

Anthropology of Food Week 9

**"Gastro-Anomie: Global Indigestion?"**

**Sign-up for Your Presentation Time**

**Guest: Stu Sivertson**

**W**elcome back to Spring Semester. I hope you had a grand Spring Break.

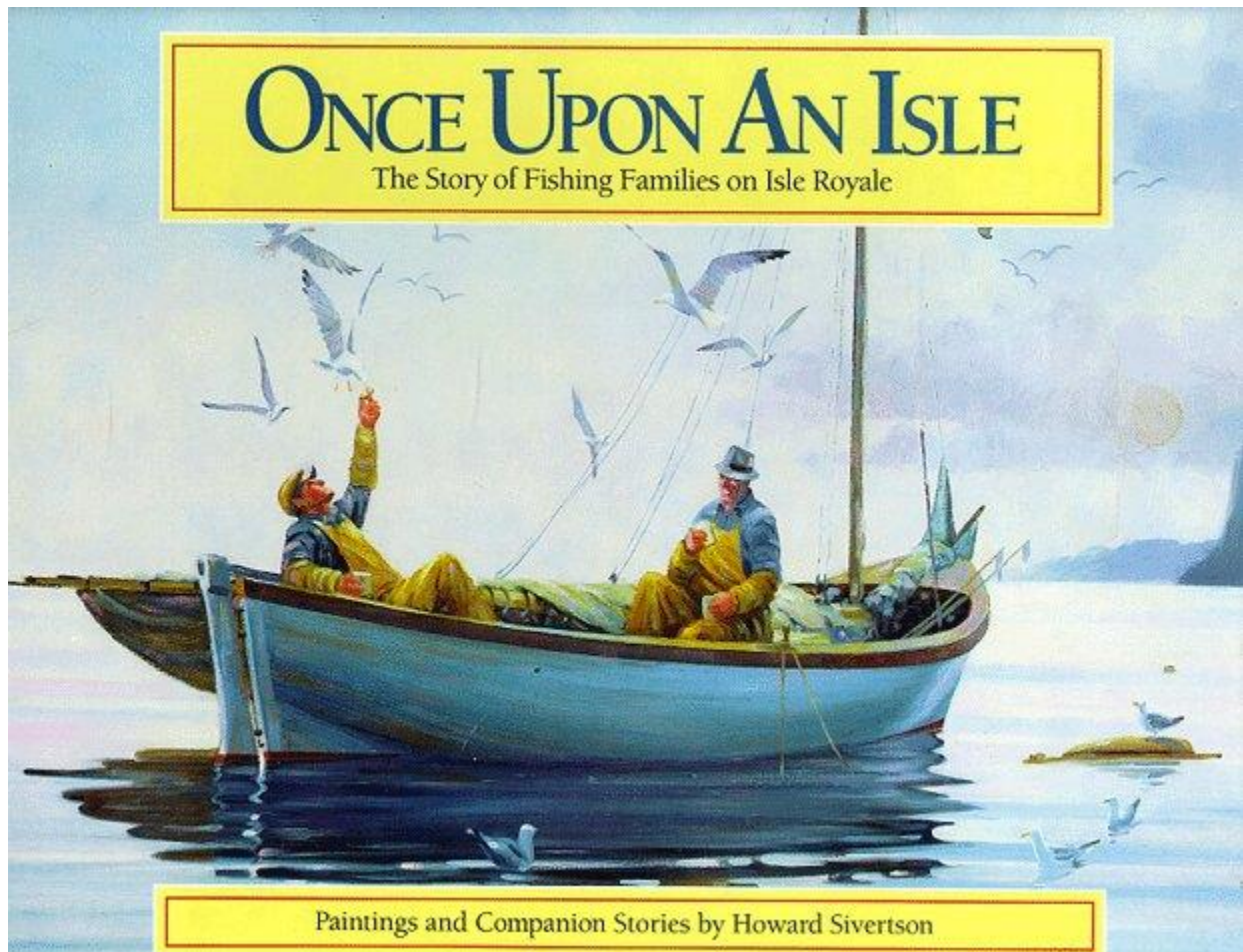
**Thursday Stuart Sivertson will be our guest speaker. Don't miss him!**

Stu is the retired President and CEO of Lake Superior Fish Co., whose grandfather came from Norway and began commercial fishing in Lake Superior in 1892. The Sivertsons have been prominent commercial fishermen on Lake Superior since the late 1800s.



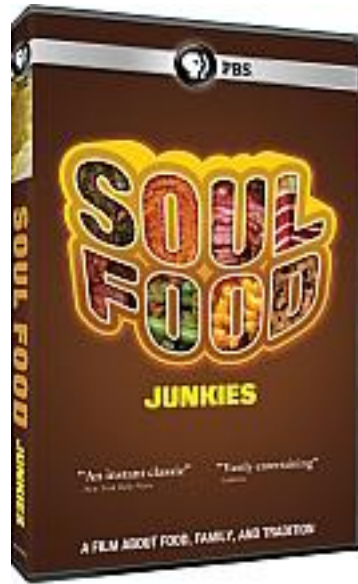
You may be familiar with the family through the work of Stu's artist cousin, Howard

Sivertson, a well-known regional artist (Cf., *Once Upon an Isle: The Story of a Fishing Family on Isle Royale*, Wisconsin Folk Museum, 1992).



Speaking of fishing, Week 13 we'll have a look (on-line) at *The End of the Line: How Overfishing Is Changing the World And What We Eat*. Week 14 we'll have a look (on-line) at the 2010 Oscar winning film, *The Cove*. If you want, you can go to Weeks 13 and 14 and watch those on-line anytime between now and the end of the semester.

**On Tuesday we meet the *Soul Food Junkies*. It is "a Film about Food, Family, and Tradition" featured on the PBS *Independent Lens* series.**



Visit the [Soul Food Junkies website](#) and have look around. . . .

*About the Film Soul Food Junkies, from the Producers*

Filmmaker Byron Hurt grew up eating lots of soul food: grits and scrambled eggs covered with cheese, buttered biscuits smothered with gravy, bacon, collard greens seasoned with ham hocks, fried pork chops, macaroni and cheese, deep-fried chicken, fried fish, barbecue chicken and **ribs, candied yams coated with cinnamon and brown sugar, and other delicious but fatty foods** right out of the black southern tradition.

Both of his parents are from Milledgeville, Georgia, a small southern town. It's a place where soul food is beloved by black and white folks alike. Soul food is a long held culinary tradition passed down from generation to generation, and is a source of pride for many black people. Some soul food, depending on how it is prepared, can be good for you. But when it is cooked with lots of fat, sugar, and salt — which is often the case — it can lead to obesity and other health issues.

Hurt can speak from personal experience. From his earliest memories, his father was overweight, his mom the soul food chef. As an adult, growing concern about his father's health prompted Hurt to confront him about his eating habits, but to no avail. Eventually, his father made small changes to his diet and began to exercise more, but the changes came too late in his life. In 2004, doctors diagnosed him with terminal pancreatic cancer, a virulent disease that disproportionately affects black people. Statistically, black Americans are more likely to die of the disease than whites; figures for 2001 to 2005 from the National Cancer Institute show that blacks had a 32 percent higher death rate. One of the risk factors for developing pancreatic cancer is a high fat, meat-based diet. Hurt's father died in 2007 at the young age of 63. This is sadly a common story in the lives of many African American families in the U.S. — losing loved ones too soon from a nutrition-related illness.

In *Soul Food Junkies*, Hurt sets out on a historical and culinary journey to learn more about the soul food tradition and its relevance to black cultural identity. Through candid interviews with soul food cooks, historians, and scholars, as well as with doctors, family members, and everyday people, the film puts this culinary tradition under the microscope to examine both its positive and negative consequences. Hurt also explores the socioeconomic conditions in predominantly black neighborhoods, where it can be difficult to find healthy options, and meets some pioneers in the emerging food justice movement who are challenging the food industry, encouraging communities to “go back to the land” by creating sustainable and eco-friendly gardens, advocating for healthier options in local supermarkets, supporting local farmers' markets, avoiding highly processed fast foods, and cooking healthier versions of traditional soul food.

Speaking of **Race (and Gender, and Class)**, be sure to have a look at the . . .

 **[Forum: Michael W. Twitty's Open Letter to Paula Deen from Afroculinaria](#)** (Due by the end of Week 9—Saturday, 18 March 2017)

Twitty's letter is a well-written—now quite famous—piece.

and, more recently,

**[This Historian Wants You To Know The Real Story Of Southern Food](#)**  
-- Michael Twitty, [NPRTheSalt](#) (01 October 2016)

Michael Twitty's new book, *The Cooking Gene: A Journey Through African-American Culinary History in the Old South* (NY: Harper-Collins Amistad, 2017) will be out in August of 2017.

**This week we'll continue to have a look at globalized industrial food; in *Eating Culture* we'll have a look at Food Sovereignty and Food Security, and a peek at Localizing Global and Globalized Commodities.**

**This week you can pick from a *smörgåsbord* of ideas on what Gillian Crowther calls “Gastro-Anomie”—obesity, as well as Food Sovereignty, Food Security/Insecurity, Cuisines, and other side topics.**

At the Nobel “Making Food Good” Conference at Gustavus two of the speakers talked about obesity in America at the very beginning of their presentations—Marian Nestle (no relation to the company) reviewed the now-common information that Americans (and people in the industrial world in general) have been growing obese over the last couple of decades to the point where over 70% of the adults are now clinically overweight or obese, while Jeffrey M. Friedman, talking on “. . . the

biologic base of obesity” began his talk stating that the figures were misleading [no pun intended], and, even if they weren’t, genes basically control body weight.

But as Robert H. Lustig, M.D., points out, **“We even have an epidemic of obese six-month-olds!”** (*Fat Chance: Beating the Odds Against Sugar, Processed Food, Obesity, and Disease*. Hudson Street, 2012, 4). The human gene pool hasn’t substantially changed in the last few decades, *so the cause cannot be genetics*, or even primarily a laps of individual self-control.

And it’s not just in the United States. In England they had to buy some new ambulances because some of **the guests will not fit into the current ambulances**. And if one doesn’t fit in the ambulance and is off to the morgue, the same problem awaits. In 2013 **one chap in the morgue wouldn’t fit into the morgue’s cooler and they left him start to decompose on the autopsy table. . . .**

**'Too big' body left to decompose** -- [BBCNews](#) (09 March 2012)

**Ambulance service buys vehicles for obese patients** -- [BBCNews](#) (23 January 2012)

**Obese patient needs bigger ambulance** -- [BBCNews](#) (03 February 2011)

**In September the National Health Service in Great Britain began to put obese patients at the end of the surgery queues, denying them routine surgery. . .**

**Obese patients and smokers banned from routine surgery in 'most severe ever' rationing in the NHS** -- [The Telegraph](#) (02 September 2016)

Not so long ago in my hometown of Winsted, MN, they added a wing to the “leisure home” and purchased **doublewide wheelchairs, and hoists to get the guests in and out of bed and bath**. The medical staff are not able to lift newly-arriving residents.

On a flight I was on not so long ago there was **a passenger who physically took up two seats in the business class section**. If he gets any larger, he may need help from the flight attendants to “shoehorn” him into the plane through the boarding door. (I don’t think airlines allow passengers to ride in the cargo hold—yet.)

**The airplane problem has gotten so bad that airlines are starting to charge obese passengers more to fly . . .**

**Should obese passengers pay more to fly?** -- [BBCautos](#) (20 October 2016)

**And calls for a “Sugar Tax” and sweetened soda rationing continue to mount . . .**

**Mexico's sugar tax leads to fall in consumption for second year running** -- [The Guardian](#) (22 February 2017)

**The Mexicans dying for a fizzy drink** -- [BBCNews](#) (02 February 2017)

**Free soda: France bans unlimited sugary drink refills** -- [BBCNews](#) (27 January 2017)

**2016: The year of the sugar tax** -- [BeverageDaily.com](#) (16 December 2016)

**W.H.O. Urges Tax on Sugary Drinks to Fight Obesity** -- [The New York Times](#) (11 October 2016)

**Philadelphia to bring in 'soda tax' to fight obesity** -- [BBCNews](#) (16 June 2016)

Obesity is now a world-wide problem . . . and all that long ago in the United States the American Medical Association declared obesity to be a “disease” . . .

**Obesity is a disease in the US. Should it be?** -- Kate Dailey, [BBCNews](#) (24 June 2013)

**Obesity is a 'disease.' Now what?** -- [NPRNews](#) (21 June 2013)

In 2016, we reached the “tipping point”, so to speak . . .

**More obese people in the world than underweight, says study** -- [BBCNews](#) (01 April 2016)

**Michael Moss' book** that came out in 2013, *Salt Sugar Fat* was on *The New York Times* hardcover nonfiction list for several months. Moss is quoted by Martha Rosenberg in the article mentioned above. And it created quite a stir. Here are some commentaries and follow-ups from the release. . . .

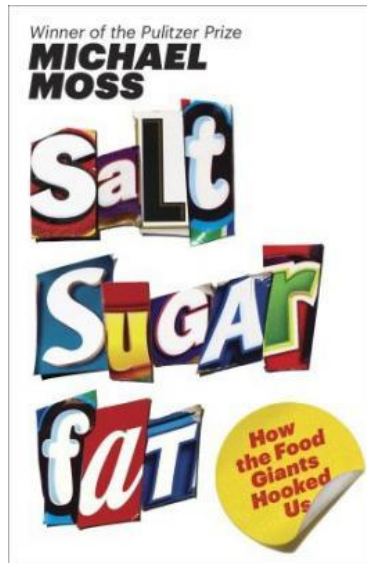
Michael Moss, *Salt Sugar Fat*

**Michael Moss on 'Salt Sugar Fat,' how we got so addicted** -- [MPRNews](#) (1 March 2013)

**Book pick: 'Salt Sugar Fat' by Michael Moss** -- [MPRNews](#) (26 February 2013)

**The Extraordinary Science of Addictive Junk Food** -- [MICHAEL MOSS](#), [The New York Times](#) (20 February 2013)

Moss, Michael. *Salt Sugar Fat: How the Food Giants Hooked Us*. Random House, 2013.



[How Sweet It Is, \[a review of\] 'Salt Sugar Fat', by Michael Moss -- DAVID KAMP, The New York Times \(15 March 2013\)](#)

[Why Is Sugar So Addictive? -- BBC News \(22 March 2013\)](#)

[How much sugar is hiding in your food? -- BBC News \(22 March 2013\)](#)

And, as Dr. Lustig notes, the problem is *fructose*, and, of course high-fructose corn products are in tens of thousands of items, literally, in a typical American super market.

<http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/troufs/anthfood/afsugar.html#title>.

**No wonder Big Food is spending millions of dollars fighting to keep information on “added sugars” off of the food label. (They argue, in effect, that their customers are not smart enough to understand what “added sugars” means.) And the sugar industry has been carrying on a campaign of misinformation and disinformation FOR THE LAST 50 YEARS . . .**

[Study Tied to Food Industry Tries to Discredit Sugar Guidelines -- The New York Times \(19 December 2016\)](#)

[The Shady History of Big Sugar -- The New York Times \(16 September 2016\)](#)

[Sugar shocked? The rest of food industry pays for lots of research, too -- MPRNews \(14 September 2016\)](#)

[50 years ago, sugar industry quietly paid scientists to point blame at fat -- MPRNews \(13 September 2016\)](#)

**Sugar industry rigged research: It shaped decades of data on its role in heart disease** -- StarTribune (12 September 2016)

**How the Sugar Industry Shifted Blame to Fat** -- The New York Times (12 September 2016)

So, take your pick: Genes control body weight, or food intake/lack of moving controls body weight, or, the fact that your brain doesn't respond to *fructose* to let you know when you have had enough to eat results in chronic overeating, or all of the above.

Meanwhile, **The Two Fat Ladies** thumb their noses at the lot. We'll meet the Two Fat Ladies next week. And, as you have seen, Michael Pollan adds his two cents worth in Ch. 6 of *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, "The consumer: a republic of fat" (see Week 7 Readings).

Whatever your take on obesity and the "obesity epidemic" in America, which is rapidly spreading to all of the industrialized nations of the world, the **startling multiple paradoxes remain**: in a world that produces more food than people need or can eat, two-thirds of the world's citizens are overweight while about 925 million people or so are undernourished while in America about 1000 Anorexics die each year of complication related to excessive weight loss thinking they are fat. . . .

We'll have a look at these issues in Ch. 8 of *Eating Culture*, "Gastro-Anomie: Global Indigestion?" For the present, to get your thought processes working on the many and complex problems associated with obesity, have a listen to what the Two Fat Ladies and Sherri A. Inness and Michael Pollen and others have to say next week and the week after.

## Take the Student Survey:

We greatly appreciate your participation in the **course survey**. If you didn't fill the Student Survey out yet, please do that (with the **Assignments and Activities section of your Week 8 Moodle Block**). In order for it to be most useful, it's 100% anonymous. '

We greatly appreciate your participation in the course survey. If you didn't fill the Student Survey out yet, please do that (with the "Activities" for Week. In order for it to be most useful, it's 100% anonymous.

### **Online Student Survey**

<<https://ay16.moodle.umn.edu/mod/feedback/view.php?id=818443>>



It's time to . . .

## Sign up for your Class Presentation Time

(See Week 9 **Assignments and Activities**)

A major part of this course is your research project—not just for the points, but because researching a topic you are interested in and presenting your findings to others, and then writing the results up as a formal paper, is one of the best ways to learn things. (Lectures, as it turns out, research suggests, are one of the worst ways—keeping in mind that one must separate “learning” from the “*perception* of learning.”) So this week be sure to spend some time working on your **Paper and Presentation**. (Remember that your Presentation is a “work in progress” report on your paper.)

(Right now there are enough time slots for everyone to sign up. Do not wait until the last minute, or until after the Presentation Sessions have gone by, and then argue that you cannot give your presentation because there is not a time available.)

The **class Presentations WebPage**, if you would like to review, is at

<http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/troufs/anthfood/afpresentations.html#title>.

Sign up below, or in the **Assignments and Activities** section of your **Week 9 Moodle Block**

Your **Assignments and Activities** listings are available in the **Week 9 Block** of your **Moodle** folder, including . . .



[Reading Assignments for Week 9](#)

## And Voice Your Opinion



REM Take the [Online Student Survey](#)



**[Forum: Michael W. Twitty's Open Letter to Paula Deen from Afroculinaria](#)** (Due by the end of Week 9—Saturday, 18 March 2017)



**[Forum: Slow Food / Locavorism](#)** (Due by the end of Week 9—Saturday, 18 March 2017)

## **Sign up for Your Class Presentation Time**

(Sign up for one time slot selected from the following days)



**[Sign Up Here for Presentations Session I, Thursday, 30 March 2017](#)**



**[Sign Up Here for Presentations Session II, Tuesday, 4 April 2017](#)**



**[Sign Up Here for Presentations Session III, Thursday, 6 April 2017](#)**



**[Sign Up Here for Presentations Session IV, Tuesday, 11 April 2017](#)**



**[Sign Up Here for Presentations Session V, Thursday, 13 April 2017](#)**



**[REM: The Course in a Nutshell . . .](#)**

**In a nutshell, ANTH 3888 Anthropology of Food consists of three main segments:**

**I Orientation and Background** (slides: on-line slides)

Introduction  
Basic Concepts  
History  
Theory  
Methods and Techniques

**II Explorations**

Comparative / Cross-Cultural  
Holistic  
Ethnographic Case Studies from the Real World: Real People . . . Real Places from Around the Globe

**III Student Presentations on Term Research Project**

And for fun, a trivia question this week . . .

What does "**Häagen-Dazs**" mean?



Answer

As usual, if you have any **questions** right now, please do not hesitate to post them on the **Moodle** "QUICKMAIL", "Messenger" or e-mail [troufs@d.umn.edu](mailto:troufs@d.umn.edu), or stop in before or after class across the hall in Cina 215.

Best Regards,

Tim Roufs

<http://www.d.umn.edu/~troufs/>