

Ben Gurion University of the Negev
Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Food for Thought:
The Anthropology of Food

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Subject: Food, like the air we breathe, is essential for our survival as biological beings. Food is also the most perfect cultural artifact, the outcome of a detailed process of differentiation, whereby wheat grains are transformed into French baguettes, Italian pasta or Chinese dumplings, which embed the essence of the diners' personal, ethnic, religious and national identity. The students will be familiarized with diverse perspectives for the social study of food and eating in differing contexts and will acquire theoretical and methodological tools for the analysis of distinct culinary phenomena.

Structure: During the first semester we will review the main anthropological approaches to the study of food and will analyze specific food events and culinary phenomena. The students are required to read an article or a book-chapter weekly according to the reading list. During this part of the course we will watch feature films and read fiction literature concerned with food and eating. By the end of the first semester we will leave class for a fieldtrip/workshop in Beer Sheva Municipal Market. In the second semester the students will present their own research projects in class. The presentations will be followed by class discussions. The reading list for the second semester will be prepared by the students according to their research projects and papers. The course will conclude with a fieldtrip to the Black Hebrews Community in Dimona and will include a cooking workshop of their unique 'vegetarian soul food'.

Requirements:

The students will attend classes regularly, read the required texts and take part in class discussions (10%).

The students will carry out an anthropological, fieldwork based, research on a food-related subject. The students are required to get my approval for their research subject with me by the end of the first semester.

The students will present the research project in class and will provide the reading for that class (10%).

Please make sure to get my confirmation for the readings.

The Students will submit a 20 pages paper on their research as the main course assignment (specific instructions will be provided along the year).

Classes and Reading List

First Semester

Class 1. Eating as multi-dimensional experience.

Class 2. Food and the Social Order

Reading: Tuchman, G. and Levine, H.G. 1993. 'New York Jews and Chinese Food: The Social Construction of an Ethnic Pattern'. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*. 22(3): 382-407.

Class 3. The Raw and the Cooked: Structuralism

Reading: Douglas, M. 1975. *Implicit Meanings*. Ch. 16 "Deciphering a Meal"

Class 4. The Developmental Approach

Reading: Mintz, S. 1985. *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*. Chapter 5: Eating and Being (pp.187-214). Oxford: Penguin Books.

Class 5. Screening of the film *Tampopo*

Reading: Ashkenazi, M. Jacob, J. 2000. *The Essence of Japanese Cuisine*. Ch.7 Aesthetics in the World of Japanese Foods.

Class 6. Meat

Reading: Fiddes, N. 1991. *Meat, a Natural Symbol*. Ch. 6 The Power of Meat

Class 7. Food, taste and Class.

Reading: Bourdieu, P. 1984. *Distinction*. Ch. 3 "The Habitus" (pp. 175-200).

Class 8. Food and Identity.

Reading: Allison, A. 1991. Japanese Mothers and Obentos. *Anthropological Quarterly* 64(4.)

Class 9. Workshop at beer Sheva Municipal Market.

Reading: Fanselow, F. S. 1990. The Bazaar Economy or How Bizarre is the Bazaar Really? *Man*, Vol. 25, No. 2, pp. 250-265.

Class 10. Food and Gender

Reading: Gefou-Madianou, E. 1992. Exclusion and Unity, Retsina and Sweet Wine: Commensality and Gender in a Greek Agrotwon. In Gefou-Madianou, E. (ed.) *Alcohol, Gender and Culture*. London and New York: Routledge.

Class 11. Screening of the film *Like Water to Chocolate*

Reading: Amado J. *Dona Flor and her Two Husbands*.

Class 12. McDonalds, globalization and change.

Reading: Yunxiang, Y. 1997. "McDonald's in Beijing".
in Watson, J.L. (ed). *Golden Arches East: McDonald's in East Asia*.

Ram, U. 2004 Glocommodification: How the Global Consumes the Local- McDonalds in Israel, *Current Sociology*, Vol 52, No.1

Class 13. Instructions for the second semester: research, presentations, reading and papers.

Reading: Avieli, N. 2005. "Roasted Pigs and *Bao* Dumplings".
Asia Pacific Viewpoint, Vol. 46(3):281-293.

Second Semester

Class 1. The Israeli Cuisine.

Reading: Shapira, R. Navon, D. 1991. Alone Together: Public and Private Dimensions of a Tel-Aviv Cafe. *Qualitative Sociology*. Vol.14 no.2

The reading list for the next classes will be determined by the students

Concluding Class: Tour and cooking workshop at Dimmona's Black Hebrews community