Instructor: Christina W. O’Bryan  
Office (Spring 2016): Condon 355  
Drop-in office hours: 1-3 Thursdays through Week 10  
You are also welcome to make an appointment to see me at another day and time if this time does not work for you.  
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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.

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 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.

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. Write a short, biocultural, ethnographic account of food which articulates the biocultural relationship of food to human beings.
4. 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:**

- 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.

a. **Required.** *Food, Inc* (Available online at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_Ltaxr_BWk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i_Ltaxr_BWk) or you can watch it in Knight Library in video reserve.)


c. **Required.** Other films or excerpts of films that are part of lectures.

d. **Optional.** Online video series: BBC film series *The Future of Food*, to be viewed at your discretion over the first eight weeks. Each video is about 1 hour, so you can divide up the viewings however you prefer.
Part 1. India  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XiPuCSGo_wo
Part 2. Senegal  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7YDQV7Ts10Q
Part 3. Cuba  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GaSd7BkJa1M

**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 weekly discussion boards, there is no midterm and no final exam. 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 1500-3000-word final paper.

**Breakdown of grading percentages**

40% discussion board appearance and participation. In the first 8 weeks, there are 6 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 presentation some time during the term (before Week 9) 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 all of your colleagues’ presentations
3. (25%) final paper

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 (541/346-4412). 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.

**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:** Incomplete work and/or shows a lack of understanding of course material.

**Final grades** will be determined as follows:

90-100 = A- to A+
80-89 = B- to B+
70-79 = C- to C+
60-69 = D
<60 = F
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 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 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. If you are discovered to be plagiarizing or cheating, the consequences can range from receiving a zero for the exercise/assignment or the course to being reported to the Office of the Dean of Students.
~~ BASIC SCHEDULE OF READINGS, FILMS AND ASSIGNMENTS ~~~

Each week, I will post lecture videos which will usually include some combination of narrative from me and then links to videos, audio or other material on the internet. For the most part, this is the schedule. If I learn of something that I want you to read, hear or view that isn’t already on the schedule, I will compensate you for the time either by reducing work somewhere else in the course or by shortening the amount of time you need to listen to lectures.

WEEK 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. On Canvas: “Swapping Germs” and related material.
4. Read Syllabus.

*Browse* (so you know where to find nutritional information):
5. In NA: Browse Appendix A and B

**DUE:** Discussion 1 quiz due by midnight Sunday before Week 2

WEEK 2. Evolution, adaptation and brief review of 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

**DUE:** Discussion 2 by midnight Sunday before Week 3.

WEEK 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
4. In FEE: Jordan_In Search of the Elusive Heirloom Tomato.

Explore websites:
National Clonal Germplasm Repository, Corvallis
DUE: Discussion 3 due by midnight Sunday before Week 4.

WEEK 4. 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 Kilpatric
4. In FEE: Dunn _The Food of Sorrow
5. On Canvas: Vietnamese market gardens in NOLA

DUE: Discussion 4 by midnight Sunday before Week 5.

WEEK 5. Colonialism, globalization and the globalization of food and food production.
Readings:
1. On Canvas: Mintz__Time, Sugar and Sweetness.
2. In NA: Coca-Colonization of Diets in The Yucatan, Thomas L. Leatherman and Alan Goodman
5. In FEE: Harris _The Enchantments of Food in the Lower Amazon.

DUE: NO DISCUSSION DUE THIS WEEK.

WEEK 6. Food and identities
Readings:
3. In NA: Japanese Mothers and Obentos: The Lunch-Box as Ideological State Apparatus, Anne Alison

DUE: 10 pts. Discussion 5 on or before midnight Sunday before Week 7

WEEK 7. Political economies and food and agriculture.
Readings:
1. In NA: Anthropological Perspectives on the Global Food Crisis, David A. Himmelgreen, Nancy Romero-Daza, and Charlotte A. Noble
2. On Canvas: Clapp_The Political Economy of Food Aid in an Era of Agricultural Biotechnology.
3. On Canvas: the view from agribusiness—Harvard Business School Executive Seminars

* Food and Culture, by Carol Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, is available as an eBook through the UO library.
4. On Canvas: Hightower excerpt

**DUE:** Discussion 6 by midnight Sunday before Week 8.

**WEEK 8. Globalization**

**Readings:**

**DUE:** Presentations uploaded by midnight Sunday before Week 9.

**WEEK 9. Presentations**

**DUE:** (See Week 8).

**WEEK 10. Presentations**

**DUE:** Peer evaluations due: Upload your evaluations of presentations by midnight FRIDAY of Week 10 so presenters can have your comments for editing their final papers.

**WEEK 11. FINALS WEEK**

**FINAL PAPER DUE** BY MIDNIGHT Tuesday of Finals Week. Submit 2 copies of your paper online where indicated. (You must submit both copies or you will receive a zero for the paper.)

**HAVE A GOOD SUMMER!**