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In addition to teaching courses such as Integrative Approaches to Human Biology and Society (SOC GEN 5), and Politics of Reproduction (SOCIOL M164), Landecker teaches the fiat lux seminar *Food Politics* (SOC GEN 19).

## HOW HAS FOOD CHANGED FROM THE PAST?

Food has become industrialized. Plants and animals have been bred for the demands of industrial agriculture, for example corn stalks that are strong enough to stand up to corn-picking machines. A lot of food is highly processed now, by the time people eat it.

## WHAT IS THE TRUTH BEHIND COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS REGARDING NUTRITION TODAY?

1. Food is **not** black and white. Usually food can not be permanently labeled as good or bad. Ultimately it's all about moderation and the amount of the food we consume.
2. **Volume.** Sometimes it's not necessarily what we eat, but how much we eat of something.
3. Consuming extracted nutrients from food will not necessarily give us the same benefits as eating the foods themselves. Benefits from food depends heavily on external factors. It could depend on how you are eating it, how that nutrient combines with all the other chemicals



## THE TAKE-HOME MESSAGE ON NUTRITION

**Do your research.** Because of the rise of the slow food and organic local food movements, there are a lot of educational resources out there to help you learn about food, health and the environment. We live in a culture that is becoming increasingly aware of food issues, and food is a central political issue. Therefore, the first thing to do is to see what you want to get from your food. Figure out what is **your** highest priority. It could be environmental (where your food comes from), or focused on fighting a certain condition (maybe one that runs in your family that you know you are susceptible too). Then read up on it, and take what you read with a grain of salt. **Know your sources.**

## FOOD POLITICS (SOC GEN 19)

In today's world, food is increasingly understood as carrier of health-enhancing or health-endangering substances. Issues of who should eat what, how food should be regulated, where line between food and medicine lies in gray area of nutritional supplements, and industrialization of agriculture are all sites of potent political controversy. Examination of issues such as vitamins, food safety, and new scientific ideas about nutrition and metabolism and their social implications through intensive discussion. Study of how science and society intersect, and how biology and social science try to understand these phenomena with different methods

## FOOD AND MEDICINE ARE COLLAPSING INTO ONE ANOTHER.

Functional foods promise to enhance your health, for example oat products like cereals say they'll reduce cholesterol or yoghurt that is advertised for its ability to improve digestion.

## OBESITY IS A SCIENTIFIC PROBLEM.

Obesity has become a central biomedical research focus in the United States and around the world, with researchers looking for genetic, environmental, and epigenetic causes. Epigenetics is the study of gene expression, and some scientists think the food environment, particularly in early development, can change patterns of gene expression related to metabolism and therefore obesity.