Instructor: Christina W. O’Bryan
Office: Condon 355
Office hours: Drop in office hours most Thursdays from 12:30 to 2:00. Otherwise, by appointment, by phone appointment or by Skype.
Email: cwobryan@uoregon.edu

GE: Gennie Nguyen
gnguyen@uoregon.edu

GE: James Daria
jdaria@uoregon.edu

Note: All elements of this course are taught online.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Unless you are ailing or fasting, you eat every day. Do you eat only to nourish yourself? Is the food you eat a collection of biochemical substances that sustain your life? Or does eating have social, cultural and symbolic value? What, if anything, does it mean when you choose not to eat? Does it mean you are sick? Does it mean that you aren’t hungry? Or does not-eating also have social, cultural and symbolic value? What are the biological underpinnings of the relationship of human beings to their food?

The food we eat serves more than the biological need to nourish. It is also a part of our cultural nourishment in social behaviors, relationships and ideas and culture is part of the unique array of adaptations we have as human beings. We call this commensality and it has important social and biological effects for human beings. We will explore this theme as well as another theme which surfaces in readings and lectures—the problem of nothingness—which is discussed in one of the readings. What does it mean to have enough—or to have enough but still not feel nourished? Can we still feel as if there is nothing even when we technically are being nourished?

This is a biocultural course in nutritional anthropology, which means that it examines issues relating to food from the perspectives of two subfields in our discipline—biological

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Footnote: 1 This is a working syllabus—which means that it may change, so be aware that I may substitute one thing for another.
anthropology and cultural anthropology. We not only explore both biological and cultural aspects to food but how they interact. For example, consider the human gut, which appears to be like a second brain which mediates—among other things—immune function. So, what is the role of the food we choose in the health of the gut, i.e., what is the relation of culture to the biological action of the gut? Are there evolutionary considerations that may have influenced our adaptations in human digestion? How are processes of culture part of evolutionary biology in relation to food? What are the social and environmental consequences of how humans feed themselves?

These and other considerations are part of “Food and Culture” and this course fulfills a departmental requirement for anthropology majors.

This online summer version of the course is intended to provide you with the full course in a condensed period of time, so you will want to plan your workload accordingly—be sure to ask for help early.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

A primary goal of this university is to help you to develop critical thinking skills. The primary goal of this course is to support your critical thinking in regard to social, environmental, symbolic, and evolutionary aspects to human foodways. In this context, critical thinking is not only about being critical or taking arguments and assertions apart. It is about developing within your intellect tools to **wonder expansively and explore with attention to contexts of arguments**. I hope that you will become a more critical consumer not just of the food you eat but of the processes by which it becomes part of your nourishment as well as some of the meanings that are attached to how you nourish yourself and your friends and family.

By the end of the course, you should have enough information to appreciate what anthropologists call different “Foodways.” You will have tools to continue exploring in many directions the biological and cultural aspects of food and culture, but in particular, you will have tools to:

1. Decipher and deconstruct a meal nutritionally and culturally.
2. Explain the chain of circumstances, environments and people through which the food you eat had to pass before it could arrive in your mouth.
3. Explain the biocultural perspective as articulated in this course.

What are your goals and objectives for taking this course? (e.g., general education requirements, major field, food for life, _____, _____?)

**ACCOMMODATIONS**

If you have documented learning issues like learning disorders or disabilities that affect how you process the various tasks involved in this course, please let me know at the beginning of the term so that I can make appropriate adjustments. Be sure to document these issues with the Accessible Education office (http://aec.uoregon.edu/).

Some of the lectures and other materials for this term are primarily available through YouTube. If you are taking this course from China or other places where YouTube is not accessible, please let me know early in the term.
REQUIRED READINGS AND OTHER RESOURCES

Required textbooks and readings:
- *Food: Ethnographic Encounters* edited by Leo Coleman. New York: Berg. (Also available as an ebook through the Duck Store and through Amazon.) (FEE)
- Other readings will be posted on Canvas.

Films: There are some films which you will be required or watch as part of lectures, but there are also videos which you will be required to watch on your own time. If you have seen them already, you may want to review them for this course.
- **Required.** *Food, Inc* (Available online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Oq24hITFTY or you can watch it in Knight Library in video reserve.)
- **Required.** *The Truth about Food, Inc.* with filmmaker Robert Kenner https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wXmF_erEv1o .
- **Required.** Other films or excerpts of films that are part of lectures.

COURSE STRUCTURE

This course is meant to create a learning climate in which you become teachers as well as students, so, while there are a few quizzes on the daily discussion boards, there is no midterm and your final exam is a final paper which is part of a research project. The course is organized around
1) weekly readings, lectures, and discussion board participation and
2) a project which consists of a 3-5-minute presentation, peer evaluations for all of your colleagues’ presentations, and a 1500-2000-word final paper.

Breakdown of grading percentages

40% discussion board appearance and participation. There are 5 discussion boards in which you will be asked to produce two items for each entry:
1) some aspect of your research project and
2) EITHER an essay or a short quiz.

60% Research project:
1. (20%) 3-5 minute narrated online presentation due at the end of Week 3 which will serve as a “report-in-progress” to your colleagues and will give you a chance to get some feedback from them about what does and does not work so that you can improve your final paper.
2. (15%) peer feedback on your colleagues’ presentations
3. (25%) final paper 1500-2000 words that expands your presentation discussion

Some written work will be uploaded through Vericite, so if you have problems with it, please get help from the tech help desk in McKenzie Hall (541/346-HELP). If you have questions about content or about assignments, contact Dr. O’Bryan.
Grading Guidelines:
A: Does the assignment exceptionally well—richer, deeper analysis and insightful discussion. Outstanding written work and participation. Shows a very high quality of understanding of course material (readings, lectures, films, etc.).
B: Does more than just the assignment and does it well. Very good written work and participation. Shows a high quality of understanding of course material.
C: Does the assignment but nothing more. Acceptable written work and participation. Shows an understanding of course material.
D: Does not really do the assignment. Poor written work. Shows minimal understanding of course material.
F: Does not really do the assignment. Incomplete work and/or shows a lack of understanding of course material.

Final grades will be determined as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>A- to A+</td>
<td>90-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>B- to B+</td>
<td>80-89</td>
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<tr>
<td>C- to C+</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>60-69</td>
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<td>F</td>
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COURSE PROTOCOLS
I want you to speak up in this class—through discussion boards, through emails to me, and in whatever ways we can find to interact. Passionate—always respectful—disagreement is an important part of learning in the classroom or in the virtual classroom, so we should work together to foster a class environment where excited inquiry, when it happens, can take place respectfully and even kindly. In other words, be polite, treat each other—and your GEs (GTFs) and me—with respect and kindness when there is disagreement, even (maybe especially) if you are annoyed or angry. I want you to feel free to bring up disagreements or questions with me; I will always endeavor to answer you well, though I can’t always promise to give you the answer you want.

Plagiarism and Cheating  Plagiarism can become a particular problem in the age of the internet and is more than just copying someone else’s work. It also includes copying someone else’s idea without attribution and there are consequences to cheating by plagiarism or other means. This course uses plagiarism-checking software. If you are discovered to be plagiarizing or cheating, the consequences can range from receiving an F for the exercise/assignment and/or the course to being reported to the Office of the Dean of Students. A truly serious case can involve serious consequences to your academic career and beyond. For more information: [http://researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism](http://researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism).
Basic Schedule of Readings, Films and Assignments

Module 1. Introductions, overview of course, and overview of a few contemporary issues

Readings:
1. In Nutritional Anthropology (NA): The Biocultural Perspective in Nutritional Anthropology, Gretchen Pelto et. al.
2. Canvas: “Swapping Germs” and related material.
5. Explore the American Gut project and the Human Food Project website: http://humanfoodproject.com/americangut/

Browse (so you know where to find nutritional information):
6. Recommended: In NA--Browse Appendix A.and B
8. Recommended: Look up the following terms and use them to begin a glossary for yourself: Commensal, commensalism, commensality, natural selection, evolutionary theory.

Discussion 1: DUE by midnight Sunday 15 January (Monday is MLK Day, so if you are taking a long weekend, you will want to plan ahead and do the quiz and assignment early)
1. Quiz
2. Project Assignment: begin research and submit topic, research questions and 5 library sources

Module 2. Overview of evolution, adaptation and subsistence strategies

Readings:
2. In NA: Kung Nutritional Status and the Original “Affluent Society”--A New Analysis, Barry Bogin
3. In NA: Body Size, Adaptation and Function, Reynaldo Martorelli
4. In FEE: Van Esterik_Revisiting Lao Food

Discussion 2: DUE by midnight Sunday 22 January
1. Quiz
2. Project assignment: schedule interview or observation, continue research

Module 3. Why Do We Eat What We Eat and What Does It Mean?

Readings:
1. In NA: No Heads, No Feet, No Monkeys, No Dogs: The Evolution of Personal Food Taboos, Miriam S. Chaiken


**Discussion 3**: DUE by midnight Sunday 29 January

1. Essay: Commensality and Why We Eat What We Eat
2. Project Assignment: continue research, **conduct** interview or observation

**Module 4. Colonialism, globalization and food production**

Readings:

1. **Canvas**: Mintz. *Time, Sugar and Sweetness.*
2. In NA: Coca-Colonization of Diets in The Yucatan, Thomas L. Leatherman and Alan Goodman
5. In NA: Anthropological Perspectives on the Global Food Crisis, David A. Himmelgreen, Nancy Romero-Daza, and Charlotte A. Noble
6. In FEE: Harris. *The Enchantments of Food in the Lower Amazon.*

**Discussion 4**: DUE by midnight Sunday 5 February

1. Quiz
2. Project assignment: write up your interview or observation.

**Module 5. Food and identities**

Readings:

3. NA: Japanese Mothers and Obentos: The Lunch-Box as Ideological State Apparatus, Anne Alison
4. FEE: "Keeping out of the Kitchen: Cooking and Power in a Moroccan Household."

**Discussion 5**: Nothing due, BUT you will need to know this week’s readings for future discussions. (This is the time to catch up if you are behind in the readings.)

**Module 6. Too much/too little, famine/obesity: Food and the Environment**

Readings:

1. In NA: Child Malnutrition and Famine in the Nigerien Sahel, Catherine Panter-Brick, Rachel Casiday, Katherine Hampshire, and Kate Kilpatrick.
2. **Canvas** link to Counihan and Van Esterik book: Want Amid Plenty; from Hunger to Inequality Janet Poppendieck.²

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² *Food and Culture*, by Carol Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, is available as an eBook through the UO library.
5. In FEE: Dunn_The Food of Sorrow

Discussion 6: DUE by midnight Sunday 19 February
1. Essay: The Problem of Nothingness
2. Work on your research project

Module 7: Political economies and food and agriculture
Readings:
2. Canvas: the view from agribusiness—Harvard Business School Executive Seminars
3. Canvas: Hightower excerpt

Discussion 7: DUE by midnight Sunday 26 February
1. Quiz
2. Work on your presentations

Module 8: Work on Presentations and Papers
Online presentations are narrated PowerPoints that you will upload where it says “UPLOAD PRESENTATIONS HERE.” See instructions under Research Project in Modules.

Discussion 8: PRESENTATIONS DUE by midnight Friday March 3

Module 9: Watch assigned presentations and work on final papers
Review peer evaluations about your presentations and make whatever revisions you deem appropriate to your final paper. See instructions under Research Project in Modules.

Discussion 9: PEER EVALUATIONS DUE BY midnight Tuesday March 14.

Module 10: Watch assigned presentations, work on final papers
See instructions under Research Project in Modules.
Discussion 10: FINAL PAPER DUE BY midnight Friday March 17.

Submit your paper where indicated in Canvas.

Have a wondrous spring break!
(Don’t forget to stop and smell some flowers!)