ANTH 3XX: Food and Culture in Middle East & North Africa
Fall 2014

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Office Hours: ________________
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Aims and Objectives of the Course
- Examine how food is more than just sustenance through the framework of culture.
- Discover how food becomes involved in the work of building identities and cultures, organizing households, local communities and societies, and creating social practices among groups of people.
- Support students’ immersion in the daily life of Amman through food and culture readings, in-class lab activities, site visits, and observation and analysis assignments.

Course Description
Since the emergence of our discipline, anthropologists have studied food and eating because how and what people eat are indicators of social status, cultural identity, religious and ethical beliefs, economic practices, domestic relations, just to list a few connections. This course explores what food and eating habits in the MENA region communicate about local culture and society. Rather than surveying the evolution of the human diet or the nutritional importance of food, course readings and requirements emphasize the cultural and social implications of food. Taking the saying “we are what we eat” to heart and Jordan as our experiential context, this course will explore what, how, when and where Jordanians eat various foods and meals. Weekly themes could also include a focus on beverages or the production and consumption of a particular food item in the region. Towards the end of the course we could explore more contemporary issues such as the impact of globalization on tastes, food tourism in Amman, and how television cooking shows, local cooking schools, or cookbooks reflect national cuisine and influence food and eating habits.

Learning outcomes for the Course
By the completion of this course, students will be able to:
- Show how cultural values and practices shape understandings of food, and how food and food-related practices can help to define cultural meaning.
• Address how everyday food practices connect with social categories such as gender, religious identity, minority group status, and class status, and what roles culture and power relations play in food systems.
• Identity how globalization affects access and relationships with food.

Knowledge
This course is designed to assist students to acquire and demonstrate knowledge about:
• Cultural anthropological and ethnographic approaches to food and culture.
• Ways that various Jordanians and other peoples in the MENA region prepare, present and consume food.
• How food becomes involved in the work of building identities, organizing households, local communities and societies, and creating social practices among groups of people.

Skills
This course is designed to assist students in acquiring or enhancing the following skills:
• Theoretical and empirical tools to understand and evaluate food systems at local and global levels.
• Critical reading and writing skills, and leading class in drawing meaning from our texts.
• Observation and participant-observation techniques.
• Interview techniques.
• Writing ethnographically using field notes and interview materials as data.

Attitudes
This course is designed to encourage development of the following attitudes:
• Students will develop an appreciation of how the anthropological perspective—a cross-cultural perspective committed to cultural relativism—can be beneficial for interpersonal and global relations.
• This course fosters a commitment to cultural relativism, examining food and culture of the MENA region in its particular socio-cultural, historical and material context.
• Students will exercise an ability to step out of their own cultural comfort zone, experiencing MENA food and culture with an open mind.

Required Reading
This course uses a combination of a coursepack and a book on culinary cultures of the MENA region. Students are required to take notes/underline important passages in all readings, and bring readings to class. Students must complete all assigned readings and accompanying exercises/questions before coming to class. Students will need to purchase or print out the following:

Please note: Please purchase before departing for Jordan and make sure to order the 2000 paperback edition.

2) **Other readings** will be compiled in a coursepack.

**Assessment Overview**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance (10%) and Participation (10%)</td>
<td>20% / 200 pts</td>
<td>Week 3, 5, 7, 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-class Lab Activities and/or Site Visits (4 total @ 50 pts each)</td>
<td>20% / 200 pts</td>
<td>Week 3, 5, 7, 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Notebook and Homework Assignment(s)</td>
<td>15% / 150 pts</td>
<td>Varies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation &amp; Analysis Assignment (2 total)</td>
<td>20% / 200 pts</td>
<td>Week 4, 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Project</td>
<td>15% / 150 pts</td>
<td>Week 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100% / 1000 pts</td>
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**Course Schedule**

According to Pellegrino Artusi’s (1820-1911) "La scienza in cucina e l’arte di mangiare bene" (The Science of Cooking and the Art of Eating Well), readings are organized around critical discussion of what makes food clean, fair and good (as well as tasty, healthy, authentic, ethical, plentiful, etc.). Readings marked (CP) can be found in the coursepack. (TT) indicates a reading from Tapper and Zubaida’s *A Taste of Thyme: Culinary Cultures of the Middle East.*

**For Starters: Why study food?**

**Week 1**
- Course expectations, structure and assignments
- Getting to know each other
- Introduction to Food and Culture: What is the relationship?
- Pellegrino Artusi reading (CP)

**Week 2**
- What is an “anthropology of food”?
Week 3
- Introducing Food and Culture in the MENA region
  - Sami Zubaida and Richard Tapper’s “Introduction” (TT)
  - Tony Allen’s “Food Production in the Middle East.” (TT)
  - Sami Zubaida’s “National, Communal and Global Dimensions in Middle Eastern Food Cultures.” (TT)

First Course: What makes “good” food clean to eat?

Week 4
- Food Taboos—purity and ritual

Week 5
- Food, Semiotics and Culture
Manuela Marin’s “Beyond Taste: the complements of colour and smell in the medieval Arab culinary tradition” (TT)

Richard Tapper’s “Blood, Wine and Water: social and symbolic aspects of drinks and drinking in the Islamic Middle East” (TT)

Abdelhai Diouri’s “Of Leaven Foods: Ramadan in Morocco” (TT)

Sabry Hafez’s “Food as a Semiotic Code in Arabic Literature” (TT)

Site Visit 1 – local olive grove or vineyard

Week 6, October 6th
NO CLASS – EID AL ADHA

Week 7
- Cuisines, Dishes, Ingredients
  - Bert Fragner’s “From the Caucasus to the Roof of the World: a culinary adventure” and “Social Reality and Culinary Fiction: the perspective of cookbooks from Iran and Central Asia” (TT)
  - Holly Chase’s “The Meyhane or McDonald’s? Changes in eating habits and the evolution of fast food in Istanbul” (TT)
  - Charles Perry’s “The Taste for Layered Bread among the Nomadic Turks and the Central Asian Origins of Baklava” (TT)
  - Sami Zubaida’s “Rice in the Culinary Cultures of the Middle East” (TT)
  - Françoise Aubaile-Sallenave’s “Al-Kishk: the past and present of a complex culinary practice” (TT)

Lab Activity 2!

Second Course: What makes “good” food fair?

Week 8
- Food, Power and Relationships

Week 9
- Food and the Social Order
  - Peter Heine’s “The Revival of Traditional Cooking in Modern Arabic Cookbooks” (TT)
  - Claudia Roden’s “Jewish Food in the Middle East”. (TT)
  - Ianthe Maclagan’s “Food and Gender in a Yemeni Community” (TT)
  - Mai Yamani’s “You are What You Cook: cuisine and class in Mecca” (TT)
  - Christian Bromberger’s “Eating Habits and Cultural Boundaries in Northern Iran” (TT)

OA 2 – Food Preparation Interview due

Third Course: What makes “good” food good?

Week 10
- Good food stirs memories of mom, home and homeland.
- Growing Up and Growing Appetites

Site Visit 2 - Cooking School
OA 1 – Food Log due

Week 11
- Nationalism, Race and Ethnicity
- Good food connects to identity


Week 12
• Good food is culturally authentic.


Week 13
• More readings on cultural authenticity


Week 14
• Globalization and Connections


Dessert Course

Week 15

- The final class of the semester is devoted to reflecting on your learning in the course over the semester.
- Students will present briefly on a food item (perhaps a nostalgia food or an item featured in their final paper).

Assessment Tasks

1. **Attendance and participation** (20%) — This part the course grade is determined by two factors: (1) showing up to class and (2) showing engagement with the class. Every class will be very important and attendance is mandatory in order to keep up with the material. It is expected that students will be on time, stay the entire time, and plan for all appointments, excursions, personal commitments, etc.

2. **In-Class Lab Activities and/or Site Visits** (20%) — Four times over the course of the semester, students will complete an in-class activity or tasks for site visits in randomly selected groups that will help you to understand the concepts covered in the readings. Specific instructions will be provided for each site visit assignment or activity in class.

3. **A Food Notebook and Homework Exercise**
   **A Food Notebook** (15%) — Students will keep a journal of insights about food and culture that might include recopied and reorganized class notes, notes on films and on readings, insights about food or meals that they have eaten at various times, pictures relating to foods, etc. Each **week students** will pick a food or a class of foods, do a little research and write approximately a page on that particular food to be added to their notebook. Students will have the opportunity to share journal insights relevant to the week’s topic during each class. In occasional **Homework Exercises** (10%) students will be asked to synthesize thoughts on the readings and other class materials. Further instructions will be provided in class and on the Moodle course website for each homework exercise.

4. **Observation & Analysis Assignments** (20%) — These two assignments will be short exercises in becoming food anthropologists. For each Observation & Analysis Assignment, you will spend time carefully observing some aspect of social life having to do with food and food practices. You will record information about the ethnographic setting and activities, and then write a brief paper about your findings using course readings and materials to help synthesize your data.

5. **Final Project—A Food Study** (15%) — For their final project students will do an analysis of food based on their observations of a class of meals, a celebration, a ritual, a marketplace or food store, a restaurant or bar/café, or of food in other socio-cultural contexts. They will gather anthropological data and compare their findings with the concepts, theory, and findings in
Taste of Thyme. Students will have a few different options for your final project, which will be discussed in class and described on the Moodle course website.

AMIDEAST Education Abroad Attendance Policy
Students are expected to attend all regularly scheduled classes. In courses that meet once a week you are permitted one unexcused absence (absences not caused by illness); in courses that meet twice a week you are permitted two unexcused absences; in courses that meet three or more times a week you are permitted three unexcused absences. If you have more than the permitted number of unexcused absences your grade for the course will be lowered by one “mark” for each additional unexcused absence. In other words,

• in a course that meets once a week after two unexcused absences an A becomes an A-; after three an A becomes a B+; after four an A becomes a B, etc.;
• in courses that meet twice a week, after three unexcused absences an A becomes an A-; after four an A becomes a B+; after five an A becomes a B, etc.;
• in courses that meet three or more times a week, after four unexcused absences an A becomes an A-; after five an A becomes a B+; after six an A becomes a B, etc.

1. Students are expected to do the required reading before class, volunteer for presentations and participate actively in class discussions.
2. Excused absences are determined by the Program Manager; in some instances a doctor’s certification may be required.
3. Deadlines must be respected, even in cases of excused absences.
4. Students are responsible for getting homework assignments they miss and submitting it in a timely manner. Assignments turned in after the due date will result in a penalty to be determined by the instructor.
5. Any assignments not submitted will result in that assignment being given a grade of 0 (zero).
6. The Attendance Policy is applied until the last day of the semester.

6 Sept 2013