Syllabus

The Anthropology of Food, 3 Credits
Professor Joan Gross

Course Description:

In this course, we examine the role of food in human societies turning our attention to different food procurement styles around the globe and more symbolic aspects of food as well as the relationship between food and the environment. The politics of food and the challenges that globalization places on local food systems will be discussed. Food insecurity, obesity, and farming are all grist for the anthropological food mill. Finally, we will examine several social movements that concern food.

Learning Outcomes:

After taking this course a student will be able to:
- Relate how the environment and culture have influenced foodways in several different societies, past and present
--Account for the politics of food and nutrition and the significance of public action
- Give examples of social movements that focus primarily on food
- Interpret the symbolic weight of various foods in particular cultures
- Identify personal, social, cultural, economic and historical variations in food and eating
- Describe the processes of domestication, industrialization and globalization as they concern food
- Explain how economic and political economic relations contribute(d) to food shortages and famines in peripheral countries
- Explain reasons for the current obesity epidemic

Readings in the order in which they will be read:


Harris, Marvin. 1985. The Abominable Pig. In Good to Eat: Riddles of Food and Culture. Simon and Schuster.


Pollan, Michael. 2013. at http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/19/magazine/say-hello-to-the-100-trillion-bacteria-that-make-up-your-microbiome.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

Kulick, Don and Anne Meneley, eds. 2005. Fat: The Anthropology of an Obsession. Tarcher


Course Evaluation:

486

2 sets of fieldnotes 10%
class participation 10%
Fat summary 10%
Essay test 30%
Cooking Project 10%
Webpage 30%

Outside Class Activities:

Students are required to attend two approved activities outside of class time. Fieldnotes are required during the week following the event.
Class Participation:

- I expect students to be in class having read and thought about that day’s readings and ready to discuss and occasionally, write.
- Participation on Blackboard discussion boards is also required.

Cooking Project

- I’d like everyone to listen to Ken Albala’s TED talk at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rt-oaLVjz3U
- Get together with 1-3 members of the class and choose a cooking project that takes a long time to make. Carefully document the stages and interactions. Present it to the class (hopefully with tastes) on November 26th.

Webpage Project. Check out the website http://lilt.ilstu.edu/rtdirks/ Pick a topic (one of theirs or your own) and have it approved by your professor by week 3. (Remember that this is a cultural anthropology class, so your topic has to have something to do with culture.) You will be creating a webpage on that topic at http://anthropologyoffood.jimdo.com/ More specific information will follow. I’ll set up a discussion board on your blackboard site where students can help each other out, if necessary. You will be required to use at least 5 academic sources. At least two must be class readings and at least 2 must be outside readings.

Course Schedule:

Week 1. Oct. 1, 3 Why and How do Anthropologists Study Food?

T-Introduction / fieldnotes/ Mintz

R- Harris/Meigs

Week 2. Oct. 8, 10 Foragers, Hunters, Pastoralists; Agriculture

T- Lee -What hunters do for a living

R- Video-Basques of Santazi; Cohen - Origins of Agriculture

Week 3. Oct. 15, 17 Food/ Fat as Symbol

T- Video-Milk in the Land; Barthes; Paxson; Read Michael Pollan’s article at http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/19/magazine/say-hello-to-the-100-trillion-bacteria-that-make-up-your-microbiome.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

R- Fat: Read Intro and write 1-2 pg. summary on one of the following chapters. What does fat mean in that particular context?
Week 4: Oct 22, 24 Migrations of Food and People
T- Nabhan 1-64; Have website topic approved.
R- Nabhan 67-133

Week 5. Oct. 29, 31 Globalization of Food
T- Fischer 1-87
R- Fischer 91-172

Week 6: Nov 5, 7 Scarcity and Plenty
T- Berg 13-22; 45-98; 191-215; 237-257
R- film - Babette’s Feast (watch outside of class) (3-5 pm -Discussion of feasts with Myriam Paredes’ Food Sovereignty class)

Week 7: Nov 12, 14 Food and Nutrition in Ecuador
T- Weismantel; Current research in N. Ecuador
R- Weismantel (3-5 pm -Weismantel Discussion with Myriam Paredes’ Food Sovereignty class)

Week 8: Nov. 19, 21
T- Work on websites
R – Essay test

Week 9: Nov 26, 28
T- Presentation of cooking projects
R- No class. Thanksgiving

Week 10: Wrapping Up – During this week students will be preparing their websites which must be posted by Friday, December 6th. There will be no class given by the professor, but students are invited to come to class to work together on their websites if they so desire.

By Friday, Dec. 13th at 5 pm, evaluations of classmates’ websites must by posted to Blackboard.
586 Syllabus Supplement

Graduate student orientation to local native foods, Friday, Oct. 2.

Oct. 6-7 – Harira preparation

1. multiply ingredients by 5
2. shop for ingredients
   a. meat
   b. fresh vegetables and lemons
   c. dried garbanzos and olive oil – soak garbanzos by 2pm, Oct. 6
   d. spices
   e. Arabic bread
(keep receipts for reimbursement and write up fieldnotes about the experience.)

Organize the use of the kitchen on Oct. 7. (Tables, bowls)

Do a spice taste test for the ugs

Present the process to the class

October 26th – Instead of doing the quiz, you will finish the textbook and write up a justification for your paper, tying it into themes laid out in the text. Write 3-5 typed pages, followed by an initial bibliography of 5 academic sources.

Graduate students are required to read one of the following books (or another food-centered book by an anthropologist – approved by the professor) and present it to the class on Nov. 2, 9 and 16. Aim for a 15 minute presentation.


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Accommodations are collaborative efforts between students, faculty and Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). Students with accommodations approved through SSD are responsible for contacting the faculty member in charge of the course prior to or during the first week of the term to discuss accommodations. Students who believe they are eligible for accommodations but who have not yet obtained approval through SSD should contact SSD immediately at 737-4098.

See OSU Expectations for Student Conduct at http://oregonstate.edu/admin/stucon/achon.htm