

# EATING AND DRINKING IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

## Course description:

This course explores the historical, archaeological, and anthropological evidence for the relationships between diet and culture in the ancient Mediterranean and Europe. The consumption of food is a universal, cross-cultural need, and the variety of cultural responses to this need form the main object of study in this course. We will take a chronological perspective, first exploring the evidence for early farming and feasting, then turning to the culinary traditions of ancient Greece, and finally to the changes to Mediterranean diets and cuisines that coincided with the Roman Empire's rise and fall. We will explore how food production, feasting, dining traditions, recipes, and sacred foods play a large role in the creation of individual and community identity, and we will discuss how eating and drinking may be used both for cultural self-promotion and to create a marginalized "other."

## Three assignments:

1. **Assignment One – Book Presentation:** The first assignment is to select a book on food germane to a topic of your interest and to present it to the class. Your presentation should last approximately 5-10 minutes and include information about the author, the book's thesis, and what sources and methodologies she or he uses in order to prove the book's conclusions. You are encouraged to choose a book related to cultures or periods beyond what is covered in this course!
2. **Assignment Two – Book Review:** The second assignment is to write a review of this book in approximately 4-5 pages, discussing and adding to what you covered in the first assignment and using the feedback you have received.
3. **Assignment Three – Term Paper:** The third assignment is a research paper of approximately 8-10 pages on a topic or event related to the material covered in this course. Your paper should make a cogent argument related to the archaeology of food, and be supported by your own independent research. With the permission of the instructor, you may write on a topic or event that is not situated within the ancient Mediterranean or Europe, but this paper may not cover the same ground as the book you read for Assignments One and Two.

## Grading:

To receive full credit, assignments must be turned in on time. Late assignments will be accepted only under extreme circumstances and must be arranged in advance with the instructor. No make-up exams will be given without official authorization. Letter grades follow the university's published guidelines.

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| 1. Mid-term examination: 20%     | 4. First assignment (presentation): 10% |
| 2. Final examination: 20%        | 5. Second assignment (review): 15%      |
| 3. Participation/discussion: 15% | 6. Third assignment (term paper): 20%   |

**Required texts:**

Stephen Mennell, *Eating and Taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the Present*. University of Illinois Press, 1996.

Massimo Montanari (trans. Albert Sonnenfeld), *Food is Culture*. Columbia University Press, 2006.

*N.b.*: Additional Reads will be assigned in the form of articles and book chapters. These will be made available to students via the course website and are marked below with an asterisk.

**Schedule:**

**Week One:** An Introduction to Eating and Drinking in the Ancient World.

\*Read: Selections from Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *The Physiology of Taste*.

**Week Two:** Early Farming, Feasting, and Civilization.

\*Read: Selections from Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel*.

**Week Three:** The Symposium.

\*Read: Selections from Andrew Dalby, *Siren Feasts*; James Davidson, *Courtesans and Fishcakes*.

**Week Four:** The Other Greeks: Food, Farming, and Greek Society.

\*Read: Selections from Victor Davis Hanson, *The Other Greeks*.

**Week Five:** The Roman Banquet.

\*Read: Selections from Katherine Dunbabin, *The Roman Banquet*; Nicholas Hudson, "Changing Places: The Archaeology of the Roman Convivium."

**First assignment** is due.

**Week Six:** Mechanisms of Exchange: the Distribution of Food in the Greco-Roman World.

\*Read: Selections from Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*.

**Week Seven:** Food and the Landscape: Food Production and the Environment.

\*Read: Graeme Barker, "Pigs, plebeians and potentes: Rome's economic hinterland, c. 350-600 AD"; Selections from Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*.

**Week Eight:** The Act of Cooking: Pottery, Fuel, and Cookbooks.

\*Read: Paul Arthur, "Form, Function and Technology in Pottery Production from the Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages"; Ibid. "Pots and boundaries: On cultural and economic areas between Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages"; Excerpts from Apicius and Vinidarius.

**Week Nine: Midterm Examination.**

**Week Ten:** Food, Status, and Identity.

Read: Massimo Montanari, *Food is Culture*

**Week Eleven:** The Changing Relationship to Food in the Late Antique West.

\*Read: Excerpts from Veronika Grimm, *From Feasting to Fasting, The Evolution of a Sin*

**Second Assignment** is due.

**Week Twelve:** The Raw and the Cooked: Assessing “Barbarian” Cuisine.

\*Read: Excerpts from Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Raw and the Cooked*; Yitzhak Hen, “Food and Drink in Merovingian Gaul.”

**Week Thirteen:** The Birth of a Medieval Diet.

\*Read: Michael Mitterauer, “Rye and Oats,” in *Why Europe?*

**Week Fourteen:** Challenging paradigms.

Read: Stephen Mennell, *All Manners of Food*.

**Third Assignment** is due.

**Final Exam:** To be determined.