

REL 3108/RELIGION AND FOOD/SPRING 2015

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Office Hours: M 2-3 pm and W 3-4 pm and by appointment
Periods M 8-9/3-4:55; W9/4-4:55

Course Description

Food is one of the most critical, yet understudied, aspects of human experience. Most of us like to eat, and food is a tangible way in which we articulate our religious, ethical and moral selves. Religious values shape how we feast and fast, and feed the deities and feed ourselves. This course will explore the relationship between food and religion by (1) investigating food in the context of specific religious traditions, e.g. Hinduism; and (2) examining food as a moral and ethical category in religious and secular contexts, e.g., organic and locavore. Topics include, but are not limited to, food and ritual; food and religious ethics; religion, food and sustainability.

This course fits under the rubric of the humanities because it focuses on how people of the world's different religious traditions understand food in its multiple capacities. This course explores the food-related myths, rituals, texts, and practices of different religious traditions, in the US and abroad; compares the role of food and eating, addressing topics such as ritual practice, health, relations between humans and the divine, morality/ethics, and sustainability; and demonstrates how food practices reflect and shape gender roles and social roles among and in-between diverse populations in the United States. It seeks to present an in-depth understanding of the language and concepts used by different traditions to define "food". This course demonstrates the methodologies used in Religious Studies, including historical, textual, comparative, and ethnographic, and consciously reflects on how and why scholars choose these methods in their investigations.

Topic/Assignment

I. Introducing Religious Studies

This section will begin to define Religious Studies as a humanistic discipline, its unique theoretical and methodological perspectives, and its role in interdisciplinary studies. Lectures will introduce a number of key thinkers, perspectives, and terms that will be referred to throughout the semester.

II. Introducing Religion and Food

This section defines the sub-field of Religion and Food. Lectures and readings introduce key thinkers, perspectives, and terms that will be used through out the semester. This section uses *Crescent: A Novel* to explore Muslim dietary practices in the context of contemporary American religious history.

III. Food and Ritual

This section introduces the relationship between food and ritual practice, drawing on examples from Hinduism in India and the USA, Protestant denomination in the US Midwestern region, and indigenous traditions of the Americas. Students will learn about specific ritual practices and also how these rituals have changed in response to social and historical factors, e.g. immigration.

IV. Feasting and Fasting

This section introduces feasting and fasting in religious context and explores how individuals shape their religious, gender, and moral identities through these practices. This section draws upon examples from medieval Christianity, Hinduism in India and the USA, and twentieth century Scandinavia.

V. Florida Food Cultures

This section explores local food cultures in Florida, highlighting foods from the works of author Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and Latin American influences. We will incorporate visits to the UF Teaching Farm and Cross Creek State Park.

VI. Food and Faith in the American South

This section traces the development of food cultures from Africa through the West Indies to the Low Country and addresses the relationship between food, religion, and social structures in the American South.

VI. Food and Our Moral Selves

This section explores how individuals use food and eating to shape their moral selves, including choices about the foods one eats, explores the relationship between religion, food, and sustainable food systems.

VIII. Final Conference

Student Learning Outcomes

Students will achieve proficiency in the skills listed below. They will be able to:

1. effectively communicate how different religious traditions understand relationship between religion and food;
2. explain how food practices reflect and shape gender roles and social roles among and in-between diverse populations;

3. analyze historical, mythical, and theological texts critically;
4. compare the role of food in different religious traditions in topics including ritual, health, morality/ethics, gender, and sustainability;
5. write analytically and comparatively about the broad themes and theories, as well as specific texts and cases, studied;
5. demonstrate understanding of the field of religion and food, including its origins and development; and
6. work collaboratively and in multidisciplinary teams on class projects.

General Education Objectives

General Education Student Learning Outcomes (H and D)

1. This course fulfills the Humanities (H) General Education Objective by providing instruction in the key themes, principles, and terminology of Religious Studies.

2. General Education Student Learning Outcomes for Humanities courses:

a. The course will teach students about the history, underlying theory, and methodologies used in Religious Studies. Both in a separate introductory section on Religious Studies and throughout discussions of other issues and cases, course readings, lectures, and discussions will emphasize the history, theory and methodologies of Religious Studies and their relevance for Religion and Food.

b. The course will provide students with background on the history, theory and methodologies used in Religious Studies, using case studies focused on the environment to illustrate approaches and issues. Readings, class discussions, and writing assignments will focus on developing the skills by which students can identify and to analyze the key elements, biases and influences that shape the ways people think about both religion and nature.

c. The class emphasizes clear and effective analysis, expressed both in class discussions and in written assignments. In reading, discussion, and writing, students will be taught and encouraged to approach issues and problems from multiple perspectives, including diverse cultural and religious traditions as well as different theoretical frameworks within religious studies.

3. General Education Student Learning Outcomes

a. To learn the history, underlying theory and methodologies used to analyze relations between religion and food as an interdisciplinary field of study;

b. To identify and analyze key elements, biases and influences that shape scholarly thinking about food and religion;

c. To approach these issues from diverse disciplinary and theoretical perspectives;

e. To communicate the information and analysis developed in this course in a clear, organized, and effective way in written work and in class discussions; and

f. To understand how the intersection of religion and food in the context of the world's diverse cultures and religious traditions.

4. This course fulfills the Diversity (I) General Education Objective by providing instruction in the attitudes, norms, and values of cultures that create cultural differences within the United States.

These courses encourage you to recognize how social roles and status affect different groups and impact U.S. society. These courses guide you to analyze and to evaluate your own cultural norms and values in relation to those of other cultures, and to distinguish opportunities and constraints faced by other persons and groups.

4. General Education Student Learning Outcomes for Diversity courses:

a. This course will teach students about the core concepts, beliefs and practices of religious traditions in the United States. Through exploring the role of food and eating in religious traditions of the United States, students will understand how cultures exemplified by traditions including Hindus, different populations of Native Americans, multiple ethnic expressions of Protestants, and Catholics have contributed to diversity in the United States. This course explores how food practices reflect difference in religious expression among multiple populations, e.g. Protestant Christianity as understood and practiced among African Americans in the South and descendents of northern European immigrants in the Midwest.

b. This course will demonstrate how food is a means to create and negotiate identity and hierarchy within and among religious communities, including racial, ethnic, and gender identity. For example, selections from *Whitebread Protestants* explores how debates about communion practice in Midwestern churches reflected broader social anxieties about immigration and social change.

c. This course will teach students about the opportunities and constraints faced by members of different religious traditions in the United States. For example, "There's No Food Like Church Food" discusses the role of food in African American churches in the American South, and "We Shall Not Be Moved" addresses the role of food in the US Civil Rights Movement.

d. This course will teach students to evaluate and analyze multiple perspectives on religion, society and food, including their own.

Course Requirements and Assignments

All assignment must be completed to pass the course.

1. Attendance and participation in class discussions and activities, including timely and close reading of all assigned texts, is required. Students will participate in a series of in-class projects throughout the semester. (10% of final grade).

2. **Group project:** Students will develop collaborative projects that demonstrate the relationship between religion and food in practical and demonstrable ways. Each group will choose a meal, e.g. Seder and will “decode” this meal, illustrating its religious, cultural, and social aspects. More detailed information will be provided early in the semester. Projects will be presented in poster/video/podcast format. (10% of grade).

3. Essays (30%)

Two individual essays (4-5 double-spaced pages, 1000 words each). The first draft should both be submitted to Canvas **AND** brought to class for feedback and discussion. First draft – 3 points; final version – 12 points.* Each essay will be worth 15% (or 15 points) of your final grade (30% total).

1. The first paper will focus on a cookbook of your choice. In this essay, you will examine a cookbook for its religious and cultural content (what it conveys about values, ceremonies and rituals, the social and ethical dimensions of food preparation and consumption, etc.)

2. The second paper will explore the relationship between food, eating, and morality. In this essay, drawing on readings from the class, you will choose a food item or practice and discuss how the moral and ethical practices around this food.

4. First Hour Exam (25% of grade).

5. Second Hour Exam (25% of grade).

This exam will integrate readings and material, focusing on the second half of the semester.

*Consistent with the standards of the University Writing Requirement, the instructor will evaluate and provide feedback on the student's written assignments with respect to grammar, punctuation, usage of standard written English, clarity, coherence, and organization. (See below for grading rubric)

University Writing Requirement (formerly known as the Gordon Rule) –

This course counts for University Writing Rule 2 credit (2000 words).

The University Writing Requirement ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. Course grades now have two components. To receive writing credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course.

The instructor will evaluate and provide feedback on the student's written assignments with respect to grammar, punctuation, usage of standard written English, clarity, coherence, and organization. Students will receive a grade and corrections on their work. Students will be graded according to the following rubric:

Assessment:

1.) What type of feedback will be provided to the student (in reference to writing skill)?

Grade Corrections Drafts Other

2.) Will a published rubric be used? Yes (see below)

Grading Policies and Scale

Full information about UF's grading policy, including credit for major, minor, General Education, and other requirements, is available at this website:

<http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html>

The grade scale for this course is as follows:

A	94-100
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	84-86
B-	80-83
C+	77-79
C	74-76
C-	70-73
D+	67-69
D	64-66
D-	60-63
E	Below 60

Please note that a C- is not a qualifying grade for major, minor, General Education, Gordon Rule, or College Basic distribution credit. To achieve such credit you must achieve a C or better in this class. <http://www.isis.ufl.edu/minusgrades.html>

Policies, Rules, and Resources

1. *Handing in Assignments*: Place all papers in my mailbox in the Religion Department,

107 Anderson Hall. DO NOT slip them under the door or leave them on the door of my office, the main department office, or the teaching assistant's office. Please also keep a dated electronic copy of all your papers.

2. *Late or Make-Up Assignments:* You may take an exam early or receive an extension on an exam or essay assignment *only* in extraordinary circumstances and, barring emergency situations, prior approval from the instructor. If an extension is not granted, the assignment will be marked down 1/3 grade (e.g., from B+ to B) for each day late.

3. *Completion of All Assignments:* You must complete all written and oral assignments and fulfill the requirement for class participation in order to pass the course. I will not average a grade that is missing for any assignment. You are responsible for knowing the course requirements and making sure you hand them in. I will not remind you of missing assignments.

4. *Attendance and Participation:* Class attendance is required, except for excused absences, e.g. religious holidays, participation in curricular activities, and university-sponsored sporting events. Do not register for this class if you cannot arrive on time. Students should arrive on time and prepared to discuss the day's readings. Tardiness harms your understanding of the material and disrupts the class. After the first late arrival, the instructor reserves the right to mark you absent, without an excused absence. The instructor will *not* provide notes or discuss material that has already been covered for students who arrive late, barring extraordinary circumstances (which do not include failing to find a parking place or sleeping in).

5. *Common Courtesies:* Cell phones and other electronic devices must be turned off during class. Students who receive or make calls or text messages during class will be asked to leave and counted absent for the day. Students may take notes on a laptop computer only with prior approval from the instructor. The instructor reserves the right to ask you to turn off the computer if circumstances warrant. The instructor also reserves the right to ask any student engaging in disruptive behavior (e.g., whispering, reading a newspaper) to leave the class. If that occurs, the student will be marked absent for the day.

6. *Honor Code:* On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The university specifically prohibits cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation, bribery, conspiracy, and fabrication. For more information about the definition of these terms and other aspects of the Honesty Guidelines, see <http://www.chem.ufl.edu/~itl/honor.html>. Any student(s) demonstrated to have cheated, plagiarized, or otherwise violated the Honor Code in *any assignment* for this course will fail the course. In addition, violations of the Academic Honesty Guidelines shall result in judicial action and the sanctions listed in paragraph XI of the Student Conduct Code.

7. *Accommodation for Disabilities:* Students requesting classroom accommodation must

first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student, who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation. <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>

8. *Counseling Resources*: Resources available on-campus for students include the following:

- a. University Counseling Center, 301 Peabody Hall, 392-1575, personal and career counseling;
- b. Student Mental Health, Student Health Care Center, 392-1171, personal counseling;
- c. Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS), Student Health Care Center, 392-1161, sexual counseling;
- d. Career Resource Center, Reitz Union, 392-1601, career development assistance and counseling.

9. *Software Use*: All faculty, staff, and students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.

10. *Writing Assistance*: In addition to scheduling time with the instructor, students are highly encouraged to seek assistance from the University Reading and Writing Center (<http://www.at.ufl.edu/rwcenter/index.html>). For additional assistance, I recommend Joshua Sowin's "A Guide to Writing Well" (<http://www.fireandknowledge.org/archives/2007/01/08/a-guide-to-writing-well/>). The University of Wisconsin-Madison Writing Center is also a valuable resource, especially for basic citation information: (<http://www.writing.wisc.edu/>).

REQUIRED READINGS

PLEASE NOTE: All readings will be available on reserve at Library West and/or on line.

Required reading: Books

Abu-Jaber, Diane. *Crescent: A Novel*. Norton, 2003.

Foer, Jonathan Safran. *Eating Animals*. Boston, Back Bay Books, 2010.

Topic/Assignment

I. Introducing Religious Studies

This section will begin to define Religious Studies as a humanistic discipline, its unique theoretical and methodological perspectives, and its role in interdisciplinary studies. Lectures will introduce a number of key

thinkers, perspectives, and terms that will be referred to throughout the semester.

- January 7 Introduction to the course
- January 12 Mary Douglas, “Deciphering a Meal” (First half)
Zeller, “Quasi-Religious American Foodways” [Canvas]

II. Introducing Religion and Food

This section defines the sub-field of Religion and Food. Lectures and readings introduce key thinkers, perspectives, and terms which will be used through out the semester. This section uses *Crescent: A Novel* to explore Arab-American foods and cultural assimilation in the context of the contemporary United States.

- January 14 Roland Barthes, “Towards a Psychosociology of contemporary Food Consumption” [Canvas]
- January 19 **No class—Martin Luther King Day**
- January 21 Abu-Jaber, *Crescent: A Novel*
- January 26 Abu-Jaber, *Crescent: A Novel*
Bring in family recipe

III. Food and Ritual

This section introduces the relationship between food and ritual practice, drawing on examples from Hinduism in India and the USA, Protestant denomination in the US Midwestern region, and indigenous traditions of the Americas. Students will learn about specific ritual practices and also how these rituals have changed in response to social and historical factors, e.g. immigration.

- January 28 Sack, “Liturgical food”
- February 2 Iron Chef goes to the Superbowl/In-class Challenge
TBA
- February 4 Zeller, “Food Practices, Culture, and Social Dynamics in the Hare Krishna Movement” [Canvas]
- February 9 Narayanan, “Ritual Foods”, *Encyclopedia of Hinduism* [Canvas]
Draft of Response Paper #1 Due

IV. Feasting and Fasting

This section introduces feasting and fasting in religious context and explores how individuals shape their religious, gender, and moral identities through these practices. This section draws upon examples from medieval Christianity and twentieth century Scandinavia.

February 11 Bynum, Caroline Walker. "Fast, Feast, and Flesh: The Religious Significance of Food for Medieval Women." [Canvas]

February 16 Film: *Babette's Feast*
Final Version of Response Paper #1 Due

February 18 Wright, Wendy. "Babette's Feast: A Religious Film"
[Canvas]

February 23 Hour Exam 1

V. Florida Food Cultures

This section explores local food cultures in Florida, highlighting foods from the works of author Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings and Latin American influences. We will incorporate visits to the UF Teaching Farm and Cross Creek State Park.

February 25 Buen Provecho
TBA

March 2 Spring Break
Watch either Cross Creek or the Yearling

March 4 Spring Break

March 9 Reading from Cross Creek/Visit to UF Teaching Farm

VI. Food and Faith in the American South

This section traces the development of food cultures from Africa through the West Indies to the Low Country and addresses the relationship between food, religion, and social structures in the American South, including highlighting the role of food in the struggle for justice, equity, and opportunity.

March 11 McWilliams, "Adaptability: The Bittersweet Culinary History of the West Indies" [Canvas]

March 16 Julianne Dodson, "There's Nothing Like Church Food"

Adrian Miller, “Fried Chicken and the Integration of Church & Plate” [Canvas]
Draft of Response Paper #2 Due

March 18 Leonard Primiano, “And As We Dine, We Sing and Praise God”
Jessica Harris, “*We Shall Not Be Moved*”
[Canvas]

VII. Food and Our Moral Selves

This section explores how individuals use food and eating to shape their moral selves, including choices about the foods one eats, explores the relationship between religion, food, and sustainable food systems.

March 23 Jeremy Rappaport, “Join Us! Come Eat! Vegetarianism in the Formative Period of the Seventh-Day Adventists and Unity School of Christianity” [Canvas]
Final Version of Response Paper #2 Due

March 25 Foer, *Eating Animals*

March 30 Foer, *Eating Animals*

April 1 Jeff Wilson, “Mindful Eating: American Buddhists and Worldly Benefits” [Canvas]

April 6 Hour Exam #2

VIII. Final Conferences

April 8 Presentations Workday

April 13 Visit to UF Teaching Farm

April 15 Poster/Video/Podcast Presentations
Podcasts due

April 20 Poster/Video/Podcast Presentations

April 22 Conclusions

Grading Rubric for Essays:

Qualities & Criteria	Unsatisfactory (C-or below)	Satisfactory (B-C range)	Satisfactory (A-B+ range)
<p>Content/Information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All elements of the topics are addressed Critical evaluation and synthesizing of sources Information based on careful research Coherence of information <p><i>(Weight 60%)</i></p>	<p>The essay is not objective and addresses poorly the issues referred in the proposed topic. The provided information is not necessary or not sufficient to discuss these issues.</p>	<p>The essay is objective and for the most part addresses with an in depth analysis most of the issues referred in the proposed topic. The provided information is, for the most part, necessary and sufficient to discuss these issues.</p>	<p>The essay is objective and addresses with an in depth analysis all the issues referred in the proposed topic. The provided information is necessary and sufficient to discuss these issues. Critical thinking and synthesis of sources is fully evident</p>
<p>Quality of Writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarity of sentences and paragraphs No errors and spelling, grammar and use of English Organization and coherence of ideas <p><i>(Weight 25%)</i></p>	<p>The essay is not well written, and contains many spelling errors, and/or grammar errors and/or use of English errors. The essay is badly organized, lacks clarity and/or does not present ideas in a coherent way.</p>	<p>The essay is well written for the most part, without spelling, grammar or use of English errors. The essay is for the most part well organized, clear and presents ideas in a coherent way.</p>	<p>The essay is well written from start to finish, without spelling, grammar or use of English errors. The essay is well organized, clear and presents ideas in a coherent way.</p>
<p>References and use of references</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scholarly level of references How effective the references are used in the essay Soundness of references APA style in reference list and for citations <p><i>(Weight 15%)</i></p>	<p>Most of the references used are not important, and/or are not of good/scholarly quality. There is not a minimum of 4 scholarly resources, and/or they are not used effectively in the essay. References are not effectively used, and/or correctly cited and/or correctly listed in the reference list according to APA style.</p>	<p>Most of the references used are important, and are of good/scholarly quality. There is a minimum of 4 scholarly resources that are for the most part used effectively in the essay. Most of the references are effectively used, correctly cited and correctly listed in the reference list according to APA style.</p>	<p>All the references used are important, and are of good/scholarly quality. There is a minimum of 4 scholarly resources that are used effectively in the essay. All the references are effectively used, correctly cited and correctly listed in the reference list according to APA style.</p>
<p>Overriding criterion: Originality and authenticity. If the essay is identified as not being original, and/or not done by the student, the instructor has the right to grade the paper as an F.</p>			

*Rubric originally developed by **Dr. Stella Porto of UMUC**