FOOD FOR DISCOURSE AND THOUGHT
THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF FOOD AND COMMUNICATION

http://www.utexas.edu/courses/stross/ant393b_files/ant393b.htm

Description

Syllabus

Brian Stross
Anthropology 393
Spring 2013

Unique # 31515 (ANT 393), [# (LAS 391)] Wednesday 400 to 700p SAC 4.116

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Course Description

Food sustains us, giving meaning, order, and values to our lives; food practices reflect the symbolism in our ideological systems, often reflecting or reiterating the structuring of our social systems. Food and food practices play important roles in our identity construction, our religious practices, and our socialization.

Food practices can thus tell us a lot about the society in which they play a part. Furthermore, foodways change both in the influencing and reflection of a society's technology. This course will investigate the facts that we communicate messages by means of foods, as well as communicating about foods, that we communicate frequently and much about foods, and that we can look at foodways to discern cultural presuppositions used in communication.

Topics explored in this course will include food preferences and taboos, genetically modified food, fast foods, technology in food production (reproduction [seed, egg, stock] growth, maintenance [weeding, feeding], harvest, packing, storage), distribution, and consumption (preparation, eating, disposal), food and energy utilization, conversation during the production, distribution, preparation, consumption and disposal of food, food as a topic of conversation, naming and beliefs about foods, food metaphors, social structure in seating and eating, meals and manners, food and education, food and religion, food and sex, food and identity, food and power, food and forensics, food and the senses, food and the flow of time, and maize in Mesoamerica.

Because food and food practices engage with multiple symbolic systems in a society, one goal of this course, conducted in a seminar format, will be to discern some of the meanings that can be read into the language-like patterns to be found in the choices and variations in what, when, where, and how people get food, share it, prepare it, and eat it, as well as what, where, when, why, and how they talk about food in all of these contexts.
This semester we will have three ethnographic projects, in which participants will collect information on foods or food related information of interest and relevance to the course.

**Requirements:**
Grades will be assigned on the basis of class preparation and participation, and on the written (approximately 7 pages each) and oral presentations of the results of three ethnographic exercises, as well as on keeping an up to date journal. Each week one (or two) of the participants will have volunteered to lead the discussion of the assigned reading, by preparing notes on the reading assignment for the week and questions for discussion.

**Texts: Required**


**Topics** - This semester I am suggesting number of topics for discussion in trying to understand the complexity of the relationships among food, discourse, and culture and in trying to discover ways by which careful observation of individual and group practices concerning food can give us useful or important information about "culture" and about "psychology", and particularly about communication and classification.

Come to class prepared to discuss the topics of the week (one person will take the role of facilitator each week, and will help facilitate the discussion both of the current topic and of the assigned homework).

**Notebook/Journal** - I would like all participants to keep a running record or journal of insights, thoughts, and general notes about food and culture that occur in the course of the semester (format & medium up to you). Among other things you might want to put in the journal, recopied and reorganized class notes, notes on films and on readings, insights about food that you might get at various times, pictures relating to food, etc. Each week I would like you to pick a food or perhaps a class of foods and do a little research and write approximately a page on that particular food, to be added to the journal. I hope to reserve a few minutes of each class for individuals to report on interesting things they have put in their journal recently and relevant to the week's topic.

**Anthropology Question** - For each topic discussed it will be useful to keep in mind a broader question about the anthropology of food. One can ask oneself: What does this information about the use and relationship of food to the various forms of human endeavor tell us about the peoples involved, about people in general, and about the anthropological topics broached? What does it tell us about variation (diversity), about functions, about correlations, about history, and about adaptation; and always, what is its "meaning" or "significance" or "symbolic content."
Week 1     January 16

Introduction: scope of the course, food, discourse, thought, symbolism, Ethnography, seeing the other, evidence and interpretation, food and the future ((short video on spices of life – Garlic))

Homework: (due for meeting week 2)
Counihan  Introduction; K. Bassie
"Corn Deities and the Complementary Male/Female Principle" come to Class of Week 2 prepared to discuss the reading and to discuss "seeing the other" (the link above).
Optional: "Oil in your Food", “Food Miles”

Week 2     January 23

MAIZE IN MESOAMERICA: production [planting, harvest, packing], distribution [storage, transport], preparation, consumption, and disposal of maize - discourse, work cycles, aesthetic enterprises, nutrition, etc. ((short video on spices of life- Chili peppers))

Homework: (due for meeting week 3) Read Harris, Ch 1, 2; Counihan Ch. 2 (Barthes – Toward a Psychosociology), Counihan Ch. 3 (Culinary Triangle). (Watch “Smell & Taste” Here)

Week 3     January 30

FOOD PREFERENCES AND TABOOS (snakes, cannibalism, snails, edible bugs, dogs, chili peppers, yogurt, famine foods) on the societal and individual levels. A society's food preferences and taboos (what is implied about that society's experiences (history), perceptions, beliefs, boundaries, classification systems, needs, adaptive strategies, etc.)
An individual's food preferences and taboos (what does it say about that individual's experiences, personality, etc.).
FOOD AND FORENSICS (e.g. the palo verde pod in the pickup truck – DNA in a Phoenix murder trial; coprolite analysis to see what people ate, and to see if they were cannibals; Hussein's dates (or) and drying sausage; maize
in jar in tomb at Apatzingan; chocolate in vessel at Rio Azul, Guatemala) ((short video on food preferences and taboos NGS)) (Spices)

**Homework:** (due for meeting in Week 4) Read; Harris
Ch. 3; Counihan Ch. 7 (Goody – Recipe, Prescription, Experiment), Counihan Ch. 8 (Mintz – Sugar & Sweetness)

**Week 4** February 6

**FOOD DISCOURSES:** Conversation during and/or about food practices, including production (supply), distribution, preparation, cooking, serving and/or consumption.

**Food Security, Food Justice, Food Sovereignty** (food justice a mission statement)

**Meat vs vegetarian** diet discourses (meatrix, Ben Fuchs) (meat video) (10 worst foods)
(super foods) (egg farming – "Silent Suffering"; Meat: People & Chickens) (speciesism);
**Sustainability** discourses (e.g. Dervaes 1, Dervaes 2, Dervaes 3, Dervaes 4, S. Jones 1; Cuba or 2)
The old vs the new (slow food vs fast food) – *Rachel Laudan’s Plea for Culinary Modernism*

**Molecular Gastronomy** and **Food Chemistry**

**Diet** (e.g. Salt, Fat & Sugar, )

**Planting prayers**, harvesting rituals and sayings, saying grace, to your health,

**complimenting the cook**, asking for seconds, offering food, toasting,

**urban legends** (such as "live monkey brains").

Classification of forms and contexts; functions of the discourses in each context (Planting and harvesting, cooking and serving, fasting and feasting)

**Diversity**

Food related linguistic routines - saying grace, toasting (and related "to your health" routines), blessing the seeds, prayers for planting and harvest,

(short video on cannibalism - discourse on that topic)

**FOOD JOKES** The character and incidence of jokes about food can reveal much about how food is thought of in the society, about social stresses concerning food, and about the nature and use of stereotypes in the society (cf. kids food jokes, hungrymonster, food jokes w/ ratings, user rated, more kids food jokes, visual, litterbox cake).

**Homework:** (due meeting in week 5) Read Harris Ch.4;
Ch. III Food in Newari Culture
(http://web.comhem.se/~u18515267/CHAPTERIII.htm)

**Week 5** February 13

**FOOD NAMING, CLASSIFICATION, AND BELIEFS ABOUT FOODS**

and associated constructs (Categorization of kinds of food, kinds of eating; kinds of food (e.g. fruits, vegetables, or meat; carbs, fat, or protein; red meat, white meat, or fish),  (1, 2, 3)
kinds of food preparation (roasting, boiling, smoking), hot and cold foods) 
((short video on the food quest in biological perspective – D. Morris The 
Hunting Ape - look for classification, naming here))

**Homework:** (due for meeting in Week 6) **Harris Ch. 5;**
**Counihan Ch. 3, 26;** and **Bays & MowBray** (Cookies, Gift Giving, & the Internet); and come to class with a list of food metaphors to share, a list of food symbols and their meanings, and some thoughts on rituals in which foods are prominent.

**Optional:** (Evon Z. Vogt 1976. *Tortillas for the Gods* – Skim to get a sense for the parts played by foods in Tzotzil Maya ritual life; Visser Ch. 4)

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**Week 6** 
**February 20**

**FOOD METAPHORS** (he's a nut; piña, chayote, mango; chile, nuts; that's corny; he brings home the bacon; that's a lot of bread to get from the bank; callaloo or tossed salad; internet cookies (+ applets, java script); food in novels; food in films, food in popular song; What are the bases for such metaphors, what purposes do they serve, and how do they influence perceptions in the process of social reproduction. (cf. e.g. G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*; G. Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*; G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind & Its Challenge to Western Thought*. Christine Ammer, *Fruitcakes And Couch Potatoes*); Internet food metaphors, **FOOD SYMBOLISM** (tamale = human body, tortilla = ?, melon = ?, maize ear = head, wine = Christ's blood, wafer [host] = Christ's flesh), throwing rice = ? . (Amber’s chapter)

What are the bases for such symbols, what purposes do they serve, and how do they inform us concerning a society’s history, interests, and adaptive strategies; food symbol and society; food in dreams; passover symbolism; easter food; ((short video on animals getting food from plants - Trials of Life: Finding Food))

**FOOD RITUALS AND RITUAL FOODS** (where the symbolism often becomes explicit); ceremony and ritual (eating out; saying grace, washing hands, brushing teeth, drinking coffee, having tea); life crisis rituals (e.g. birth, marriage, death ) (bread, chocolate, wine)

**Homework:** (due for Week 7) **Counihan Ch. 12, 14, 17; Harris Ch. 6**

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**Week 7** 
**February 27**

**SOCIAL STRUCTURE** In the time and place of food production, food distribution, food preparation, and food consumption (e.g. seating locations, who eats first, who does the planting, who does the gathering, who does the hunting, who cooks the staples, how is food transported from place of production to place of consumption; what meals are eaten when; eating out,
**MEALS AND MANNERS**  
**table manners** (using knife fork and spoon; *cat*;   continental vs American style  V 138-241) (belching to show appreciation of food V 297-358) 
(topics of conversation – eg. usually dinner conversation doesn't include bathroom habits, but children often find ways to get into such topics - V 262-272) 
((short video on spices of life – Cloves  or **The Meaning of Food 1: Food and Life**))

**Homework:** (due week 8) Counihan Ch.  4, 10, 15 ; Harris Ch. 7;

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**Week 8  March 6**

**FOOD AND RELIGION**  
**feast, festival,  fast, forbidden**  
Food for the Gods  (e.g. chocolate, incense [e.g. *copal* ], candle; food sacrificed to the gods),  
food and drink in the wafer and the wine – the bread of life;  
sacrifice of only perfect specimens;  **the holy meal.**

Food in this Life -  
How to kill  (halal and kosher),  
Blessing the meal  
Harvest festivals  (Id Al-Fitr, Seder, Holy Communion )  
(Religious vs. secular holydays and festivities:  where is the dividing line? **Thanksgiving, Mardi Gras, Halloween**)

Food in the afterlife  (food for the soul, food on the journey)  
Stothert  _Feeding Living & Dead_ (Stross  This World & Beyond [Blackboard])

((short video on spices of life – Saffron or **The Meaning of Food 2: Food and Culture**))

**Homework:** (due for week 9) Read Counihan 22, 30;  Harris Ch. 8 ;  Read on the web: **Food & Seduction** by Robin Fox

Optional: (Consuming Passions Ch. 7) C&V Ch. 14, 16, 17, 18 ;

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**Week 9  March 20**

**FOOD, GENDER, SEX, and CHILDBIRTH**  
Food, gendered and sexual.  (metaphors linking food and sex [and gender],  
beliefs about food and gender [production, distribution, preparation, consumption], food facilitators and inhibitors of sexuality; gender related eating problems [anorexia, bulimia]; pregnancy cravings; geophagy); food taboos for new mother.  
((short video on spices of life – Allspice or **The Meaning of Food 3: Food and Family**))

**Homework:** (due week 10) Counihan 18, 19, 21;  Harris Ch. 9;  
FOOD AND IDENTITY Strategies for manipulating identity (of self and of other) through food and discourse on food. (Cancuqueros are known to eat snakes", "The Mixe claim to be cannibals", "I like Chinese food", "I love pizza"; French "Frogs" and German "Krauts"); rituals of identification (ethnicity and/or ethnicities – that one identifies with - by means of food; locale one identifies with - of origin or growing up - by means of food; time/era/decade one identifies with - of birth or growing up - by means of food ["We used to have fresh pumpernickel from these little bakeries", "I remember when they rationed chocolate/sold Kanana banana flakes"]; social class one identifies with - ["I remember trying to drink the water from the fingerbowl", "I used to love roast possum"; "I'd like to just sit around and eat caviar]. Ethnic origins can be apparent when looking around someone's kitchen; Religious affiliations/identity in food (e.g. Muslims and Jews – no pork; Hindus no beef); Where you buy your food shows your politics. Doing it yourself: (growing your own food; preparing a meal from scratch – connecting with tradition, appreciating the activities, "getting your hands dirty")

FOOD AND MEMORY Aromas bring back memories, and food scents provide some of the strongest memories. Earlier identities and memories are often are tied up with meals and the foods they are composed of (cf. last suppers). Memories of travel often include memories of special foods and meals encountered. ((short video on spices of life – Nutmeg or Food for the Ancestors))

Homework: (due week 11) Counihan Ch. 33, 34, 35; Harris Ch. 10; 2nd project due this week

FOOD AND POWER (giving, receiving, and refusing food; food sharing/commensalism; genetically engineered food plants [golden rice1, biotech corn]; globalization; food and politics; dieting; )
food production – power in control of irrigation system; power in control of food plants and land;
distribution - power in control of how food gets distributed and stored;
food preparation – power in control of the preparation of foods (specialized knowledge among other things, the power to poison);
another kind of power (food needs lead to big brother);
food consumption – power in control of who eats, when and where.
Conspicuous consumption; public giving away of food; Display of food staple in/on ruler's attire or body (says the ruler is the nurturer of his people, and the food is thus a symbol of power); control by hunger strike (refusing to eat).
Food is chemically transformed in the body yielding calories through
digestion and other processes characterized by chemical reactions. This energy constitutes another form of power (energetic, caloric). Some foods are in this sense more powerful than others.

**FOOD AND WAR** - The relationship of war to food production, distribution, and consumption. Food for troops (rations) and for those left behind (rationing). sieges, distributing **food packets & cluster bombs** in Afghanistan. wars fought for food, and **food fights** (top 5). Manipulation of food and food references in time of war (e.g. French fries become "freedom fries" by an act of Congress, March 2003)

((short video on spices of life – **Pepper** or ½ of **Future of Food**))

**Homework:** (due week 12) **Counihan Ch. 24, 25, 32; Harris Ch. 11;** handout to be distributed in class if available

**Further Reading:** Frances Moore Lappe, *Diet for a Small Planet* (1971);

**Week 12  April 10**

**FOOD AND TIME** [time as **duration**, as non-repeating **sequence** (of events), as **order** (w/in a cycle), and as **frequency** (all based on two experiential facts 1. certain natural phenomena repeat themselves (repetition), 2. life change is irreversible (non-repetition)].

Cycles by which food crops or gathered food plants organize the activities of the year; (and cycles of food crop pests that also affect planting, and harvesting)

Times of food preparation, time it takes to prepare meals, special meals;

**Fast food, fast food nation** (why, how does it work, what are its consequences?) **(Future Food Fabrication with home “printer”)**

**the slow food movement:**

Cycles of food consumption that organize the day; cycles of food consumption that reflect other cycles of time, like the month, the year, or the decade;

**Famine foods** for times of famine.

Time duration for abstinence from certain foods for ritual purposes;

Time duration following eating before swimming, sex, other activities;

**Food Preservation** (links to preservatives and other additives)

((short video on spices of life – **Herbs** or ½ of **Future of food**))

**Homework:** (due week 13) **Counihan Ch. 23, 36, 31;**

**Messer, Ellen. 1984, Anthropological perspectives on diet. Annual Review of Anthropology 13;205-49) [look in library's electronic journals]:**

**FOOD POLITICS** responsible decisions about eating; food miles / locavores; GM foods ; labeling food (what to label); vegan , vegetarian, omnivore, meat lover; pesticide use ; the meaning and politics of organic. (cf. McWilliams *Just Food*)

**Food**

**Week 13  April 17**

**FOOD AND NUTRITION** (vitamins, minerals, salt in foods, maize and lime and protein, msg, **genetically engineered foods**, entomophagy) **diets and dieting.**
one view of modern diet, animal protein & cancer (YouTube version), diet & history.
((short video on spices of life – Spices of India or Mustard))
Further Reading: Bryant et al, The Cultural Feast.
FOOD AND MEDICINE (tofu and menopause - estrogen production, almonds and cancer cures [vit. B17], fiber and intestinal health; Pharmacist Ben hot and cold foods)
foods in ethnomedicine
Homework: (due week 14) Counihan Ch. 27, 28,
bring some kind of food to class for all to share. It could be something that you identify with, or something new you've discovered, something you love, or something just learned how to make.

Week 14  April 24
FOOD AND EDUCATION (formal and informal)
learning about life during food production and consumption
learning about food during non-food experiences
school and food (the cafeteria, catsup as a vegetable, food vending machines in school, Coca Cola sponsoring Channel 1 in AISD)
(one learns a lot around the "dinner table", learning about life while planting maize, shopping for food, or working in the kitchen)
formal (and informal) education about food production and consumption
((short video on spices of life – curry))
FOOD AND THE FUTURE energy, fertilizer, and food production;
Meat vs vegetarian food production costs and consumption costs;
Grain vs. root production and storage costs; Sustainable Food / Permaculture Aquaponics, Fish Farm in Spain
If you feel like it, prepare a little something to bring to class for the last class meeting and be able to talk a little about it from one or more of the perspectives dealt with in the course.
Homework: (due Week 15)
3rd project due this week

Week 15  May 1
FOOD AND THE SENSES (the smell of baking bread, living near the stockyards, a sprig of parsley on the plate, eating with the fingers, the sound of chewing, lip-smacking; piquant chile burning the mouth)
((short video on spices of life – Peppercorns))
Molecular Gastronomy (what happens on the molecular level when food is prepared). Food Materials Science (the science and technology of materials involved in all aspects of food production and consumption).
RESOURCES

Readers and other books: Optional

ISBN 1-59726-091-6 (pb)
Peter Farb and George Armelagos. 1980.  *Consuming Passions: The Anthropology of Eating.*  (out of print, but useful read)
Schlosser, Eric. 2001.  *Fast Food Nation*

Glossaries and Timelines

*http://www.gracefoods.com/site/glossary*  glossary of food & cooking terms

http://lloyd2.home.mindspring.com/words.htm  food conversions

http://www.foodtimeline.org/foodmaya.html  maya foods

http://www.foodtimeline.org/index.html  food timeline

Videos

The Spice of Life Series – traces the history of spices and herbs over the centuries and into present day kitchens. (popular and dated, but fun and interesting)

- Allspice, One Spice
- Chili: a Dash of Daring,
- Cinnamon, the Elegant Addition
- Cloves: Nature's Little Nails
- Curry Around the World
- Garlic's Pungent Presence
- Herbs: Aromatic Influences
- Mustard, the Spice of Nations
- Nutmeg, Nature's Perfect Package
- Pepper, the Master Spice
- Peppercorns, Fresh Ground Flavor
- Saffron, Autumn Gold
- The Spices of India

Sustainability  ever growing series of videos on food, energy, permaculture…

More Food Videos:

Street Food

Cairo 1
Cairo 2

Zanzibar 1
Zanzibar 2

Montreal 1
Montreal 2

Nairobi 1
Nairobi 2

Mumbai 1
Every day, in a city the size of London, 30 million meals are served. But where does all the food come from? Architect Carolyn Steel discusses the daily miracle of feeding a city, and shows how ancient food routes shaped the modern world.

Eating habits & obesity  Ted

Films Concerning Food

Solar Cooking Videos  Kevin Contreras  Parabolic Reflector Sun Cooker  Solar Cookers Compared

Fast Food Women  UT Audio Visual Library  VIDCASS 3765  29 minutes  1991

Bibliography

Another Bibliography  detailed, excellent, on the web, recently updated -  Robert Dirks

Journals -  Food & Foodways: Explorations in the History and Culture of Human Nourishment.

AFHVS Journal  -  (see below)  AFHVS Society

AOF  (Anthropology of Food)

Food Culture And Society  (author Guidelines)

Convivium Artium  Journal on food representation in the arts

Websites  Association for the Study of Food and Society (ASFS)  Publications  Agriculture, Food, and Human Values Society (AFHVS)  CSFC – Critical Studies in Food and Culture Blogspot  SAFN  (Society for the Anthropology of Food and Nutrition)  Research guide on Gastronomy  Natural News  – Mike Adams
Case studies on Food Policy in Developing Countries
Hidden Kitchens  NPR series on hidden kitchens, kitchen pioneers and food rituals
The Sociology of Food  -  many web links on this subject can be found here
Research Center for the History of Food and Drink  -
Resources for the Anthropological Study of Food Habits  Illinois State University
International FoodWorks  -  Austin's own Ken Rubin, also hosting Foodways Group of Austin
Internation Commission on the Anthropology of Food  -
The Global Gastronomer  -  Cuisines of the World
World Cuisines  -  Links and Searches restricted to the topic: from Google
Local and Localized Food
Ryerson's Centre for Studies in Food Security  a Canadian research center dealing w/ food safety
Social Issues Research Centre  has anthropological series on food and eating by Robin Fox
Edible Ormamental Plants  -
Edible Communities  magazines celebrating local foods, season by season  Edible Austin
Gernot Katzer's Spice Pages  -  117 spices, names, history, chemistry
Cooking Science  Science behind food and cooking in the kitchen
Molecular Gastronomy  the chemistry of food and cooking  Wikipedia article
Food First  Institute for food and development policy
Truth in Food  Read carefully and question everything.
Food Museum
Food Tropes
Food, Ritual & Society  online study of Newars of Nepal, by Per Löwdin
Cooking Issues
Nixtamalization

Blogs  SAFN Blog  (Society for the Anthropology of Food and Nutrition)
Food Studies  Daniel Heron 'Asiago'
When Dad Cooks
Food Blog
Food Historian’s Blog  Rachel Laudan
David Lebovitz