

Eating Culture: Introduction to the Anthropology of Food

Instructor

Kimberley Connor

Office Hours: Thursday 11:30-1:30 or by appointment

Course Schedule and Location

Tues and Thurs 9.00-10.20

Course Description

Everyone eats, it's an essential and universal part of human existence. But food is not just about calories and nutrition - it is rich with meaning and memory. In this course we take a broad view of the social meanings of food, cooking and eating to think about how food choices create and are produced by individual and group identities. We explore different methods that anthropologists use to study food—from the archaeological to the single ingredient study—, and we deconstruct ideas about 'natural' and 'good' ways of eating by placing them in historical and transnational contexts.

In this class you will learn the following:

- to understand why anthropologists study food
- to produce self-reflexive writing connecting course content to personal experiences of food
- to apply insights from course readings and lectures to everyday food encounters
- to analyze the social/political/economic/historical contexts of a particular food, meal or relevant source
- to identify and compare different theoretical and methodological approaches anthropologists use to study food
- to read and analyze a variety of types of anthropological writing

Classroom Expectations

I expect students to be:

- **Active participants** in class activities and discussions
- **On time** to classes
- **Respectful** of others and their opinions
- **Prepared** for class by having done assigned readings and exercises

Coursework

This is a reading-intensive and writing-intensive course which consists of two 90-minute classes per week. The first will generally develop core knowledge of that week's topic using lectures, while the second will deep understanding with discussion of the readings and hands-on activities. In addition, you are expected to complete required readings, prepare weekly reading analysis notes, and complete outside reading, research and writing under the direction of the instructor.

Assignments

Participation (10%) – active participation in class discussions and completion of weekly ungraded quizzes

Reading and Field Notes (20%) - each week you will complete field notes consisting of observations of a food experience and interpretations based on the week's readings. You should submit 7 over the course of the quarter. Submit them by the Friday of the week the readings apply to.

Mid-term (20%) – Week 5 short and medium-length responses covering class content (lectures, discussions and readings) and applying theoretical perspectives to real-world examples.

Writing Assignment – Assessing the Menu 2000 words (50%)

- With reference to at least two of the theoretical approaches we have discussed in class explain how you would analyze a chosen recipe or menu.
 - o Topic proposal - Week 4
 - o Class discussion of chosen recipes/menus - Week 6
 - o Annotated bibliography - Week 8
 - o Final Paper - Finals Week December 15th

Assignment formatting – please submit all written work as a Word document or PDF, 1.5 or double spaced, in size 12 Times New Roman font. For references use the Chicago in-text citation style, with a reference list at the end of the document. Include page numbers for multi-page documents.

Course and University Policies

Assessments

Assignments are due at midnight on the due date and should be submitted through the class Canvas site. The assignment portal will close at this time and any late assignments should be emailed to the instructor with an explanation. Emergencies (sudden illness or hospitalization, bereavement etc.) will not be penalized.

Across all assignments (except the presentation) you have two flex days, allowing you to submit items late. You can choose when you would like to apply them, and whether to use them together or separately. Please include in your explanation email how many flex days you intend to use. Once these days have been used, late work will be marked down 10% per day.

Attendance

Consistent attendance and active participation is an important part of doing well in this course, and the decision to enroll in the class is a decision to attend the classes and do the required readings and assignments. Having said that, I know that life happens, and some circumstances are beyond our control. Up to two absences will have no effect on participation and do not require documentation, although please do let me know that you will not be present. Beyond these two, absences will affect your participation grade. For any absences, you are responsible for making up for missed work and class materials by liaising with your peers.

Planned absences - If you know that you will be absent for a class (e.g. travel for a university sporting event), contact the instructor in advance to make arrangements. If you know in advance that you will be absent when an assessment is due, it is your responsibility to submit your work ahead of the due date.

Illness – If you are sick and unable to participate or if you are contagious, please do not come to class. Contact the instructor as soon as practicable to let them know you will not be attending and to make arrangements to catch up on work once you are better. The instructor may request medical documentation for protracted or frequent absences due to illness.

Students with Documented Disabilities

Stanford is committed to providing equal educational opportunities for students with a disability. If you experience disability, please register with the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). Professional staff will evaluate your needs, support appropriate and reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Academic Accommodation Letter for faculty. To get started, or to re-initiate services, please visit oae.stanford.edu.

If you already have an Academic Accommodation Letter, I invite you to share your letter with me early in the quarter so I can partner with you and OAE to identify any barriers to access and inclusion that might be encountered in your experience of this course.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is a commitment undertaken by all scholars—students, faculty and researchers alike—to honest, fair and responsible scholarship. At Stanford, students and faculty are expected to work in accordance with the Honor Code (<https://communitystandards.stanford.edu/policies-and-guidance/honor-code>) and the Fundamental Standard (<https://communitystandards.stanford.edu/policies-and-guidance/fundamental-standard>). Among other things, these prohibit plagiarism, unauthorized aid, copying from another's work, and representing someone else's work as your own. Violating these standards is a serious offense, even when it is unintentional. You are responsible for understanding these rules and you should familiarize yourself with them. If you have any questions, please see me to discuss them.

Course Privacy Statement

As noted in the University's [recording and broadcasting courses policy](#), students may not audio or video record class meetings without permission from the instructor (and guest speakers, when applicable). If the instructor grants permission or if the teaching team posts videos themselves, students may keep recordings only for personal use and may not post recordings on the Internet, or otherwise distribute them. These policies protect the privacy rights of instructors and students, and the intellectual property and other rights of the university. Students who need lectures recorded for the purposes of an academic accommodation should contact the [Office of Accessible Education](#).

Electronic Devices

You are welcome to use laptops in class for notetaking but should not be using it for other purposes which distract you from class. Phones should be turned to silent and should not be used during class time.

University Resources

The last two years have been challenging for all of us and we are still facing new uncertainties, responsibilities, and emotions. Especially under such conditions, I appreciate your participation in this course, and will do everything I can to support you. There are also campus resources, such as [accommodations](#), [undergraduate advising directors](#), [well-being coaches](#), [counselors](#), [academic coaches](#), [Hume Center writing tutors](#), and the [FLI opportunity fund](#) for broader needs you might have. If there are additional ways I can support you in the course, please feel free to reach out to me.

Class Materials

Technology

You will need to have access to a device that connects to the internet so that you can access email and Canvas. All course details and materials will be posted on our Canvas course site. Students can borrow equipment and access other learning technology from [the Lathrop Learning Hub](#)

Books

Readings will be assigned from

- 1) Counihan, Carole, et al., editors. *Food and Culture: A Reader*. 4th edition, Routledge, 2018.

Note - Multiple editions are available. Most will have all the readings, but if you purchase an edition which doesn't then it is your responsibility to source that chapter somewhere else (many were published as standalone essays and are available through Searchworks).

- 2) Crowther, Gillian. *Eating Culture: An Anthropological Guide to Food*. 1st edition, University of Toronto Press, Higher Education Division, 2013.

Both are available through the Campus Bookstore and online shops, including used copies. All other readings are available on the course Canvas site.

Schedule

Week 1 Introduction – what is food and why study it? How do different types of anthropologists approach food? And what is the relationship of the anthropologist to foods they study?

Thursday

- Eating Culture – Introduction
- Guthman, Julie. “Food: Provocation.” *Society for Cultural Anthropology*, <https://culanth.org/fieldsights/food-provocation>.
- Twiss, K. C., 2007 *The Archaeology of Food and Identity*. Center for Archaeological Investigations, Occasional Paper No 34, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale – pages 1-7
- Haines, Helen R., and Clare A. Sarmells. *Adventures in Eating: Anthropological Experiences in Dining from Around the World*. University Press of Colorado, 2010. – Chapter 1

Bonus content – Ologies Episode on Food Anthropology

<https://www.alieward.com/ologies/food-anthropology>

Week 2 Co-evolving With Food – this week we are exploring the earliest evidence of cooking and thinking about the relationships between food and human evolution.

Tuesday

- Eating Culture Ch 2 – Domestic Food Production
- Wragg Sykes, Rebecca. *Kindred: Neanderthal Life, Love, Death and Art*. Bloomsbury Sigma, 2020. Chapter 8 – Eat and Live

Optional reading:

- Hardy, Karen, et al. “Neanderthal Medics? Evidence for Food, Cooking, and Medicinal Plants Entrapped in Dental Calculus.” *Naturwissenschaften*, vol. 99, no. 8, Aug. 2012, pp. 617–26. *Springer Link*, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00114-012-0942-0>.
- Wrangham, Richard, and NancyLou Conklin-Brittain. “Cooking as a Biological Trait.” *Comparative Biochemistry and Physiology Part A: Molecular & Integrative Physiology*, vol. 136, no. 1, Sept. 2003, pp. 35–46. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1095-6433\(03\)00020-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1095-6433(03)00020-5).

Thursday

- Cutright, Robyn E. *The Story of Food in the Human Past: How What We Ate Made Us Who We Are*. University of Alabama Press, 2021. Chapter 4.
- Smith, Bruce D. “Niche Construction and the Behavioral Context of Plant and Animal Domestication.” *Evolutionary Anthropology: Issues, News, and Reviews*, vol. 16, no. 5, 2007, pp. 188–99. <https://doi.org/10.1002/evan.20135>.
- Molleson, Theya. “Seed Preparation in the Mesolithic: The Osteological Evidence.” *Antiquity*, vol. 63, no. 239, June 1989, pp. 356–62. *Cambridge University Press*, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003598X00076079>.

Bonus content: Christina Warriner – Debunking the Paleo Diet

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BMOjVYgYaG8> and

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/foodfeatures/evolution-of-diet/>

Week 3 Classic Theories of Food – looking back at how have academics thought about the social meanings of food, and how these ideas have changed over time.

Tuesday

- Eating Culture Ch 4 – Cooks and Kitchens
- Food and Culture Ch 2 – The Culinary Triangle
- Food and Culture Ch 3 – Deciphering a Meal

Optional readings

- o Food and Culture Ch 8 – The Raw and the Rotten: Punk Cuisine
- o Lehrer, Adrienne. “Cooking Vocabularies and the Culinary Triangle of Lévi-Strauss.” *Anthropological Linguistics*, vol. 14, no. 5, 1972, pp. 155–71.
- o Robidoux, Michael A., and Aida Stratas. “The Inuit’s Offer to Canada’s Black Governor General: Food, Power, and the Deconstruction of Lévi-Strauss’ ‘Culinary Triangle.’” *International Journal of Canadian Studies*, vol. 60, no. 1, 2022, pp. 21–39.

Thursday

- Cooking Cuisine and Class, selection
- All Manners of Food Selection

Week 4 Writing Recipes – recipes, menus and cookbooks have become an important way of accessing sub-conscious ideas about food and, by extension, the world around us, especially in historical contexts. This week we’re looking at both quantitative and qualitative approaches to cookbooks and thinking about the relationship between writing about food and food itself.

Tuesday

- Crowther Ch 5 – Recipes and Dishes
- Halloran, Vivian Nun. “Recipes as Memory Work: Slave Food.” *Culture, Theory and Critique*, vol. 53, no. 2, July 2012, pp. 147–61.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14735784.2012.682791>.
- Leach, Helen M., and Raelene Inglis. “The Archaeology of Christmas Cakes.” *Food and Foodways*, vol. 11, no. 2–3, Jan. 2003, pp. 141–66.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/07409710390242336>.
- Vester, Katharina. *A Taste of Power: Food and American Identities*. University of California Press, 2015. – Chapter 3 “The Difference is Spreading”: Recipes for Lesbian Living”

Thursday

- Gora, L. Sasha. “Today’s Special: Reading Menus as Cultural Texts.” *Food Studies: Matter, Meaning, Movement*, edited by David Szanto, Amanda Di Battista and Irena Knezevic. Food Studies Press, Ottawa, 2022, pp. 114-122.

TOPIC PROPOSAL DUE

Week 5 Local and Global Food Systems – this week we consider interactions between local and global food systems, including the rise of single commodity histories.

Tuesday

- Food and Culture Ch 27 – Time, Sugar, and Sweetness
- Food and Culture Ch 21 – On the Move for Food: Three Women Behind the Tomato's Journey
- Eating Culture Ch 8 – Gastro-anomie: Global Indigestion?

Optional reading

- o Carney, Judith. “Reconsidering Sweetness and Power Through a Gendered Lens.” *Food and Foodways*, vol. 16, no. 2, June 2008, pp. 127–34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07409710802085999>.

Thursday

- Williams, Judith. “The Mango Gang and New World Cuisine: White Privilege in the Commodification of Latin American and Afro-Caribbean Foods.” *Black Food Matters*, edited by Hanna Garth and Ashanté M. Reese, University of Minnesota Press, 2020, pp. 251–78. <https://doi.org/10.5749/j.ctv182jtk0.13>.
- Hoover, Elizabeth. “‘You Can’t Say You’re Sovereign If You Can’t Feed Yourself’: Defining and Enacting Food Sovereignty in American Indian Community Gardening.” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2017, pp. 31–70. <https://doi.org/10.17953/aicrj.41.3.hoover>.

Bonus content –

Fresh Flour to the People episode of Gravy <https://www.southernfoodways.org/gravy/fresh-flour-to-the-people/>

The Rights of Rice and Future of Nature episode of 99% Invisible <https://99percentinvisible.org/episode/the-rights-of-rice-and-future-of-nature/>

MID-TERM

Week 6 Food and the Self – how do food choices produce individual identities, and vice versa? How is social difference expressed through food?

Tuesday

- Wills, Wendy, et al. “The Framing of Social Class Distinctions through Family Food and Eating Practices.” *The Sociological Review*, vol. 59, no. 4, 2011, pp. 725–40. *Wiley Online Library*, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2011.02035.x>.
- Kasper, Kimberly. “‘Preserve and Add Flavor’: Barbecue as Resistance in Memphis.” *Black Food Matters*, edited by Hanna Garth and Ashanté M. Reese, University of Minnesota Press, 2020, pp. 181–207. <https://doi.org/10.5749/j.ctv182jtk0.10>.

Thursday

- Earle, Rod, and Coretta Phillips. “Digesting Men? Ethnicity, Gender and Food: Perspectives from a ‘Prison Ethnography.’” *Theoretical Criminology*, vol. 16, no. 2, May 2012, pp. 141–56. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362480612441121>.

- Sobal, Jeffery. "Men, Meat, and Marriage: Models of Masculinity." *Food and Foodways*, vol. 13, no. 1–2, Mar. 2005, pp. 135–58. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07409710590915409>.

CLASS DISCUSSION OF ASSIGNMENT TOPICS

Week 7 Food and the Nation – following on from our week on individual identity, we're looking at the production and maintenance of national identities through food.

Thursday

- Food and Culture Ch 4 – Japanese Mothers and *Obentōs*
- Appadurai, Arjun. "How to Make a National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India." *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 30, no. 1, 1988, pp. 3–24.
- Ohnuki-Tierney, Emiko. *Rice As Self: Japanese Identities Through Time*. 1st paperback, Princeton University Press, 1993. Ch 6 – Rice as Self, Rice Paddies as Our Land
- Bak, Sangmee. "McDonald's in Seoul: Food Choices, Identity, and Nationalism." *4. McDonald's in Seoul: Food Choices, Identity, and Nationalism*, Stanford University Press, 2006, pp. 136–60. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780804767392-007>.
- Lewis, Krista. "Fields and Tables of Sheba: Food, Identity, and Politics in Early Historic Southern Arabia." *The Archaeology of Food and Identity*, edited by Kathryn C Twiss, Center for Archaeological Investigations, Southern Illinois University, 2007, pp. 192–217.

Week 8 'Good' Food – the modern food scene is rife with competing moral judgements about what constitutes 'good' food and what food choices make you a 'good' person. This week we are thinking through both contemporary and historical examples to understand the moralization of food.

Thursday

- Food and Culture Ch 34 – Slow Food and the Politics of "Virtuous Globalization"
- Bowen, Sarah, et al. *Pressure Cooker: Why Home Cooking Won't Solve Our Problems and What We Can Do About It*. Oxford University Press, 2019. Part 1
- Schwarz, Carolyn. "Eating Morality: Food and the Goodness of Care in Northern Aboriginal Australia." *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology*, vol. 19, no. 1, Jan. 2018, pp. 19–34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14442213.2017.1394363>.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE

THANKSGIVING BREAK

Week 9

Tuesday - Non-foods and Not Eating – many more things are edible than what we actually eat, so how do individuals and societies decide what does and does not constitute food? And what about hunger, fasting and famine?

Tuesday

- Eating Culture Ch 1 – Omnivorousness
- Lohmann, Roger Ivar. "Boiled Eggs with Chicks Inside, or What Commensality Means." *Adventures in Eating: Anthropological Experiences in Dining from*

Around the World, edited by Helen R. Haines and Clare A. Sammells, University Press of Colorado, 2010.

- MacClancy, Jeremy, et al., editors. *Consuming the Inedible: Neglected Dimensions of Food Choice*. Berghahn Books, 2007. Intro + Ch 12

Bonus content: Cannibalism episode on Gastropod <https://gastropod.com/cannibalism-from-calories-to-kuru/> and Eating Insects and the Yuck Factor on Sapiens <https://www.sapiens.org/culture/eating-insects-podcast/>

Thursday - **Multispecies Encounters** – so far we’ve considered food as a human experience but this week we consider the complex relationships between animals, humans and plants that we humans rely upon to feed ourselves.

- Paredes, Alyssa. “Experimental Science for the ‘Bananapocalypse’: Counter Politics in the Plantationocene.” *Ethnos*, vol. 0, no. 0, Apr. 2021, pp. 1–27. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00141844.2021.1919172>.
- Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. *The Mushroom at the End of the World*. Princeton University Press, 2015. Pages 1-27

Week 10

No class – time to work on writing assignment

WRITING ASSIGNMENT DUE FINALS WEEK