

WRITING THROUGH THE RHETORICAL MODES

SECTION 1: A RHETORICAL MODES READER

Chapter Two: The Expository Mode

Division, Classification, and Definition: Reading 2

Michael Pollan, “Unhappy Meals”

*Michael Pollan is an American author, activist, and professor of journalism at the University of California Berkeley. His 2006 book, *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*, investigates the American food industry, critiques the standard American diet, and encourages the reader to adopt a more sustainable, natural, and simple way of eating.*

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/28/magazine/28nutritionism.t.html>

Questions for Reading and Discussion

- 1) What are some examples of the “edible foodlike substances” that Pollan mentions in his second paragraph? Why does he use the words “edible” and “foodlike” rather than simply “food”?
- 2) According to Pollan, what are some of the problems with discussing what we eat in terms of “nutrients”? How should we think about food, if not as a nutrient-delivery system? Who benefits from the discussion of food in terms of nutrients?
- 3) Pollan mentions various dietary crazes throughout recent decades, the low-fat craze of the 1970s and the low-carb craze of the 1990s being two examples. What diet- and health-related crazes exist today? What scientific claims, if any, drive them?

Questions for Writing and Research

- 1) Research the phrase “standard American diet” (also commonly referred to as the “Western diet”). When did this phrase come about, and what does this “diet” consist of? Write a summary of several current alternatives to the standard American diet, and state which to you seems the most feasible to follow on a daily basis, and why.
- 2) Write an analysis of the health claims on a packaged food of your choice. Is your chosen food a whole food or a processed food, and how can you tell?

3) Choose a “nutrient” (your choice could be general, like fat, carbohydrates, protein, vitamins, etc. or specific, like omega-3 fatty acids, glucose, iron, B12, etc) and research the discourse around it, making sure that you have a mix of scholarly and popular sources. Do your sources show disagreement or controversy over how “healthy” your chosen nutrient is, or over the best way to incorporate it into one’s diet?

4) Write a paper in which you state your observations of and recommendations for the food scene at City Tech. What is the proportion of “edible foodlike substances” to whole foods sold on campus? In keeping with Pollan’s nine “rules of thumb” for eating, stated at the end of his article, what changes should be made to City Tech’s current available food options to promote the best food scene possible?



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