Anthropology 365
Food and Culture
Spring 2022
Online WORKING Syllabus

Instructor: Christina W. O’Bryan
Class time: wifi/ethernet + any time you choose = class time
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Unless you are ailing or fasting, you eat every day. 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 just aren’t hungry in the moment? Or does not-eating also have social, cultural and symbolic value? What are the biological underpinnings of the relationships 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 which can be applied to satisfy a requirement for either a biological anthropological course or a cultural anthropological course.

This is an asynchronous course, meaning that there is no standard meeting time. Each weekly module will “drop” Monday morning after assignment due dates are passed. Most modules and will include some combination of recorded lectures and external videos and an assignment of some kind for almost every week. Due dates for the first 8 weeks will be Sunday nights by 11:59 PM, except for the last 2 weeks when the due dates will be different.
COURSE OBJECTIVES
A primary goal of this university is to help you to develop critical thinking skills in relation to understanding the interaction between food and culture—social, environmental, symbolic, and evolutionary aspects of 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. Deconstruct meals nutritionally and culturally.
2. Explore the chain of circumstances, environments and people through which the food you eat had to pass before it could arrive in your mouth as well as after you chewed it up then swallowed it, sending it along its inevitable journey out of your body. (In fact, we will start the course exploring our guts.)
3. Explain the biocultural perspective as articulated in this course—in particular, the difference between biocultural anthropological and cultural perspectives.
4. What are your goals and objectives for taking this course? (e.g., general education requirements, major field, food for life, _____, _____?)

ACCOMMODATIONS
Not all of us learn in precisely the same way. Some of us learn in ways that don’t always match with the current educational practices. If you have issues that affect how you function academically—e.g., if English is not your first language or 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 any learning issues with the Accessible Education office (http://aec.uoregon.edu/) so that those resources are available to you and to me.

Some of the lectures and other materials for this term are primarily available through YouTube.

REQUIRED READINGS AND OTHER RESOURCES
- There is no required textbook. All required readings will come from articles or book chapters. Links or the readings themselves will be posted on Canvas or available through library e-books.
COURSE STRUCTURE
This course is organized around readings, lectures, and a small research project that will allow you to research something that interests you in addition to learning about the things that I’ve chosen for you to read.

Assignments: For the first 8 weeks, each week, there will be some combination of:
- either reflections on readings, or a very short quiz, plus
- a draft of some part of your final project, and
- your critique of one or 2 of your colleagues’ entries.

These assignments are meant to encourage you to think aloud on the page rather than get everything perfectly right. The way to do well on these weekly assignments is to follow directions and do each part. If you don’t answer all the parts of the prompt, that is when you’re likely to lose points rather than if you answer and get something wrong.

Research project:
The research project will include
1. An interview with somebody who is related to a food and culture issue you wish to research.
2. An annotated bibliography.
4. Substantive feedback to 6 of your colleagues.
5. Final paper.

More detailed guidelines for your research project will be posted on the canvas website under Modules.

GRADING
Breakdown of grading percentages
45% discussion board assignments and participation
55% Research project:
1. (15%) report of research in progress
2. (15%) peer feedback
3. (25%) final research paper

(Seventy points = C-. Sixty-nine points = D+.)

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: 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>Score Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>97-100</td>
<td>A+</td>
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<tr>
<td>94-95</td>
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<tr>
<td>90-93</td>
<td>A-</td>
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<tr>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>84-86</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>90-83</td>
<td>B-</td>
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<tr>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<tr>
<td>74-76</td>
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<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>D</td>
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<td>&lt;60</td>
<td>F</td>
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I don’t bump grades up to the next category automatically, but I do look at the feedback that you give on assignments and particularly the feedback related to the final project, so it is worth your time and energy to make a serious effort for any feedback you give. Positive feedback is important and necessary, but cheerleading each other is not what is looked for. Think about giving good constructive critical feedback — not just what works well, but what could be improved or what advice you could give about other sources or ideas. Instead of worrying about being too critical, think about what you can contribute to your colleague’s work.

**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. 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, you will receive a zero for the assignment(s) in question with potential additional consequences up to and including an ‘F’ for the course and being reported to the Office of the Dean of Students. For more information: [http://library.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/index.html](http://library.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/index.html).

Your best strategy for not losing points to plagiarism: **Don’t plagiarize.**

Other basics:

- **Bother me** if you have questions and do so early rather than waiting.
- **Skimming** is very helpful in a course like this—e.g., reading the abstract or introduction, the conclusion and the subheadings to get the main points. You can always go back and deepen your reading once you know where things are. You can also avoid the methodology discussions if they don’t interest you.
- **Boldfaced** readings should be read more closely.
- You cannot get points for assignments you do not turn in, so you are better off in a point-driven class like this to turn in something that isn’t perfect.
- No extra credit.
- If you are having trouble keeping up with deadlines, contact Dr. O’Bryan and let’s strategize to help you.
~~~ BASIC SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS ~~~

NOTE: The course is organized around Modules in Canvas which will open up one module per week on Monday mornings. Each of these modules will contain

• Lectures from combined sources — usually at least an introductory lecture by me, and then either more videos by me or videos like TED talks or other material curated from the Internet.

***PLAN AHEAD for any special events and holidays. It’s always okay to turn assignments in early.***

Modules open each Monday. 
Assignments for Weeks 1-9 are due by 11:59 the following Sunday. 
Assignment for Week 10 (Final Paper) is due Tuesday of Finals Week (Week 11).

Module 1. Biocultural perspective and commensalism/commensality
Readings:

Browse (so you know where to find nutritional information):

Module 2. Overview of evolution, adaptation and subsistence strategies.
Readings:
2. Bogin, B., 2011. ! Kung nutritional status and the original" affluent society"-a new analysis.

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

*Module 4. Too much/too little: Food, hunger and the Environment*

**Readings:**

2. Fessi OR Dinneen

**Recommended:**


*Module 5. Colonialism, globalization and the globalization of food and food production.*

**Readings:**


*Module 6. Food and identities*

**Readings:**


**Recommended:**

Module 7. Political economies and food and agriculture.
Readings:

Recommended:

Module 8. Globalization
Readings:
1. Anthropological Perspectives on the Global Food Crisis, David A. Himmelgreen, Nancy Romero-Daza, and Charlotte A. Noble

Module 9: Reports on research in progress
1. Read 6 reports in progress and
2. Submit peer evaluations of 12 reports-in-progress assigned to you.

Module 10: Work on Final Paper
1. Read over your colleagues’ comments on your report-in-progress.
2. Edit the draft of your final paper as you deem necessary.

FINALS WEEK:
Final Paper DUE by midnight Tuesday of Finals Week.

HAVE A WONDERFUL SUMMER!