions in pornographic videos as sites for the racialization and sexualization of bodies. This analysis examines how representations of food, eating, pleasure, and consumption within pornography reinforce, challenge, or subvert dominant ideas about race, sexuality, and gender.

- **Eating Bodies at Middlebury** (Annie and Jeremy): An event at which 15 people came together in the Warner Greenhouse for an afternoon of what we called “political eating.” Participants were tasked with building a dish from a table of prepared foods. The goal was to examine “taste” in conjunction with ideas of authenticity, health, value and embodiment, and, in doing so, to consider how food can be a site for development of political subjectivities.

- **Eating for Two on WIC** (Erin): A research paper that examines food rules, pregnancy, and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) food assistance benefits in the context of food, feminist, and queer studies to analyze the relationship between food and reproductive justice.

- **A Slice of Food Justice** (Mika and Tiff): An event about food justice at which 50 participants engaged in discussion about the benefits and limits of food justice movements; focus on consuming local, organic, and sustainable foods. We focused in particular on the Vermont dairy industry.

- **A Pinch of Memes** (Sandra): These are a couple of memes that translate some of the topics of discussion in class about authenticity, gentrification, institutional racism in food systems, and the Utopian. These replicate the making and sharing of memes and their daily consumption by the social media.

---

Key Terms/Vocabulary

This is a visual representation of the key terms that we used from the readings of this course. As a class, we had a discussion on how to effectively articulate these concepts for an audience outside of the classroom. Although, it was a challenging task to translate the comprehensive readings, this is a good start in understanding the material. We hope you enjoy this zine.
On the Cover
by Sandra Ruiz

The artwork on the cover—designed by Sandra Ruiz—was inspired by our class readings and discussions. In this class, we examined the ways in which binaries inform ideas about food, embodiment, and people's social location, focusing on: (un)real, (un)natural, (ab)normal, organic/industrial, private/public, fat/thin, (non)human, (un)healthy, junk/healthy food, (in)authentic, and pure/toxic.

In the collage, we used images of vitamins found in food, a capsule that contains fruits and vegetables, and a doctor measuring a fat body. Our decision to use these images was inspired by Kim Hall's critique of the ways in which neoliberal food movements focus on "health" and the "purity" of foods can reproduce ableist, sexist, and homophobic ideas, producing, in particular, what he calls "alimentary ableism." Hall asserts that if disabled culture has a food, it is fast food, challenging understandings of food as either good or bad. We also included the image ironically telling the crowd to "Keep Calm and Eat Real Food" in reference to Hall's argument.

Our images of slaughtered animals, raw meat, and intestines reference the gruesomeness of the meat industry, as described by Eric Schlosser's exposé Fast Food Nation and Ruth Ozeki's novel My Year of Meats, both of which detail the industrialization of meat production and its negative consequences for workers and the environment. Upton Sinclair writes in his classic book The Jungle, "I aimed for the public's heart and by accident I hit them in the stomach," highlighting that consumers often care more about their own health effected by their consumption of contaminated meat than about immigrant workers' rights. A picture of Cesar Chavez represents the United Farm Worker movement that fought against low wages, health problems, and harsh working conditions. The availability of fresh foods is often connected to the gentrification of communities comprised of poor people and people of color, so we placed a statement that reads "gentrification in progress" alongside images of Whole Foods and fresh vegetables.

Drawing inspiration from Giovanna DiChiro's "Polluted Politics?: Confronting Toxic Discourse, Sex Panic, and Eco-Normativity," we used pictures of toxic pollutants spilling onto the "gay" birds (notice the rainbow birds) as crowds of people run in panic. DiChiro argues that the mainstream environmental justice movement's focus on the environmental impacts of toxins is rooted in broader fears of feminization and androgyny. The images of the toxicity arrow pointing at the pregnant woman also highlight how fears of toxicity are informing how people approach pregnancy and reproduction. The fear of the effects of toxicity on future generations references Lee Edelman's "No Future" and Jose Munoz's "Queerness as Horizon: Utopian Hermeneutics in the Face of Gay Pragmatism" in his Cruising Utopia. Edelman argues that the image of "the child" and its place in discussions of the future reproduces heteronormativity. While Edelman resists the supposed need to care about the future, Munoz suggests that focusing on the future is crucial, especially for those of us who are struggling in the present. Drawing from queer theoretical debates on futurity, we discussed how we might focus on food justice in the here and now and also discuss the food justice in the future without relying on reproductivist assumptions.

The images of the people picnicking with the lynched bodies, the slaughtered animals, and the white family with a lynched black body on the table are representations inspired by analyses made by Kyla Wazana Tompkins’s Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the 19th Century and Vincent Woodard’s, The Delectable Negro: Human Consumption and Homoeroticism within U.S. Slave Culture. These authors argue, in part, that bodies are gendered and racialized through literal and metaphorical consumption. In a bocadillo (a bite or mouthful) entitled "Necrophagy at the Lynching Block," Erin Gray writes about the history of US lynching culture and describes how white families picnicked at lynchings. The slaughtered animals also gesture towards conversations we had about the relationship between the cruelty towards animals raised for human consumption and the cruelty of food workers, who are disproportionately people of color.

Lastly, the title of the zine comes from Lauren Berlant's and Michael Warner's chapter entitled "Sex in Public" in the edited collection Intimacy, where they introduce the idea of "queer world-making" through analyzing a scene they describe as "erotic vomiting." This deeply intimate encounter takes place in public, and serves as evidence for Berlant and Warner's claim that public spaces are deeply intimate, even though we typically link intimacy with the private sphere. We often express intimacy through food and food contains possibilities for making alternate worlds, for shifting the social order. We hope you'll read our zine in this spirit.
Food + Porn
by Caroline Agsten, Aliza Cohen, Hana Gebremariam

For our final project, we conducted research regarding the ways in which food functions within pornography as a mechanism for the racialization and sexualization of the body. The questions we asked include: How does food within pornography construct, challenge, and reinforce ideas about racial, sexual, and gender ideologies? How does food within porn influence our understandings of who has access to pleasure, who deserves pleasure, and how and where we can experience pleasure? Here, we will share a condensed version of our analyses. We draw from those scholars of sex work and pornography who have examined through porn the symbolic and literal circulation of power, eroticization, and intimacy. We expand on this scholarship to consider the role of food in porn. We apply a queer feminist framework to expand, challenge, and subvert dominant ideas about the relationships among food, sex, consumption, pleasure, and the public/private spaces in which they exist. Our analysis draws considerably from the work of Juana Virginia Rodriguez, Fabio Parasecoli, Mireille Miller-Young, Evelyn Harman, and Robert Lee.

“Put Some Hot Sauce on That Burrito Baby.” Pornhub

Though perhaps not intended as a feminist video, “Put Some Hot Sauce on That Burrito Baby” subverts common tropes within pornography of the Black woman as the object of consumption. In the video, a Black woman dressed as a police officer and wearing a strap-on has tied a white man’s ankles to the legs of a table and his arms to the sides of the table. The video opens with the woman exclaiming “Well looky what we have here. Very nice!” Dousing the strap-on in hot sauce, the woman says, “You’re gonna be my spicy little meat. Oh this is gonna be yummy for me.” As the woman penetrates the man, he moans in anguish and frequently yells “No!” The scene ends with the woman orgasming, pointing a gun at the man, and saying, “Now it’s your turn. Tie me up and fuck me.” Through dialogue and action with explicit references to hot sauce and meat, the woman makes the man’s body an object of consumption. By dressing as a police officer, the woman marks herself as the one with the power to control. The video offers a site where we can clearly understand sex as political—where the racialization and the eroticization of bodies and food can reinforce racial and gender hierarchies but also where it might subvert these hierarchies.

“Naked Sushi, Blowjobs, and Anal Sex.” Pornhub

This video reinforces ideas of Asian women as promiscuous, obedient, and submissive that have long been described as Orientalist. In this video, a man eats sushi off a woman who is bound up and tied to another object to resemble a human-sized piece of sushi. She represents the meat and is the object of consumption. At the same time, the woman-as-sushi, the vehicle of food, never speaks, embodying the voiceless and passive stereotypical portrayal of Asian women in American pop culture. However, the woman herself is not Asian. Thus, in the video the sushi serves to intentionally racialize the viewer so she is coded as Asian. Another woman, dressed in a geisha costume, caters to the man throughout the entire video. She serves him the sushi on top of the other woman, undresses him, and initiates oral sex with the other woman. She says to the man, “I’ve prepared her for you. She’s very wet now.” She continues to bind the woman-as-sushi in different positions so that the man can have sex with her. Her comment and actions demonstrate aspects of gendered labor: she is the one who prepares the “food” for the man. This video clearly demonstrates the connections between eating and pleasure and desire, as eating the sushi is directly paralleled with having sex. The continuous racial impersonation and references to Japanese culture also show how eating informs the production of racial difference.

“Black BBW [Big Black Woman] Gets Hot With Food.” Pornhub

This video illustrates how black women’s consumption, both literal and metaphorical, and their bodies are understood as excess. As indicated by the title, the woman’s large size is a site of spectacle and sexual desire. However, as the video demonstrates, when black women’s sexuality is invoked, it’s often by the white imagination that eroticizes and at times exploits black women’s bodies. In this video, a white man is seen feeding large servings of macaroni and cheese to a black woman, then sucking and playing with her breasts. Macaroni and cheese is a racialized food item, often associated with Black southern cooking. In this video, it is used as a site and vehicle of sexual pleasure and used as a source of sexual and nonsexual nourishment between which there are no clear boundaries in this video. Afterwards, he pours cheese all over the woman and both parties proceed to eat the cheese off of the woman’s body. In this scene, the black woman becomes the object of consumption when he begins to eat food off of her body. Although the black woman becomes a site of consumption and sexual pleasure, the fact that she is the one who is consuming the macaroni and cheese and the satisfaction of her appetite is seen as sexual pleasure subverts tropes of black womanhood that often denies the appetite of black women.
Eating Bodies At Middlebury
by Annie Bartholomew and Jeremy Alben

Kyla Wazana Tompkins, in her book Racial Indigestion, writes that eating entails the “production of social inequality at the level of the quotidian functioning of the body,” which also reveals “fissures and openings in the body politic, spaces where political fictions are exposed, messy, and only semidigested.” We situate our project here in this messy, semidigested place of possibility and tension. In this place, bodies are always already in process, always engaged orifically with the social world in the production of political subjectivities.

For our project, we organized an event in which 15 participants came together in the Warner Greenhouse on May 12 from 3-5pm for an afternoon of political eating. Participants received envelopes containing random amounts of money and were tasked with building a dish from a table of prepared foods. The foods available represented a broad ethno-geographic terrain and be valued according to their price in Middlebury, VT. Through this grocery store simulation, students had to reconcile their own cultural norms of “good food” with varying sums of money. Some were unable afford a staple protein and settled for grains and legumes, while others had a bevy of options. While there will was no explicit instruction, sharing of funds and ingredients occurred during the preparation stage. After participants created their dishes, each one was displayed and sampled by the group.

After the activity, we entered a period of reflection on how we might think about how political subjectivities are created through food. In advance, we created a workbook containing quotes and questions to which participants were asked to respond. During this period, participants reflected on their decision making process, cultural knowledge that influenced their dishes, and opinions on fellow participants’ dishes. Following this reflection, we facilitated a group conversation on how participants’ economic constraints and available foods structured their experience.

From these personal experiences, we fleshed out the political implications of cooking and eating, considering these processes microcosms of society. In doing so, we unraveled and reconfigured notions of identity and embodiment undergirding the experience and guided participants to a more fine grit understanding of eating as a practice that produces political subjectivities. Looking at eating in this way allows for critical engagement with how identities and power relations are structured and transformed in embodied practices. It is our hope that participants took away a critical vocabulary from the event that will allow them to transform and resist the ways in which bodies are politicized through food.

These flyers were distributed throughout campus to get students to attend Annie’s and Jeremy’s event Eating Bodies at Middlebury.
A Slice of Food Justice
by Tiffany Martinez and Mika Morton

For our course project, we organized an event entitled "A Slice of Food Justice" at which participants ate pizza and discussed the benefits and limits of the mainstream food justice movements' focus on local, organic, and sustainable food production. We focused specifically on the Vermont dairy industry as a way to draw attention to Migrant Justice's Milk with Dignity campaign, which aims to improve the working conditions of Vermont dairy workers. Our goal was to reach students on campus who would not otherwise engage with food justice and to help people engage with new intellectual positions through an everyday activity: EATING! We served pizzas from American Flatbread—a local restaurant that advertises their use of local and natural foods—to highlight the ubiquity of the idea that eating local, organic, and sustainable foods is the pinnacle of progressive food politics.

We circulated pamphlets that we had made that included information on food justice movements, including how the concerns of food activists might shift if we centralized issues related to race, gender, class, and disability. Our pamphlets also included questions that we used to spur a discussion. These included: What goes into your food decisions? Do you look, for example, for local foods, organic foods, non-GMO foods, foods produced in ethical and humane ways, and so on? In what ways do labels (organic, non-GMO, local) fail to inform the consumer about the food item? Through our pamphlet and conversations, we were able to use this dinner to address issues related to food justice that get left out when we focus primarily on food consumption. We drew from course material—including feminist, queer, disability, and critical race studies—to address the ways in which milk 10th reflects and provides opportunities to challenge broader social issues.
A Rinch of Memes
by Sandra Ruiz

When a convicted felon is released from jail, in most states they will not have the right to vote (2). Black people are disproportionately incarcerated at higher rates than White people (3). This is what living in a USA, marched by systemic racism and anti-blackness, means. When you lose the right to vote, you lose less political power than those who can vote. You cannot vote for the laws and policies that affect everything—this includes the food and health systems. You cannot vote against a Lindt Date that is specialist, supports "Big Ag," is invested in the prison industrial complex, is carceral, is in carceral context. If you are a convicted felon, it is incredibly difficult to gain employment—especially if you are a convicted Black or Latino felon. When you lose your employment, it is a struggle to buy or access what you need to survive (e.g., food, housing, transportation, etc). Not being able to buy these things alone, you have lost much of your economic voting power. Hence, the systemic "good life" monarchs' mindset, "vote with your dollars," indicates that you cannot vote, so you cannot change the system in any way. Hence, this institutional system in which the political economy is seeming unaffected by the mass incarceration of Black and Brown people within the machinery of systemic racism and white supremacy, a good food system can never be achieved if systemic racism as well as the Prison Industrial Complex are not dismantled in the process (4).

Summary

When Avery Gordon gives you the inspirational words to continue the revolution

When they tell me that institutional racism doesn't exist
Objectives
- Understand food as socially, politically, discursively, historically, and geographically constructed and situated
- Explore the connections among feminism, queer, disability, and critical race studies, food studies, and food justice movements
- Analyze food as it relates to various identities and experiences (along the axes of sexuality, race, geography, class, disability, gender, religion, nation, and so on)
- Articulate how the contours of feminist and queer thought and action might be expanded through a focus on food justice and how food justice movements might benefit from engagement with feminist and queer texts and related activism

Week 1: Anti-Racist, Feminist, Queer, Crip Food Politics: Mapping the Contours through the Edible & Embodied
T 2/14
- Personal introductions, course introduction, discussion of syllabus & course expectations
Th 2/16
- Kim Hall, "Toward a Queer Crip Feminist Politics of Food," philoSOPHIA
- Elspeth Probyn, "An Ethos with a Bite: Queer Appetites from Sex to Food," Sexualities
- Jane Ward, "Feminist Foodways and Queer Eating," Feminist Pigs blog
- Amie Breeze Harper, "The Racial Privilege of Voting with Your Dollars to Create a Good Food System," The Sistah Vegan Project

Week 2: Circulating "Feminisms" and Food Systems: What are the benefits of and limits to contemporary understandings of feminism for challenging food systems?
2/21
- Allison Hayes-Conroy and Jessica Hayes-Conroy, "Taking Back Taste: Feminism, Food and Visceral Politics," Gender, Place, and Culture
- These are short blog posts. Please read each of them and think about how "feminism" circulates here. How can we draw from these texts to begin to articulate what a feminist approach to food looks like? What are the limits to these understandings and deployments of feminism? What is missing?
- Heather Laine Talley, "Food is a Feminist Issue," The Feminist Wire
- Elaine Lipson, "Food, Farming...Feminism? Why Going Organic Makes Good Sense," Ms. Magazine
2/23
- Eric Schlosser, Fast Food Nation
- In class clip: White Earth Land Recovery Project, "Manoomin: A Minnesota Way of Life"

Week 3: Food Justice for the Present? For the Future?: Drawing from Queer Theory's Debate on Futurity
2/28
- Lee Edelman, "The Future is Kid Stuff," No Future: Queer Theory and The

Week 4: Producing Place: The (Sovereign) Nation, Diaspora, Local, Global
3/9—Quiz 1
- Peter Jackson, "Thinking Geographically," Geography
- Martin Manalansan IV, "Beyond Authenticity: Rerouting the Filipino Culinary Diaspora," Eating Asian America: A Food Studies Reader
- Margaret Gray, "The Dark Side of Local," Jacobin
- UC Merced, "Most Americans Could Eat Locally, Research Shows," Food First

Week 5: Queering Borders
** Must meet THIS WEEK with Prof. Thomsen to discuss your project!**
3/14
- Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, "Sex in Public," Intimacy
- Joshua Sbicca, "These Bars Can't Hold Us Back: Blowing Incarcerated Geographies with Restorative Food Justice," Antipode
- Anna Rohleder, "Gardening Behind Bars: San Quentin's First Harvest," Civil Eats (see also the organization "Planting Justice," upon which this article is based)
3/16
- Chad Lavin, "A Year of Eating Politically," Taking Food Public
- Mark Bittman, "No Meatless Mondays at the USDA," The New York Times
- "Why Meatless?", Meatless Monday
- Damian Carrington, "Giving up Beef Will Reduce Carbon Footprint More Than Cars, Experts Say," The Guardian
- In class screening: Cowspiracy

Week 6: On Toxicity, Organics, and the "Natural"
3/21—Project and Paper Proposal Due
- Julie Guthman, "Fast Food/GMO Food: Reflexive Tastes and the Making
Week 7: Consuming the Other
4/4
- Kyla Wazana Tompkins, "Introduction," Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the 19th Century
- Vincent Woodard, "Introduction," The Delectable Negro: Human Consumption and Homeroiticism within U.S. Slave Culture
- Erin Gray, "Necrophagy at the Lynching Body," GLQ
- Nina Martyris, "Frederick Douglass on How Slave Owners Used Food as a Weapon of Control," National Public Radio
4/6—Quiz 2
- Sunaura Taylor, "Vegans, Freaks, and Animals: Toward a New Table Fellowship," American Quarterly
- Laurent Berlant and Jordan Alexander Stein, "Cruising Veganism," GLQ

Week 8: Thinking Production Queerly
4/11
- David Goodmand and E. Melanie DuPuis, "Knowing Food and Growing Food: Beyond the Production—Consumption Debate in the Sociology of Agriculture," Sociologia Ruralis
- Leah Penniman, "Radical Farmers Use Fresh Food to Fight Racial Injustice and the New Jim Crow," yes! Magazine
- Amanda Kolson Hurley, "No, Your Kid May Not Have a Snack," Chicago Tribune
4/13
- Nina Ichikawa, "Giving Credit Where It Is Due: Asian American Farmers and Retailers as Food System Pioneers," Eating Asian America: A Food Studies Reader
- Margot Sanger-Katz, "Giving the Poor Easy Access to Healthy Food Doesn't Mean They'll Buy It," The New York Times
- Benjamin Wright, "Wild Food Foraging: Culinary Revolution or Passing Trend?" Highbrow Magazine

Week 9: Food, Place, and the Politics of "Home"
4/18
- Melanie DuPuis and David Goodman, "Should We Go 'Home' to Eat?" Toward a Reflexive Politics of Localism," Journal of Rural Studies
4/20
- Robert Ji-Song Ku, "Gannenshoyu or First-Year Soy Sauce? Kikkoman Soy Sauce and the Corporate Forgetting of the Early Japanese American

Week 10: On Embodiment and "Excess"
4/25
- Lauren Berlant, "America, Fat, The Fetus," The Queen of America Goes to Washington City
- Kathleen LeBesco, "On Fatness and Fluidity: A Meditation," Queering Fat Embodiment
- Sam Collins, "What Happened When Scientists Put African Americans on an African Diet and Africans on an American Diet?", Think Progress
4/27
- Robyn Longhurst, "Queering Body Size and Shape: Performativity, the Closet, Shame and Orientation," Queering Fat Embodiment
- April Herndon, "Disparate but Disabled: Fat Embodiment and Disability Studies," Feminist Disability Studies
- Guy Schaffer, "Queering Waste through Camp," Discard Studies: Social Studies of Waste, Pollution, and Externalities

Week 11: Something More Powerful than Skepticism: Creative Approaches to Food
5/2
- Avery Gordon, "Something More Powerful than Skepticism," Keeping Good Time
- Kyla Wazana Tompkins and dirtysurface, "Sweetness and Light," GLQ
- Juana Maria Rodriguez, "Viscous Pleasures and Unruly Feminisms," GLQ
- Food First Comics: Exploding the Myth of Scarcity!, Institute for Food and Development Policy (note that this was published in 1982)
5/4—Take-Home Quiz 3 due
- Ruth Ozeki, My Year of Meats

Special thanks to Professor Carly Thomsen for teaching GSFS 430 for the first time at Middlebury College.