

The Anthropology of Food

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Food is of central concern in human society. The production and consumption of food represents a direct link between people and Nature. People also invest food with important symbolic and social meanings. Topics in this course include: the origins of agriculture in prehistory, biological aspects of human nutrition, food sharing as social act, symbolic analysis of food and the globalization of the food system. The course draws on archeology, physical anthropology and cultural anthropology. Upon completing the course, students should have an enhanced appreciation for the role of food production and consumption in a variety of social settings (including our own!) and an understanding of an anthropological approach to understanding food.

COURSE STRUCTURE & CLASS PARTICIPATION:

The course is taught in a lecture format, but requires considerable participation from students. Course readings will be drawn from the required textbook, Food and Culture: a reader by Counihan and van Esterik as well as a course pack of supplemental readings. One of the goals of the course will be to actively engage students in learning more about food through research and mini-projects, the results of which will be shared with the class.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Weekly Facilitators – Every week, two students will lead discussion for that week of reading. Students will need to be prepared with any materials they find helpful (questions, handouts, etc.). Each student will do two presentations, worth 50 points each.

Term Paper – Students will choose a topic of interest relating to food and research it during the semester. The final draft of the term paper (minimum of 10 pages) is due **May 14th by 5PM**. Students will also give a presentation of their research findings to the class. The paper and presentation are worth 200 points.

Periodic Exams – There will be three exams throughout the semester, worth 100 points each.

Class Participation – Active participation in the class is required, both through the scheduled presentations and through daily attendance and informal participation in class discussions.

GRADING POLICY:

There are 600 total points in the course: 300 points in exams, 200 points in the research paper/presentation and 100 points in the reading presentations. Students will be graded on a straight scale as follows:

540-600 points = A

480-539 points = B

420-479 points = C

360-419 points = D

<360 points = F

The +/- grading system will be used to decide marginal cases.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Counihan, Carole & Esterik, Penny Van
1997 Food and Culture: A Reader. New York: Routledge.

The Anthropology of Food reading packet – available at Mr. Kopy.

Additional readings may be assigned throughout the semester.

SCHEDULE:

Week 1 – 1/25 to 1/27 Introduction to Course

Readings:

“Food is Fundamental, Fun, Frightening and Far Reaching”(packet)–Paul Rozin (pp.9-29)
Cultural Geographies (Packet) – read introduction (pp. 1-19)

Week 2 – 2/1 to 2/3 Fundamental’s of Food

Readings:

Hunger and Work in a Savage Tribe (Packet) – Audrey Richards (pp. 1-35)
“The Biological Baseline” (packet) – Farb & Armelagos (pp. 17-39)
Food and Culture – Introduction and Margaret Mead article (pp. 2-19)

Week 3 – 2/8 to 2/10 Ecology, Food Systems, and Origins of Food

Readings:

“Consumers in Agro-Ecosystems” (packet) – Krummel & Dyer (pp. 55-68)
“Re-embedding Food and Agriculture” (packet) – Esteva (pp. 2-13)
“The Mexican Food System: Traditional and Modern” (packet) – Allen (pp. 219-232)

Week 4 – 2/15 to 2/17 Archaeology and Prehistoric Food Habits

Readings:

Man the Hunter (packet) - (Lee) “What hunters do for a living, or how to make out on scarce resources” (pp. 30-48)
“The Original Affluent Society”(packet) – Sahlins (pp. 1-39)
“Explaining the Transition to Agriculture” (packet) – Patty Jo Watson
“The Neolithic Paradox” (packet) – Schusky (pp. 7-26)

EXAM 1: 2/22

Week 5-6 – 2/24 to 3/2 The Symbolic Analysis of Food

Readings:

Food and Culture (Counihan & Esterik) – read Roland Barthes (“Towards a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption”), Claude Levi-Strauss (“The Culinary Triangle”), Mary Douglas (“Deciphering a Meal”), Jean Soler (“The Semiotics of Food in the Bible”), Marvin Harris (“The Abominable Pig”), and E.N. Anderson (“Traditional Medical Values of Food”)

Project One = Based on these readings decipher a meal

Week 7 – 3/7 to 3/9 Exchange Theory: Food as Gift

Readings:

The Gift (Packet) – Mauss (read introduction and Chapter 1) – (pp. 1-18)
The Trobrianders (Packet) – Weiner (“Marriage and the Politics of Yams”) (pp. 81-96)
“Eating Christmas in the Kalahari” (packet) – Lee
Food and Culture (Counihan & Esterik) – Meigs (“Food as a Cultural Construction”) (pp. 95-106)

Video: Ongka’s Big Moka (film)

****Potluck Exchange** (everyone must bring food to exchange)

Week 8 –3/14 to 3/16 Commensality and Fasting

Readings:

Food and Culture (Counihan & Esterik) – read Dorothy N. Shack (“Nutritional Processes and Personality Development among the Gurage of Ethiopia”), William A. Shack (“Hunger, Anxiety, and Ritual: Deprivation and Spirit Possession among the Gurage of Ethiopia), and Caroline Walker Bynum (“Fast, Feast, and Flesh: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women”)

Week 9 – 3/21 to 3/23 Spring Break

Week 10 –3/28 to 3/30 Food and Body: Gender, Meaning and Power

Readings:

Food and Culture (Counihan & Esterik) read Susan Bordo (“Anorexia Nervosa: Psychopathology as the Crystallization of Culture”), Emily Massara (“Que Gordita”), and Elisa J. Sobo (“The Sweetness of Fat: Health, Procreation, and Sociability in Rural Jamaica”)
“Men are Taro (They Cannot be Rice): Political Aspects of Food Choices in Wamira, Papua New Guinea”(Packet) In *Food and Foodways* 3: 41-57.

Week 11 – 4/4 to 4/6 Identity: Food and the Negotiation of Self

Readings:

Rice as Self (Packet) - Ohnuki-Tierney (read chapters 1, 8, and 9)
Food and Culture (Counihan & Esterik) – read Marvalene H. Hughes (“Soul, Black Women, and Food”) (pp. 272-280)
Talking About People (Packet) – Williams (“Why Migrant Women Feed Their Husbands Tamales: Foodways as a Basis for a Revisionist View of Tejano Family Life”) (pp. 159-164).
The Anthropology of Food and Body (Packet) - Counihan (“Food, Power, and Female Identity in Contemporary Florence”) (pp. 41-60)

EXAM 3: 4/11

Week 12 & 13 – 4/13-20 The Political Economy of Food

Readings:

Food and Culture (Counihan & Esterik) read articles by Penny Van Esterik (“The Politics of Breastfeeding: An Advocacy Perspective”), Janet M. Fitchen (“Hunger, Malnutrition, and Poverty in the Contemporary United States: Some Observations on Their Social and Cultural Context”), and Frances Moore Lappe (“Beyond the Myths of Hunger: What We Can Do?”)
“The Global Population of Food and Environment” (Packet) – Pimentel (pp. 239-249)
“Food and Food Poverty: Perspectives on Distribution” (Packet) – Richard Goldman (pp. 283-302)

Week 14 – 4/25 to 4/27 Food and Community

Readings:

“As You Sow” (Packet) – Goldshmidt
“The Problem of Community” (Packet) – Dudley (pp. 47-56)
“So Shall You Reap” (Packet) – Solbrig (pp. 204-252)

Video: The Invisible Enemy

Project Two = Interview a farmer at the farmer’s market/go to the grocery store and find out where your food comes from

Week 15 – 5/2 to 5/4 The Globalization of Food

Readings:

Food and Culture (Counihan & Esterik) read articles by Carole Counihan (“Bread as World: Food Habits and Social Relations in Modernizing Sardinia”), Jack Goody (“Industrial Food: Towards the Development of a World Cuisine”), and Sidney W. Mintz (“Time, Sugar, and Sweetness”)
Golden Arches East (Packet)– Watson (read Introduction) (pp. 1-38)
“Bananas, are they quintessential health food? A global/local perspective” (Packet)– Susan L. Andreatta (pp.437-447)

Week 16 – 5/9 to 5/11 Conclusions and Student Presentations
Final Papers Due 5/11/00 by 5 p.m.
Final Exam: date?