

Theory and Method in the Anthropology of Food: Space and Place across Cultures

**Course description:**

This course will explore anthropological theories about and methods to study beliefs and behaviors surrounding food production, distribution and consumption, with case material from Tuscany, the US, and China. Our specific focus will be on the significance and meaning of food places and spaces across cultures.

**Course objectives:**

1. Students will learn some of the theories and methods used by anthropologists to study foodways.
2. Students will learn about anthropological fieldwork and writing by conducting a study on food, culture, and place in Italy.
3. Students will learn about the cuisines of Tuscany and the USA, their roots in specific environments, their role in social relations and ideology, and their evolution.
4. Students will learn how food is a form of communication and identity across cultures.

**Requirements:**

1. Students will do the assigned readings and be prepared to discuss them in class.
2. Students will write a one-page essay on "Tuscan Foodways and Gender."
3. Students will conduct a Food, Culture, and Place Project
  - Pick a food place where you will carry out a participant-observation study. It should be a place where you can comfortably sit, observe, take photos, and possibly conduct an interview or two. It should be a public space or place where people produce, store, transform, prepare, and/or consume food. Some examples are: kitchens, gardens, food-stands, restaurants, markets, food stores, factories, farms, etc.
  - Your research should address the question of how the food place and space constitute a cultural setting that contributes to or detracts from the goals of Slow Food--pleasure, sustainability, biological/cultural diversity, and relationships between producers and consumers. Plan to do at least two observations of at least one hour each at different times of the day or week in the place to gather data. You may also conduct an interview or two and take notes or tape record it. Some topics to cover are:
    - Detailed description of appearance, color, noise, smell, temperature, etc.
    - Location and set-up (take photos, draw sketches, diagrams, or maps)
    - What material and social functions take place there?
    - Detailed description of people and their roles--who does what?
    - What relationships are there between space, place, location and function?
    - How do design and location affect people's relationships to food and each other?
  - Write a 4-5 page report (word-processed, double-spaced), and share findings orally with the class as a visual and oral presentation (e.g. powerpoint).

**Required Readings:**

Clark, Dylan. 2004. “The Raw and the Rotten: Punk Cuisine.” *Ethnology*, 43, 1, pp. 19-31.

Counihan, Carole. 1999. *The Anthropology of Food and Body: Gender, Meaning and Power*. NY: Routledge.

Counihan, Carole. 2006. Food as Women’s Voice in the San Luis Valley of Colorado. *Food in the USA: A Reader*. Ed Carole Counihan. New York: Routledge, pp. 295-304.

Taggart, James M. 2002. “Food, Masculinity and Place in the Hispanic Southwest.” In *Food in the USA: A Reader*. Ed Carole Counihan. New York: Routledge, pp. 305-313.

Yan, Yunxiang. 2000. “Of Hamburger and Social Space: Consuming McDonald’s in Beijing. In *The Consumer Revolution in Urban China*, ed. Deborah S. Davis. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp. 201-225.

**Syllabus**

Class	Topics	Assignments
1 Wed June 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Theory and method in the anthropology of food</li> <li>- What do anthropologists study, how, and why?</li> <li>- How do food rules communicate gender?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Read Counihan chap 1, “Food, Culture &amp; Gender” and chap 7, “Food Rules in the US”</li> </ul>
2 Th June 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ethnographic fieldwork methodology: food-centered life histories, participant-observation, student projects</li> <li>- Anthropology, gender, food, and body in Tuscany</li> <li>- How have Tuscan cuisine, gender and culture evolved?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Read Counihan chap 3, “Food, Power, &amp; Female Identity” and chap 10, “The Body as Voice of Desire”</li> <li>- Write one page essay on: “Foodways &amp; Gender”</li> </ul>
<i>Tues June 12</i>	<i>OPTIONAL: Attend PQ Masters student presentations</i>	
3 W June 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ethnographic methods continued</li> <li>- Your ethnographic projects: food, place and space</li> <li>- What do restaurants communicate about place and space</li> <li>- Globalization of food: McDonalds in China</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conduct fieldwork on food, place, and space in Italy</li> <li>- Read Clark, “Punk Cuisine”</li> <li>- Read Yan, “Of Hamburger and Social Space”</li> </ul>
4 Th June 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Anthropology of food in the USA</li> <li>- Food and ethnicity among Hispanic Americans</li> <li>- Food, gender, place and space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Read Counihan, “Food as Women’s Voice”</li> <li>- Read Taggart, “Food, Masculinity, and Place”</li> </ul>
5 F June 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Comparative perspectives on the anthropology of food and place in Italy</li> <li>- STUDENT ORAL REPORTS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prepare written and oral report on food, culture, and place in Italy</li> </ul>

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