



YALE SUSTAINABLE FOOD PROGRAM

# 7TH ANNUAL MELON FORUM

SENIOR ESSAYS ON  
FOOD & AGRICULTURE



 **Annie Cheng '20**

Political Science  
Advisor: Quan Tran

Title: The Kitchen Brigade and the Indochinese Experience of War, Empire, Race and Labor in the 20th century Parisian Restaurant

Power dynamics in kitchens have been informed extensively by race, gender, class. My senior thesis looks to understand the roots of such relationships in 20th century Paris, where the modern restaurant was born. With a broader focus on French-Indochinese relations, this paper is organized around a series of 1935 Paris news reports about a group of Indochinese cooks. The primary source helps me consider historical and theoretical frameworks of empire and nation, race and processes of racialization, food and body politic. Through an analysis of power in French cultural nationalism and migrant labor, I present an argument on the lasting hierarchies of morality, performance, surveillance, cultural landscape, and citizenship.

 **Tiana Wang '20**

Sociology  
Advisor: Jeffrey Alexander

Title: A Changing Tea Culture, A Changing China Variations in Conceptions of Gift Tea Among Tea Sellers

Existing literature discusses tea in terms of consumption and as a symbol of nationalism, but its role in guanxi relations has remained largely unexplored. This paper examines how cultural and economic meanings of tea in guanxi relations are changing in reaction to 1) a demographic transition in the tea industry and 2) an exogenous shock—the 2013 anti-corruption campaign. China's economic rise in the past few decades has spawned a new generation of middle-class consumers influenced by Western values of individualism and connoisseurship. I argue that this, along with the structural dismantling of public and social meanings resulting from the crackdown on luxury gift items, spurred tea sellers to further emphasize consumer values in their conceptualization of tea as a gift object. I additionally argue that the financial impact of the 2013 anti-corruption campaign affected tea merchants unevenly, with Beijing tea sellers suffering the heaviest losses.

 **Jessica Trinh '20**

Neuroscience  
Advisor: Dana Small

Title: How the Cookie Crumbles: Testing for Individual Differences of Odor Imagery Ability

My thesis centers around our ability to image, or mentally represent, odors in our mind. Odor imagery can be thought of as the odor equivalent to visual imaging. Prior studies relied on questionnaires and self-report, raising the possibility that effects reflect perceived, rather than actual ability. To find an objective way to measure odor imaging ability, I conducted a perceptual discrimination task. This included testing how well human participants could imagine cookie dough and rose odors in their mind and whether this ability in turn helped them pick out actual odors of the two compared to a blank control. Our results—though limited due to COVID-19—indicated that our objective measure of odor imagery ability was positively correlated with subjective report questionnaires. This is an exciting finding as it suggests that self-report questionnaires for odor imagery ability may be valid as a way to measure individual differences in odor imaging.

 **Mara Hoplamazian '20**

American Studies  
Advisor: Quan Tran

Title: Hunger, Food, and the Politics of Longing in Armenian-American Grocery Store

Food metaphors permeate our discourses around migration, from the deep ties to biology that the word “assimilation” carries, to the “melting pot” theory of American culture. But food is, at its core, a concrete subject, intimately tied with not only our sense of ourselves, but with the bodies that we live in. In my thesis, I argue that the discourses around what it means to be Armenian-American are deeply based in food—not only in the foods we eat, but also in the ways in which eating and hunger are narrated and understood in relation to Armenian-American lives. From the narrative of “starving Armenians” to the Armenian grocery stores that line the streets of Watertown, Massachusetts, my thesis explores the ruptures caused by migration, the ways in which communities cope with those ruptures, and how we move forward while preserving the memory of what we have left behind.



 **Marisa Vargas-Morawetz '20**

Ethnicity, Race, and Migration  
Advisor: Doug Rogers

Title: "Something more than a job": Labor, Personal Fulfillment, and Whiteness on an Alternative Farm

In this essay, I analyze two memoirs written by a journalist-turned-farmer, drawing out the implicit and explicit messages about hard work, personal fulfillment, and whiteness that pervade the memoirs. In particular, I focus on the memoirs' portrayal of farm labor as a personally rewarding and morally upstanding calling – "more than a job" – which helps create an image of alternative farms as beyond the realm of labor politics. Likewise, the memoirs' emphasis on hard physical work – mixed with a little "magic" – as the recipe for farm success obscures the role of racial capitalism in structuring access to land and both cultural and financial capital. I conclude by showing the usefulness of these particular obfuscations towards creating an image of alternative farms as inherently "good," feeding consumer fantasies of being able to create a better food system simply by buying "alternative."

 **Natasha Feshbach '20**

Environmental Studies  
Advisor: Maria Trumpler

Title: Women's Rhetorical Strategies in Climate Change Communication on Social Media

Examining women's rhetorical strategies in climate change communication on social media provides a window to consider the fundamental relationship between climate change and gender equality. I focus on the content of five women (Abby Cannon, Mary Heglar, Tamar Haspel, Lauren Singer, and Greta Thunberg) on Instagram and Twitter. Drawing on feminist philosophy on climate change, intersectional analytical frameworks, and Foucauldian discourse analysis, my thesis situates women in the context climate change communication on social media and identifies themes that illuminate nuanced aspects of rhetoric that may reinforce or defy certain power patterns and underlying social categorizations. Themes of identity, community, and entrepreneurialism amidst Cannon, Heglar, Haspel, Singer, and Thunberg's social media rhetoric suggest points of tension and strength in the connection between climate change and gender equality.

 **Rocky Lam '20**

Sociology  
Advisor: Olav Sorenson

Title: Embedded Entrepreneurship: How Business Owners Navigate Industry City and Gentrification in Sunset Park, Brooklyn

Historically known for its Chinese wet markets and Latin American restaurants, Sunset Park is experiencing a growth in artisanal coffee shops and avocado toast cafés, among other signs of gentrification. These changes have been associated with Industry City, a luxurious mall-like development on its waterfront. This thesis sought to better understand these changes through the perspective of business owners: it found that those in favor of Industry City praised the development's revitalization of the area, role as a creative place, and generation of new customers and businesses, while those against worried about the displacement of longtime businesses. The rest voiced a blend of these points or remained neutral on the issue. Using embeddedness theory, a deeper analysis suggested that one's ability to adapt to middle-class consumer demand and neighborhood ties impacted business owners' views.



The Melon Forum provides a space for graduating seniors to share their culminating academic work in food systems study. The event borrows its name from Yale's beloved Mellon Fora, which bring together seniors in their residential colleges to present their theses. Convening students from a range of disciplines and departments, the Melon Forum celebrates food systems scholarship at Yale College. It is supported by a generous gift from the Northern Greening.

The Yale Sustainable Food Program serves as a hub for creative and critical work on food and agricultural systems topics that are entangled with pressing problems of global significance. On the farm, in the classroom, and around the world, we aim to grow food-literate leaders.

For more information, visit [www.sustainablefood.yale.edu](http://www.sustainablefood.yale.edu)



