

Anthropology 140

THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF FOOD AND DRINK

This course provides an introduction to the new, exciting anthropological field of food and drink. Food is necessary for survival and yet it is never consumed without being transformed and mediated by social meaning. Food is the backbone of society and sociability. When abundant and varied it is a source of pleasure, when scarce, the cause of pain and suffering. Through eating, we create solidarity and a sense of well being, while at the same time enacting gender, class, national, and ethnic roles. In this course, we will examine all these topics, as well as a series of key themes in food studies, including food taboos, the connection between food and religious belief and practice, the global politics of food, consumption patterns and health, cross-cultural notions of the meal, among others. We will also analyze drinking patterns cross-culturally to determine why, what, where, and how different peoples choose to consume beverages, particularly alcoholic beverages.

In addition to required readings, our analyses of food and drink will include sources from popular culture, including commercial and independent films, advertising images and text, cookbooks, and self-help literature. Through lectures, readings, and a series of small projects, we will analyze the important, albeit often unmarked, place of food in shaping our own identity and place in the world, as well as the ways in which consumption patterns have changed through time.

Course requirements

This course will be run as a seminar, with active student participation. Although the instructor will be lecturing about half of each session, students will be required to report on course readings and raise questions for discussion. In addition, students will present brief oral reports based on small-scale projects dealing with food and drink as they experience them in their own lives and social world. To the maximum extent possible, we shall be using resources available in the Washington, D.C. area for these projects. These reports, together with class readings and films dealing with food issues, will provide the basic class content. Students will be graded on attendance, class participation, plus the quality of oral and written reports.

Discussion Topics and Readings

Session 1: Introduction to the Course

Personal introductions and review of topics, readings, and course procedures.
Overview of the field and its contemporary significance.
No readings.

Session 2: The Anthropological Approach to Food Studies

Reading: Margaret Mead, "The Changing Significance of Food."

Claude Levi-Strauss, "The Culinary Triangle."

Session 3. Food Aversions and Taboos, I

Reading: Marvin Harris, *Good to Eat*, Chapters 4 ("The Abominable Pig") and 9 ("Dogs, Cats, Dingoes, and Other Pets").

Stephen Mennell, "On the Civilizing of Appetite."

Session 4: Food Aversions and Taboos, II

Reading: Ellen Messer, "Three Centuries of Changing European Tastes for the Potato."

Paul Rozin, "Disgust: The Cultural Evolution of a Food-Based Emotion."

Session 5: The Meal

Reading: Mary Douglas, "Deciphering a Meal."

Anne Allison, "Japanese Mothers and *Obentos*: The Lunch Box as Ideological State Apparatus."

Michael Pollan, "The Perfect Meal," from *The Omnivore's Dilemma*.

Session 6: Food and Religion, I

Reading: Jill Dubisch, "Religious Aspects of the Health Food Movement."

Session 7: Food and Religion, II

Reading: Stanley Brandes, "Sugar, Colonialism, and Death: On the Origins of Mexico's Day of the Dead."

Session 8: Food and Health, I

Reading: Susan Bordo, "Anorexia Nervosa."

Michael Pollan, "A Republic of Fat."

Gary Paul Nabhan, "Rooting Out the Causes of Disease: Why Diabetes is so Common Among Desert Dwellers."

Session 8: Food and Health, II

Reading: Warren Belasco, "Food and the Counterculture: A Story of Bread and Politics."

Michael Pollan, "The Ethics of Eating Animals."

Session 9: Food and Visual Culture

Reading: Ruth Weintraub, "The American Still Life: A Document of American Diet 1800-Present"

Melissa Salazar, "Salad Days: Using Visual Methods to Study Children's Food Culture."

Session 10: Food and Ethnic Identity

Reading: Marie Sarita Gaytán, "From Sombreros to *Sincronizadas*: Authenticity, Ethnicity, and the Mexican Restaurant Industry."

Session 11: The Globalization of Food

Readings: Theodore Bestor, "How Sushi Went Global."

James L. Watson, "China's Big Mac Attack."

Eve Jochnowitz, "Flavors of Memory, Jewish Food as Culinary Tourism in Poland."

Session 12: Drinking Behavior and Globalization

Readings: Theodore Schwartz and Lola Romanucci-Ross, "Drinking And Inebriate Behavior in the Admiralty Islands, Melanesia."

Craig MacAndrew and Robert Edgerton, "Indians Can't Hold Their Liquor," Chapters 6 and 7 from *Drunken Comportment*.

Session 13: Alcohol Problems and Recovery

Reading: Stanley Brandes, *Staying Sober in Mexico City*, Chapters 4 ("Storytelling"), 7 ("Illness and Recovery") and 8 ("Sobriety and Survival").

Session 14: Drink and Gender

Readings: Stanley Brandes, *Staying Sober in Mexico City*, Chapter 5 ("Gender and the Construction of Manhood").

Geoffrey Hunt and Sandra Satterlee, "Darts, Drink and the Pub: The Culture of Female Drinking."

Session 15: Food, Drink, and Political Policy

Readings: Robert Paarlberg, "The Global Food Fight."

Harriet Ritvo, "Mad Cow Mysteries"

Jennifer Clapp, "The Political Economy of Food Aid in an Era of Agricultural Biotechnology"

Note: The professor might take the opportunity to make minor adjustments to this syllabus up until the beginning of the Fall Semester in Washington, D.C.

SOME RELEVANT FILMS FOR POSSIBLE CLASS DISCUSSION

"Like Water for Chocolate."

"Chocolat"

"Ratatouille"

"Mostly Martha"

"Babette's Feast"

"Tampopo"

"The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover"

"Combination Platter"

"Delicatessen"

"Sideways"

"Soul Food"

"Big Night"

"La Grande Bouffe"

"Eat, Drink, Man, Woman"

"Super-Size Me"

"The Meaning of Food"

"The Future of Food"

"Fast Food Nation"

"Waitress"

"Food, Inc"

"Julie and Julia"

"No Reservations"

"Days of Wine and Roses"

"Jiro Dreams of Sushi"