Food and Culture

ANTH 3750, Summer 2019
Montpellier, France
Class Period 1: 8am-10am

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Office hours, a course web site with assignment details, and local contact information will be provided as we approach the start of the program.

When it comes to food, it sometimes seems like we live in a world of endless plenty. In North America and Europe, at least, the supermarkets are nearly always full, displaying thousands of items, from fruits and vegetables, to carefully packaged meats, breads, dairy and an endless variety of snacks, meals, and beverages. As a result of globalization and modern transportation, we are no longer bound by seasons, so we can eat whatever we desire, whenever we desire it. Yet in the middle of this cornucopia, we worry. Americans (and Europeans too) are increasingly obese, bringing on a series of health consequences previously uncommon in human history. We are unsure of the sustainability of our food system and wonder if we can continue to produce and distribute food with little or no regard for seasons or regions. We worry about the consequences of sharp inequalities in food access within our own societies and between our societies and others.

This course will bring an anthropological perspective to the study of our contemporary food system. We will begin by asking why people eat what they eat. We will examine how the definition of food, along with the ways in which it is produced and distributed, shapes and is shaped by society and culture. Food, we will see, plays a central role in the organization of kinship, relations between social classes, the practice of politics, and the shape of religious life. We will examine the relationship between changing systems of food production and distribution and the structure of societies. We will raise questions about how our food system participates in globalization, from questions of inequality, to cultural homogenization, potential loss, and creativity. We will use the resources available to us in Montpellier—farmers markets, wine makers, cheese producers, artisanal chocolate makers, Slow Food advocates, and local scholars—to explore what distinguishes French food thinking and practices from those in the United States. By the end of this class, you will be able to analyze global and local food systems, compare core concepts about food and nutrition across cultures and societies, and critically examine the debates, policies, and social structures regarding food in contemporary society.

Course Requirements

The course is organized in a seminar format with discussions based on the readings. Thus, each reading assignment should be completed before the date it is to be discussed (see below).

You will be graded on:

- Field/Reading journal, 40% of your grade.
- Field research report (oral), 20% of your grade.
- Final exam, 20% of your grade.
- Participation, 20% of your grade.

Attendance is mandatory. Except for severe emergencies, more than 1 absence will reduce your grade significantly. As a seminar, this class cannot succeed without the full participation of all students.

Academic Integrity

Honesty and respect for your work and for the work of others are essential to your success in this course and in university life in general. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. This includes cheating and plagiarism. Proper social science citation methods will be required on essays. For further details on academic integrity, see the UNO Judicial Code: http://www.uno.edu/student-affairs/documents/Student-Code-of-Conduct-rev-2018.pdf
Disabilities

I will do my best to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities. Please feel free to contact me about your needs. If you have a disability, please contact the Program Coordinator, Robyn White (RLWhite3@uno.edu) as soon as possible so that we can best accommodate you.

The Program

All readings will be made available online as PDF files. A link to the readings will be distributed to students a few weeks before we start the program. Unless otherwise noted, all readings are required.

Food/Culture/Society: Raising Questions


What is Food?

7/3 Douglas, Mary. "The Abominations of Leviticus"

Mintz, Sidney. "Time, Sugar, and Sweetness."


Agriculture, Place, and the Nation, Some French Thoughts


Paris

7/5, 7/6 Paris market visit, restaurant menu project.
7/7

The Taste of Place


The Taste of Culture


Cheese project.
Marchés, Supermarkets, Global Markets


7/16 Marché des Arceaux, visit (morning), Château de Flaugergues ([https://www.flaugergues.com/](https://www.flaugergues.com/), afternoon).

7/17 Arles! Restaurant menu project.


Cooking, Ritual, Memory


Chocolate project.

Restaurant Worlds


Montpellier! Restaurant menu project.

7/31 Finals