GHENT UNIVERSITY

Course Specifications

Valid as from the academic year 2026-2027

Research Seminar: World History (A005254)

Course size *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

Credits 5.0 **Study time 150 h**

Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2026-2027

A (semester 1)	English	Gent	lecture
			group work
			seminar

Lecturers in academic year 2026-2027

Barré, Louise	LW03	lecturer-in-charge
Coghe, Samuël	LW03	co-lecturer

Offered in the following programmes in 2026-2027	**crdts**	**offering**
Master of Science in Teaching in Arts and Humanities (main subject History)	5	A
Master of Arts in Global Studies	5	A
Master of Arts in History	5	A
Exchange Programme Global Studies and World Societies	5	A
Exchange Programme History	5	A

Teaching languages

English

Keywords

Global History, Food, Political economy, Consumption

Position of the course

This seminar will explore global history through the lens of the history of food and consumption.
At the crossroads of agricultural history, science and technology studies, political economy, social and cultural studies, food will be analyzed through a *longue-durée* perspective from the early modern period to the present. The intercontinental exchange of crops, the provisioning of transatlantic ships, the accommodation of elites' tastes for far-away products, generated specialized agriculture, trading networks and technological innovation to deliver foodstuffs. This course draws on the conceptual frameworks of sociology, anthropology and political economy to examine empirical case studies on food circulation, processing and consumption, both in Europe and beyond. As an entry to the study of global history, stress will be put on interconnectedness between different parts of the world, the chronology of expanding networks of trade and the expansion of a "middling cuisine" (Laudan, 2013), while acknowledging how successive world orders also fostered food deprivation either for specific periods of time (wars, economic crisis) or more structurally for a vast array of the world's population. By looking at consumption practices, this course will also pay attention to geographical and historical specificities, taking the African continent as a focus point. Doing so, this course will recount how global phenomena have sharply different effects depending on ecologies, household structures, labour division, social hierarchies.... The course also draws attention to the multiscaled actors of those changes, such as states, agro-businesses, international organizations, merchant diasporas, doctors and consumers, households and cooks.

Contents

This course mainly consists of a discussion between students about the assigned

readings. Preliminary readings and active participation in class are necessary to succeed in the final evaluations. A short lecture summarizes the main takeaways from the readings and reflects on applied methodologies to do global history. Students will acquire a solid conceptual background to analyze food, through successive inquiry into its economic, social, (geo)-political, environmental and cultural aspects. At the same time, this course aims to strengthen their skills as historians, which requires mainly the ability to assess the quality of information. Working with large amounts of information drawn from secondary literature and primary sources, students will learn to identify how an argument is made, and to assess whether it can be sustained in other contexts. In group discussions and written assessments, student get to critically engage with a field by identifying its concepts or points of contentions, while learning to establish cross-referenced information themselves. Themes and readings for each class are chosen in order to make students experience the way historians write global history, which sources they use and which analytical perspective they choose. In the end, students will be able to conceive a research paper that has a global reach, either through its theme (connections, circulations, hybridization), its object (world events, networks of people, commodity chains), its methodology (comparison, biographies, transfer of concepts).
Detailed expectations for the assignments are laid down in class at least a couple of weeks before the actual evaluation. Final grading is based on pre-circulated guidelines where required skills and outputs are explicitly addressed.

Initial competences

Bachelor degree

Final competences

1 To have the ability to take a critical approach to the history of a particular period or subject.
2 To have the ability to elaborate complex tasks within an interdisciplinary group
3 To have general insight into the field's literature (also in another language than Dutch), and the ability to use sources (also in another language than Dutch) in an original and creative way.
4 To have the ability to critically assess knowledge production processes over a specific place, or through certain types of documents.
5 To possess the techniques required to independently collect, criticise, and process historical sources and literature (also in another language than Dutch), and to integrate these in a historical argument.
6 To be able to give a nuanced interpretation and correct presentation of the results of one's own research in the form of a report, thesis or article.
7 To have the ability to write down the results of one's own historical scientific research in a clearly structured, academically justified text, written in a clear and academically correct language

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is determined after successful competences assessment

Conditions for exam contract

Access to this course unit via an exam contract is unrestricted

Teaching methods

Group work, Seminar, Lecture

Extra information on the teaching methods

Classes, group work, independent work.
students always have access to PowerPoint slides which introduce the week's themes and readings.

There is no recording of the lecture.

Study material

Type: Syllabus

Name: Syllabus
Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty
Optional: no

Language : English
Available on Ufora : Yes
Online Available : No
Available in the Library : No
Available through Student Association : No

Type: Reader

Name: Readings (articles and book chapters)
Indicative price: Free or paid by faculty
Optional: no
Available on Ufora : Yes

References

Bentley, Amy (dir.), *A Cultural History of Food in the Modern Age*, Londres, Berg, 2012.
Cohen, Benjamin, Michael S. Kideckel and Anna Zeide, *Acquired Tastes. Stories about the Origins of Modern Food*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2021.
Cox, M. E. and C. Morelon (eds.), *Hunger Redraws the Map: Food, State, and Society in the Era of the First World War*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2025, pp. 319–339.
Folke Ax Chritina, Niels Brimnes, Niklas Thode Jensen, Karen Oslund, *Cultivating the Colonies: Colonial States and their Environmental Legacies*, Ohio University Press, 2011
Laudan, Rachel, *Cuisine and Empire. Cooking in World History*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2013.
Lopes, Maria-Aparecida and María Cecilia Zuleta, *Foodways in the Twentieth-Century City*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2025.
McMichael, Philip, "A Food Regime Genealogy", *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol. 36, n° 1, 2009, pp. 139–169.
Mintz, Sydney, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*, New York, Viking, 1985.
Nützenadel, Alexander and Frank Trentmann (eds.), *Food and Globalization. Consumption, Markets and Politics in the Modern World*, Londres, Berg, 2008.
Ó Gráda Cormac, *Eating People Is Wrong, and Other Essays on Famine, Its Past, and Its Future*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2015
Pilcher J., *Food in World History*, (3rd edition), Routledge, London, 2023.
Sen, Amartya, *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1981.
Topik, Steven C. and Allen Wells, *Global Markets Transformed, 1870–1945*, Cambridge/Londres, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2012.

Course content-related study coaching

Via Ufora, email

Assessment moments

end-of-term and continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Oral assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Written assessment

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Participation, Peer and/or self assessment, Assignment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

examination during the second examination period is not possible

Extra information on the examination methods

Report on group discussion 20%.
In the first 6 weeks, students are expected to hand it a written paper that summarizes class discussions about a set of readings, and hightlights the author's position in these debates.

primary source analysis (sitting exam in class) 40%
A three hours in-class exam : student critically account for a primary in a

structured essay.

final research paper and oral exam 40%
Students write a research paper where they address a specific question based on secondary sources.
The make-up exam is a written exam covering all the readings assigned for the course throughout the semester, as well as the lectures. Re-sit exam will take place between February 2027 and April 2027.

Calculation of the examination mark

Facilities for Working Students

Facilities:
1 Student attendance during educational activities is required
2 Possible rescheduling of the examination to a different time in the same semester
3 Feedback, both final and interim (the latter of which is optional), can be given by email or face-to-face by appointment. There is the possibility of submitting an essay draft prior to final submission, which will not count towards the final grade.

Extra information:
For more information concerning flexible learning: contact the monitoring service of the faculty of Arts and philosophy