

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
Department of Global and Community Health

Course Number: GCH 583

Course Title: Food and Culture: Biocultural Perspectives on Food and Nutrition

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Prerequisite: HSCI 295 or Permission of Instructor

Class Schedule: Thursdays: 1:30 pm – 4:20 pm

Catalogue Description: This course examines food and eating behaviors, diet, and nutrition from a cross-cultural perspective. It focuses on how and why people choose what to eat, the range and significance of cross-cultural variability in diet, how diets have changed in the evolutionary and recent past and the health and social implications of those changes. Teaching strategies include Lecture/discussion, Guest lecturers, Video presentations, Audio/visual aids, Student presentations, Case-study analyses.

Course Objectives:

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Describe the diversity of diets and food and eating behaviors throughout various cultures
- Examine dietary behaviors among specific cultural groups.
- Examine how traditional dietary patterns can affect the health and well-being of individuals.
- Explore multiple theories of why cultures eat what they do.
- Apply knowledge of biocultural perspectives on food and nutrition to healthcare scenarios.
- Explore economic and environmental issues related to food choices.

Required Texts:

1. "Food and culture, a reader" Second edition. Eds. Carole Counihan & Penny Van Esterik, Taylor & Francis. 2008. (FC)
2. "Omnivore's Dilemma, A natural history of four meals", Michael Pollan. Penguin Books. 2006. (OD)

Additional Readings TBA.

Assignments:

1. Readings

You are expected to keep up with the readings. They are listed in the schedule in the syllabus. Some days we will discuss the readings if there is time, if not, please include a paragraph from each reading in your journal.

2. Food Assessment Assignment (60 points) (Due 11/5/09), Be prepared to present findings in class.:

For this assignment, you will conduct a 24-hour dietary recall interviews with an individual from a culture different from your own. You will assess the diet using a diet analysis program (www.mypyramid.gov). Print-out the analyses from the assessment and write-up the following in a 2-3 page report:

1. Give a general description of the person including age, race/ethnicity, country of origin, gender, occupation, etc..
2. Is this day typical? (Concerning diet)
3. Does he or she believe their diet is healthy? Why or why not?
4. What does he or she believe is lacking? Does he or she believe they consume too much of anything?
5. Does this individual believe diet is important for health? Why or why not?
6. What do food/beverages mean to this individual? Is it important that food tastes good? Is it more important that food is healthy? Are other factors more important? (i.e. politics, religion, environment, culture).
7. What kind of foods/beverages does this individual think a person should eat every day? Why or why not?
8. What foods/beverages are representative of this individual's culture? Does this individual consume these foods regularly? Does this individual feel these foods are healthy? Why or why not? What foods and beverages does this individual feel are most healthy? How do these foods or beverages promote health?
9. Write a summary of your interview and then a summary assessment of this individual's diet. Compare your assessment with the individual's responses. i.e. Does this person consume the foods and beverages he or she feels are important?
10. The report should be a maximum of 5 typed double spaced pages (12 point font). Remember to include the dietary analysis pages. Be prepared to present your findings in class on November 5th.

3. Journal (50 points) (First half is due 10/15 and final second half is due 11/19)

You are expected to keep a journal of notes in the class. The journal should be typed and should include comments and summaries of the required readings and guest presentations from class. Please include a citation of each reading and the date and name of each speaker.

For each class reading and presentation, include at least one paragraph with a summary of what was covered and then a statement or two on your opinion.

For the journal, do not only summarize what you feel is important about certain topics and readings, but write any comments or questions too.

4. "Super H" field trip (20 points). October 1st, 2009. (Assignment due October 8th, 2009)

Super H
10780 Lee Highway, Fairfax, VA 22030
(800) 427-9870

We will take a trip to the Super H Grocery Store. Find 3 foods that you have never seen before and write down the name of the food, brand, and any other information you can find. Do a web search to find out more about the food. Where is this food commonly consumed? What are the ingredients, or where is it grown, produced? How is it cooked or prepared? Is there any nutritional content information?

Before class if you would like we will meet with Dr. Chong at 12:00 pm at a local Korean Restaurant, HangKang.

Here is the website for the Super H grocery store: <http://www.hmart.com/index.asp>.

5. Four web-based short activities. (5 points each) (Due throughout the semester)

There are 4 short web-based activities for this course. Each activity is worth 5 points. Be prepared to share what you have found in class.

1. DUE : 9/24/09

Stone-age diet activity.

Conduct a web search for information concerning the "paleo-diet" or "Stone-age diet". Compare this information with your reading from class and nutrition review. Do a critical one-page review of two websites related to the the paleo or stone-age diet... i.e.

- A. Do you think these diets were truly developed from the research done by scientists? Why or why not?
- B. Is the health information presented here credible? Why or why not?

2. DUE : 10/08/09

Wine Quizzes

Go to the following website:

<http://www.wineeducation.com/quiz/quiz.html>

Take the three wine quizzes, print up your results for each quiz. How did you do? Write two paragraphs on what you learned.

3. DUE: 10/29/09

American Cuisine.

Go to the following website:

<http://www.keyingredients.org/default.asp>

This website outlines a traveling exhibit visiting small towns all over the United States. Browse through the site and think about the history of food in the United States. Write up your findings to the following questions in a one-page discussion:

- a. Is there such a thing as an "American cuisine"?
- b. What does "cuisine" mean to you?
- c. Does the food in the United States vary much from one area to another?
- d. What are some of the major influences on American food over time?

4. DUE : 11/12/09

Julia Childs.

Go to the following website and explore Julia Child's kitchen:

<http://www.americanhistory.si.edu/juliachild/default.asp>

This website takes you on the tour of one of America's greatest influences on the "American cuisine". Review her stories and kitchen and write up your findings to the following questions in a one-page discussion:

- a. Who is Julia Childs? And what was her influence in the United States?
- b. What were some of her greatest influences?
- c. Do you believe her influence remains the same today in the United States?

6. Interview/Food preparation activity. (100 points) (Food dish presentation (10 points) due 11/19/09, presentation of interview (10 points) due 12/02/09, and final paper (80 points) due 12/03/09.

Purpose:

The purpose of this project is for you understand the food habits, choices, and behaviors of a specific culture. You will write-up and present what you find as well as prepare a dish for us to try from that culture.

Target:

Investigate a culture that is your own or one unfamiliar to you and be specific. The cultural group will be defined in that they share a common food/diet. For this, chose someone who has some familiarity with cooking and food within their culture. For example, you might want to choose to report on an ethnic restaurant and interview the owner and patrons. If you are unsure about your selection, check with me before collecting your data.

Data Collection:

Interview a group member or members from the target group you have chosen. Attempt to ask the following questions directly or indirectly:

1. What foods do this cultural group typically eat? Is there a specific cuisine? What would that consist of?
2. How are meals typically consumed?
3. Where is the food normally prepared and consumed?
4. Who usually prepares the meals?
5. Who usually decides what foods will be consumed?
6. When is the food and/or meals usually eaten?
7. Are there differences in eating behaviors between old and young, or male and female?
8. From where are the ingredients purchased?
9. What kinds of ingredients are most important? Why?
10. Are substitutions typically needed to be made with this specific type of food because it is made in the U.S. and ingredients are not available?
11. What limitations are there on food intake of this individual? (for example, a student may be limited to food service meals)?
12. What foods does this individual feel are the most healthy and why? Does this individual feel that the specific cultural group identifies with specific healthy foods? i.e. couscous for better digestion in Moroccan cuisine..
13. What are the symbolic meanings of the food known to the group? Or What does this food mean to the group?
14. Can they give you a recipe for their favorite dish? (If not find one on your own.)

Ask non-threatening, concrete questions. You may find that you want not only conduct an interview but use your own background and knowledge or direct observation in trying to find out this information.

When you have completed the data collection, write-up a report that is no longer than 6 pages, double-spaced, 12 point font. Be prepared to present what you have found to the class.

Bring a small dish of a food from the target population. Label the food with its name, cultural/regional association, and basic ingredients. In your paper, note the nutrient content and any cultural meanings in the food, the preparation, and the consumption. Be prepared to also present your findings during the last week of class.

This assignment is broken into 3 parts:

- 1). Dish and recipe (10 points)
- 2). Presentation in class (10 points)
- 3). Paper (80 points)

Attendance:

Attendance (including lateness) will be randomly taken to evaluate class participation and to assist students that may have difficulty with content areas they may have missed. Although you are not given a grade for attendance, it does factor into those grades that are borderline. For example, a grade 2 points away from an A may be raised to an A if class was regularly attended.

Cell phones and pagers:

Please refrain from using and turn-off cell phones and pagers during lecture. You will be given a ten minute break during each hour that you can check your messages and make calls.

Late assignment policy:

I will accept assignments late, however, they will be docked 5% for each day late. I will NOT accept assignments any later than 2 weeks past the due date. I will NOT accept any late extra credit assignments.

Schedule:**Please note that this schedule is subject to change.**

Day	Topic	Assignment
9/3	- Go over syllabus - Introductions - “Hungry Planet”	OD, Introduction
9/10	- Review of nutrition concepts	OD, Chapters 1-2 F&C, Chapter 4
9/17	- Unusual foods activity - Introduction to Food and Culture - Discussion: Food identity.	F&C, Chapter 23 O&D, Chapters 3-4
9/24	- Videos, (The Hunters) (Pima Indians) - Paleodiet - Evolutionary perspective	F&C, Chapters 27, 29 OD, Chapters 5-7 Web #1 due
10/1	- Field Trip: Super H with Dr. Chong (meet in front at 1:30 pm) - Lunch prior to Super H with Dr. Chong (optional)	OD, Chapters 8-10 F&C, Chapters 28,
10/8	- Slow Food Movement - Wine and Chocolate	F&C, Chapters 24, 34 Web # 2 due Super H due OD, Chapters 11-12
10/15	- Field Trip to Smith Meadows (Berryville, VA)	F&C, Chapter 21 Journal part 1 due. OD, Chapters 13-14
10/22	- Food, status, and symbolism - Video, (Food for the ancestors)	F&C, Chapter 32 OD, Chapters 15-16
10/29	- Southside Tour	OD, Chapters 17-18 Assigned reading Finish Food assessment assignment Web #3 due
11/5	- Feeding the World (Food aid programs) - Food and hunger and food and obesity - Present food assessment findings	Assigned reading OD, 19-20 Turn in Food assessment
11/12	- Food taboos, restrictions - Religious significance of food - Watch: “Julie and Julia”	Finish final paper Web #4 due
11/19	- Present dishes	Journal part 2 due.
11/26	- NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)	Finish final paper
12/3	- Oral presentations: Findings from interviews	Finish final paper

12/17

- Turn in final paper

Final Paper due