

Soul Food: Eating and Drinking in Western Religion

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Catalogue Description

An examination of Western religious rituals involving food and drink, both as they have been practiced and rationalized in teaching in various contexts. Reading, discussion and writing will center on such phenomena as ritual sacrifice, Dionysian excess, kashruth and the Passover seder, the Eucharist, religious feast and fasts, the American temperance movement, health food (both in its 19th-century sectarian manifestation and in its later more pervasively secular, "New Age" and "simple living" forms) and ethnic "soul food" (church-supper fare and other identity-conferring dietary practices).

Texts

- Elizabeth Carmichael and Chloe Sayer, *The Skeleton at the Feast: The Day of the Dead in Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991)
- Gillian Feeley-Harnik, *The Lord's Table: The Meaning of Food in Early Judaism and Christianity* (Washington and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1981)
- Arien Mack, ed., *Food: Nature and Culture* (*Social Research*, 66:1, Spring, 1999) Massimo Montanari, *The Culture of Food* (Oxford, UK, and Cambridge, USA: Blackwell, 1994)
- Colin Spencer, *The Heretic's Feast: A History of Vegetarianism* (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1995)

Recipes

1. *Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. **Genesis 3:1-6.***
2. *Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? If you then, you, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him! **Matthew 7:9-11***
3. *Here let us feast, and to the feast be join'd/ Discourse, the sweeter banquet of the mind. **Pope's Homer***
4. *4. Man ist was man isst. **Old German Proverb***

Daily Recommended Requirements

Individual stuff:

1. *Attendance* -- maximum four absences. Five and above negatively affect grade.
2. *Journal* -- 1 page (8 1/2 x 11) reflection on each reading assignment, due before class. On occasions of visiting presentation or group report, the journal entry will be a response *to* the class, rather than preparation *for* it. Full, engaged journals (with no more than 4 entries missing) can enhance your grade; lacklustre and/or overly slim journals will hurt it.
3. *Book or Service Site Report* -- 4 pp. wordprocessed report plus participation in a class conversation with students reading similar books (or working on similar food-related service sites). 30 %
4. *Final take-home essay* -- 4 pp., wordprocessed. A chance to put it all together and demonstrate both digestion of details and incorporation of perspectives. 20%

Group stuff:

1. *Eucharist or Passover or religiously-based Soup Kitchen visit* -- written up (2-4 pp., wordprocessed) and (informally) presented in class. 30%
2. *Group Report* -- 4 pp. wordprocessed analysis of one of the following: a religious-based group's approach to food; the (implicitly religious?) approach to food/drink of a secular organization or magazine; website(s) dealing with food and drink. Also presented informally in class (scheduled throughout the semester). 20%
3. *Group preparation and presentation of a dish* -- sharing of a dish with religious and/or community meaning that arises out of your group's conversation. (Required, but not graded -- especially not graded on taste! Scheduled throughout the semester.)

Menu

Appetizers

JANUARY

- 18 Getting to know your companions; tasting the subject...
20 Food in Western Culture. Montanari, "Proposal" and ch. 1
25 Montanari, chs. 2-3
27 Montanari, ch. 4

FEBRUARY

- 1 Montanari, chs. 5-6

Antepasto

- 3 Religion and Culture. Friedlander, Rozin, Visser, in *Social Research*

Entrees

- 8 Religion and Food. *Encyclopedia of Religion*, s.v. "Food" and "Beverages" [on reserve]
10 Bloch, Doniger, Rawson in *Social Research*
15 FILM
17 Feeley-Harnik, chs. 1-2

22 Feeley-Harnik, chs. 3-4
24 Feeley-Harnik, ch. 5
29 Feeley-Harnik, chs. 6 and Conclusion

MARCH

2 *Reading Roundup #1*
7 "Noshing is Sacred" -- a discussion of *kosher*. Reading TBS.
9 *The Battle of Carnival and Lent*: Spencer, chs. 6-7
14 Spencer, chs. 8-10
16 11-13
21-23 SPRING BREAK

(Eat Your) Veggies

28 Carmichael and Sayer, Part I
30 *Reading Roundup #2*

APRIL

4 Carmichael and Sayer, Part II
6 Nestle, *Social Research*
11 Goldman, Murcott, *Social Research*
13 *Reading Roundup #3*

Desserts

18-25 Food-ritual Reports
27 FILM

MAY

2 Concluding Pot-Luck
9 Final Exam period, 2-5 p.m.

Though we will strive to complete the reading, there may be additional visits and perhaps one field trip: stay tuned.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES 252: SOUL FOOD

Spring 2000

Class Information

NAME: _____

EMAIL: _____

CLASS: _____ MAJOR: _____

PREVIOUS CLASSES IN....

RELIGION? _____

HISTORY? _____

ANTHROPOLOGY/SOCIOLOGY? _____

RELIGIOUS TRADITION(S)? _____

FAMILY ETHNIC TRADITION(S)? _____

FOOD RELATED RELIGIOUS MEMORY (OR RELIGIOUSLY RELATED FOOD MEMORY)?

A FAVORITE FAMILY DISH: _____

A FAVORITE COMFORT FOOD: _____

SMALL GROUP INTEREST FINDER Please check three food-issues that interest you. *NB: this is low-risk, and does not tie you into a particular project; rather it just puts you in touch with some congenial companions.*

_____ Judaism _____ Christianity _____ Health Food

_____ Vegetarianism _____ gourmet "spirituality" _____ excess and asceticism

_____ food and justice _____ identity food

_____ other? (specify) _____

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