Western University
Department of English and Writing Studies

English 9185: Early Modern Food from Shakespeare to Milton
Spring/Summer 2020

Instructor: Dr. Madeline Bassnett Time: Tuesday and Friday 10-12
Office Hours: Zoom meetings by appointment Place: Zoom
Email: m.bassnett@uwo.ca

Course Description
Today, food reflects ethical, cultural, and spiritual identities, reveals political attitudes, and inspires
emotions of delight and disgust. But we aren’t the first to be obsessed by food and its discourses.
Early modern English writers likewise used the language of nourishment to define religious and
national identities, to assert and resist hierarchies of class and gender through practices such as
hospitality and gift-giving, and to examine topics such as pleasure, sustainability, and the fear of and
desire for the unknown. In looking at food, this class aims to introduce a rich and growing field of
research that is open to a wide range of historical, theoretical, and critical exploration. We will take
a new look at familiar texts, such as Shakespeare’s Titus Andronicus, with its final scene of
unwitting cannibalism, and Milton’s Paradise Lost, with its depiction of a world destroyed by an act
of eating. But we will also consider lesser-known material, such as Margaret Cavendish’s Poems
and Fancies, in which death is likened to a cook, and Elizabeth Clinton’s Countesse of Lincolnes
Nurserie, a pamphlet advocating the primal work of maternal breastfeeding. As well, we’ll examine
the recipe book—a genre central to early modern food studies—to discuss theories and practices of
cookery, do some cooking, and make a virtual visit to an archive.

Learning Outcomes and Objectives
Experience the field of early modern food studies
Integrate theory and practice
Further develop research and presentation skills
Engage closely with primary and secondary texts
Initiate and pursue discussions
Write in a variety of forms
Investigate archival material

Texts
Thomas Deloney, Jack of Newbury, Broadview (preferable)
Online, original spelling edition:
http://catalog.lambertvillelibrary.org/texts/English/deloney/jack/jack_of_newbury.htm

Robert Greene,

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Your three questions might try to get the class to assess or further your arguments and suggestions;

they might addr ess top ics you didn’t have time to discuss during your presentation.

Guidelines for the narrated PowerPoint to come.

Online Seminar R eponses 10% (for 8 responses)

After watching/listening to posted seminars, please post a short response to o ne of the questions

asked by the presenter. Your r esponses may build on/respond to earlier posts, or they can stand

on their own. Response posts must be completed by midnight on Monday and Thursday. This will

give me time to read the responses and use them to deepen our discussions on Tuesday and

Friday.

Guidelines for posting respo nses to come.

NOTE: You do not have to post a response if you’re presenting a Secondary Source mini-paper.

NOTE: On days with two seminars, you only have to respond to one. You will be expected to

have listened to both.

Mini-papers (4) 35%

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‣ Robert Greene, Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay
‣ Wendy Wall, “The erotics of milk and live food, or, ingesting early modern Englishness”
(OWL)
‣ Dietary and Housewifery manuals on milk: Andrew Boorde, Here Followeth a Compendious
Regiment, or Dietarie of Health; Thomas Elyot, The Castell of Health; William Vaughan,
Directions for Health, Gervase Markham, The English Housewife (OWL)

Thursday May 21: Clinton Seminar posted by noon
Post responses by midnight

Friday May 22: Homegrown Milk Zoom Discussion 10-12
‣ Elizabeth Clinton, Countess of Lincoln, Countesse of Lincolnes Nurserie (EEBO/OWL)
‣ Thomas Moffat, “Of Milk” in Health’s Hᑦ呓 o@def倸MԠ@º䃰º䃰º䃰º䃰º䃰º䃰º㋮쫍ᖮ

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June 8: Shakespeare Seminars (2) posted by noon
Post responses by midnight

June 9: Cannibalism Zoom Discussion 10-12
‣ William Shakespeare, Titus Andronicus
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