Cities are shaped by people, and people are in turn shaped by the food they grow, process, cook and consume. This course explores how the production, transportation and preparation of food has transformed urban landscapes in the Midwest since the time of Cahokia, the Native American city whose growth was fueled by advances in the cultivation of corn. We will explore how Chicago’s development as a center of agricultural commodity markets left its mark on Chicago’s architecture and urban geography, how the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition introduced new foods and cuisines to eager American consumers, and how Upton Sinclair’s 1904 novel *The Jungle* brought the harrowing conditions in Chicago slaughterhouses to the attention of a horrified American public, leading to reforms in food safety (but not Sinclair’s hoped-for revolution in workers’ rights). Immigrants to Chicago continue to bring both their labor and their food cultures to the city, and we will consider the restaurant industry as a center of immigration activism in today’s Chicago. Chicago has also been shaped by the movement of people within the nation, and we will examine how the Great Migration of African Americans to Chicago from the rural south in the early to mid-twentieth century resulted in the culinary tradition of ‘soul food,’ leaving a mark on the city’s restaurants and grocery stores and becoming a source of identity and debate for black activist movements. Finally, we will reflect on how food preparation intersects with gender and gender roles. Throughout the semester, we will attend to the way that ethnicity, race, class, and gender shape individuals’ relationships to food as well as the way that individual lives are remembered in archives.
Week One. Introduction and Methods

What does it mean to study the history of people and places through food? What can we know, and not know, about how people cooked and ate in the past? In this first week, we explore the kinds of materials that are gathered in the Newberry’s archives and consider how scholars use the history of food to explore larger questions of identity and belonging. Instructors will lead students through two case studies on primary texts – documents relating to agricultural practices in medieval England and the colonization of North America.

Research plan: This week, we will work on brainstorming activities to explore students’ interests and the viability of different research topics. Individually and in groups, students will reflect on their previous research experiences, discuss strategies for developing research questions, and craft research goals for the semester.

Readings taken from:
*Chicago Food Encyclopedia*, selections
Walter of Henley and other treatises of Estates Management (ed. Oschinsky)

In the archives:
**Introduction to the Newberry’s collections (overview)**
George Vasey, *Illustrations of eating, displaying the omnivorous character of man, and exhibiting the natives of various countries at feeding time* (London: J.R. Smith, 1847).

Possible activities:
Skype lecture with Marissa Nicosia, author of the blog *Cooking in the Archives*.

**Out In Chicago:** Potential visit and discussion with Chicago Food Sovereignty Council
Week Two. Food and Ancient America/Illinois

How did the domestication of agriculture, in particular maize, beans, and squash, transform North America before non-Indigenous peoples arrived after 1492? By looking at the Indigenous urban center of Cahokia from 800 CE to 1300 CE, we will evaluate the ways in which maize revolutionized Indigenous peoples throughout North America. At its height Cahokia’s population numbered more than 20,000 individuals in a complex web of trade and food production. But Cahokia’s influence reached beyond present-day Missouri and Illinois to as far east as South Carolina and as far west as Oklahoma. Our readings both narrate this history and offer archaeological resources for students to understand the practice of ethno-historical methodology.

Research plan: This week, we will work on learning how to navigate a major research library by locating and requesting primary and secondary sources. We will evaluate strategies for reading a collection guide to identify keyword search terms. Together, we will build a set of potential primary sources that we could examine for a sample research project.

Readings taken from:
Carolyn Merchant, Ecological Revolutions (University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 28-111.

In the archives:
Selected highlights from the Edward E. Ayer Collection

The Mound Builders: the greatest monument of prehistoric man (1913).

Possible activities:
guest lecture; outing to Cahokia; visit to the Farm Tech Exhibit at the Museum of Science and Industry

Out in Chicago: Potential visit to Native American Food Sovereignty Alliance
Week Three. Food and Place: Chicago as an Agricultural Capital

How did the rise of Chicago as center of wealth and population follow from developments in agriculture and transportation? This week, we explore the nineteenth-century rise of Chicago as a center of commerce for agricultural commodities. How is the city intertwined with the countryside that supports it (and that it supports in turn)? Our readings are augmented by the Newberry’s collections of family papers recording the lives of farmers in the Midwest in the nineteenth century.

Research plan: This week, we focus on research methods with archival sources. Each group will present a primary source on food history and the Midwest. Student groups will outline the subsequent interpretive steps for understanding the value of their source while putting together a short bibliography of secondary sources.

Readings taken from:

In the archives:
Selections from the Steele-Winters Family Papers
Selections from the John Montgomery Roberts Diaries, 1831-1886
Selections from the Rowley Family Journals
Selections from the Rodgers Family Papers, 1773-1925

John S. Wright, Prairie farmer: devoted to western agriculture, horticulture, mechanics and education (Chicago : Jas. J Langdon Printer, 1852).
Guide map to Chicago streets and Stockyards (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1883).

Possible activities:
Architectural tour of the historic skyscrapers in Chicago’s Loop

Out in Chicago
Potential visit to: Chicago Food Policy Action Council and Chicago Board of Trade
Week Four. Urban Tastes: Chicago as a Food Capital

This week focuses on the 1893 Columbian Exposition and its role in cementing Chicago as an international center of fashion and cuisine. The Columbian Exposition introduced the American public to foods like tamales to (alongside new industrial innovations including pancake mix and breakfast cereal) and changed the way Americans ate by introducing the first cafeteria. We will examine the fair’s legacy, including on the architecture and landscape of Chicago in its surviving campus at the Museum of Science and Industry. How do cities, operating as national and international crossroads, shape the way we eat? Our study is enhanced by the Newberry’s rich collection of ephemera from the Columbian Exposition.

Research plan: Student presentations on possible research topics followed by workshopping of project ideas to narrow down research questions, contextual framing, and source materials.

Readings taken from:
Erik Larson, The Devil in the White City (Vintage, 2004).

In the archives:
Selections from the Alan Calavano Collection of World's Fair Postcards and Ephemera, 1876-1990s
Viewbook of the World's Columbian Exposition (1893).
Hubert Howe Bancroft, The book of the fair: an historical and descriptive presentation of the world's science, art, and industry, as viewed through the Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1893 (Chicago: The Bancroft Company, 1893).

Possible activities:
Museum of Science and Industry
Weeks Five and Six. Food and Migration: Labor

These weeks consider the impact of immigration on the production and consumption of food in Chicago. We begin with the history and legacy of Chicago’s stockyards, and the way they shaped the social landscape of the city (as well as the food traditions of the nation). Upton Sinclair intended to draw attention to terrible working conditions endured by the recent immigrants in the stockyards, but he ended up sparking a food safety movement instead. How does the marketing and packaging of food obscure the labor that went into its production? Our work will be complemented by materials from the Newberry’s archives in socialist publishers and organizations, including the records of the Charles Kerr Publishing company, which published some of Sinclair’s works. We will continue with a consideration of patterns of immigration today and the importance of immigrant labor within the Chicago restaurant industry, and restaurant-led activist movements such as the ‘day without immigrants’.

Research plan: Students workshop drafts of their work and work in groups to refine their research questions and the significance of their arguments.

Readings taken from:  
Carl Sandberg, “Chicago”  
Rob Hill, “Coming of Age in the Back of the Yards;” in Videobook  

In the archives:  
Selections from the *Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company Records, 1885-1999*  
Selections from the *Frederick D. Countiss Chicago Stockyards Industrial Park Photographs*  
Selections from the *Mexican Hometown Associations Oral History Project Records* (2016)  
John Drury, *Dining in Chicago*, with a foreword by Carl Sandburg (1931).  
Possible activities: Tour of the Back of the Yards and visit to The Plant; guest lecture from Gill Gualtieri, New York University (ACM-Newberry Seminar alum)

Week Seven. Food and Migration II: Movement and food traditions

This week, we consider how The Great Migration transformed food culture in Chicago. What is the relationship between food and racial and ethnic identity, and how does this take shape in an urban context? How are food traditions, and the meanings attached to food, shaped by the movement of people within the nation? We will consider the development of ‘soul food’ as an urban expression of rural southern foodways drawing on African, European, and Native American food traditions, and then explore how Black nationalist movements alternately embraced soul food as an expression of a distinct African-American identity and advocated moving beyond soul food into other distinctive diets, including vegetarianism. In addition to a rare copy of an early soul food cookbook published in Chicago, our work this week will be complimented by the Newberry’s holdings related to African-American activism in the city.

Research plan: Submission of finalized annotated bibliographies and research proposals. Students will formalize their research schedules with their groups and with the professors.

Readings taken from:
The Autobiography of Malcolm X (1965), excerpt
Elijah Muhammad, How to Eat to Live: Book I (1967), excerpt
Frederick Douglass Opie, Hog and Hominy: Soul Food from Africa to America (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

In the archives:
Rufus Estes, Good things to eat, as suggested by Rufus (1911).
Selections from the E. Winston and Ina D. Williams NAACP Papers, 1940s-1986
Selections from the Ernest A. Griffin Family Papers
Selections from the Chicago Black Lives Matter Protest Collection, 2014-
Possible activities: visit to Soul Vegetarian Restaurant; Walking tour of Pullman National Monument and Pullman Porter Museum; DuSable Museum.

Out in Chicago: Potential visit to National Black Food and Justice Alliance

Week Eight. Home Cooking: Food and Gender

This week considers home cooking in the twentieth century, and the way that the division of spaces of food preparation into domestic (home cooking) and public (restaurants) in turn creates gendered divisions of labor. How does the way we make and consume food produce and reinforce both gender roles and gender itself? Our readings will be paired with selections from the Newberry’s extensive archive of 20th century Midwestern cookbooks.

Research plan: In weeks 8 and beyond, peer-editing and revision continue each week along with individual meetings with professors.

Readings taken from:
Laura Shapiro, Something from the Oven: Reinventing Dinner in the 1950s (Penguin Books, 2005).

In the archives:
Highlights from the Stuart W. Miller Collection of Midwestern Recipe Books
Mrs. Owens' cook book and useful hints for the household (1883).