REL/ANT/SAS 400
Eat, Feed, Fast: Food, Religion and Society in India
TuTh 2:00 – 3:20  Hall of Languages 101

Instructor: Ann Grodzins Gold  email: aggold@syr.edu
Office hrs.: Tu 4-5 pm or by appointment  HL 507 tel: x-5717 / 3861

All human beings eat, but every cultural universe endows foods with different flavors and social significances. This course explores various meanings, uses and practices surrounding food in India through the lenses of myth, ritual, literature, and everyday life including preparing, consuming, and sharing food. We look at festivals and feasts, at prayers and vows, at the politics of distribution and abstention in domestic and political arenas. Our sources range from ancient texts to modern ethnographic and fictional accounts of food. We look at broad commonalities across India's pluralistic society, as well as sampling distinctive regional and religious traditions.

Requirements

Required work breaks down into the following weighted categories:

- 50% weekly reflection posts on blackboard (10 posts for 11 specified weeks at 5 points each; see below for additional information)
- 25% independent project (information will be provided in a separate handout on February 5)
- 15% presence & participation
- 10% every student will join one of three groups to investigate specific issues involving food in contemporary Indian society; each group will work together to create an informative presentation for the class based on web research; topics are (1) India's "Right to Food" bill; (2) recent political uses of public fasting; (3) debates around agricultural technologies, seed varieties, organic farming, and genetically engineered food crops
- extra credit up to 5% for attending relevant events outside the classroom; known opportunities shown on syllabus marked (√); a separate handout will provide further information

This course will normally have a seminar format. All students are therefore responsible for having completed each week's assigned readings for both days in advance of our Tuesday session. On eleven Mondays by 9 pm you are required to post to Blackboard discussion forum between 300-500 words reflecting on required readings for the entire week ahead; your post must include at least 3 questions you want to raise for general discussion and must demonstrate your familiarity with all required readings (unless the syllabus specifies a choice). I will collect the posts at 9 pm and only those who have posted by that time will get credit for the week's reflection. Those weeks when posts are required are highlighted in yellow on the syllabus. Every student may skip any one of these weeks at their own convenience.

Required Readings

The following book is required reading and should be available for purchase at the University Bookstore by the middle of February. One copy has also been placed on two-hour reserve in Bird library.
The following required readings will be available to download as PDFs on our merged Blackboard course web site in folders under "content."

**ANT/REL/SAS.400.Merged.SPRING13.Eat, Feed, Fast**


Chopra, Surabhi 2009 Holding the State Accountable for Hunger *Economic & Political Weekly* August 15, xliv (33):8-12


Ramanujan, A.K. "Food for Thought: Towards an Anthology of Hindu Food Images."


Textual sources. Short passages about food from *Upanishads*, *Gita*, *Manu*


*See p. 7 of syllabus for an additional list of recommended readings.*

"This whole world is nothing but food!" (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, Olivelle, transl. 1996:11)

**Week/Date** | **Topic/Readings**
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1 Tu 1/15 | Introductory and organizational session

Th 1/17 | The pure, the vital and the rotten!  
Read: Textual sources: Short passages from *Upanisads*, *Gita* and *Manu*, *BB*; Sen, "Historical Overview," *BB*

2 Tu 1/22 | first tastes: sampling cultural delicacies  
Read: Ramanujan, Food for Thought, *Table*, 1-29; also available on *BB*

Th 1/24 | food themes: separation, solidarity, transformation  
McGee, "Food and Foodways," *BB*; Gold, "Food Values," *BB*  
_Recommended_ for anthropology of food: Farquhar, "Food, Eating, and the Good Life"

3 Tu 1/29 | Feeding powerful beings, Hindu versions  
Read: Toomey, "Mountain of Food," *BB*  
_Recommended_ for feeding the dead: Knipe, "Make That Sesame on Rice, Please!"

Th 1/31 | Feeding powerful beings, Jain versions  
Read: Cort, "Gift of Food," *BB*  
_Recommended_ for Hindu Jain comparison: Babb, "Ritual Culture"; for Jains and asceticism in general: Cort, "Holy Asceticism"; for Jains and food: Jaini, "Fear of Food"

4 Tu 2/5 | Feeding one another  
Read: Singh, "Community Kitchen," *BB*; Narayan, "Heaven and Hell," *BB*  
_Recommended_ for the importance of giving food: Gold, "Awakening Generosity"  
• hand-out on Independent Project •
Th 2/7  Food and hierarchy: views from below
Read: Gold, "Grains of Truth," BB; Lutgendorf, "Dining Out," BB
Recommended for anthropology of food in India: Appadurai, "Gastro-politics"

Tu 2/12  Vegetarianism, non-violence, cows
Read: Chigateri, "Glory to the Cow," BB; Kapur, "The Shandy," BB
Rosen, Chapters 2&3 from Holy Cow
Recommended for diet and identity: Ghassem-Fachandi, "Hyperbolic Vegetarian"
formation of investigation groups for weeks 7, 10, 12

Th 2/14  Fasting and feasting among Hindus, Muslims and Jains
Read: Narayan, Mondays (3 chapters), BB; Murphy, "Piety and Honor," BB; Kelting, "Candanbala's Hair," BB

Tu 2/19  Food and community
Read: select at least three items from the six contained in "Caste, Community and Culture," Table
** due date for 2-page description plus source list for Independent Project **
in-class discussion of student project proposals

W 2/20 4:00 pm in Global Collaboratory, 060 Eggers Stir, Fry, Simmer (film) by Vani Subramanian, Fulbright Scholar, Cornell University

Th 2/21  Surplus, self-control, hunger
Read: all items in "Fasting, Feasting and Famine," Table

Food and Power: Politics, Production, Justice, Well Being (5 weeks)

Tu 2/26  Poverty, equity, intractable problems
Read: Chopra, "Holding the State Accountable" BB; Dreze, "Democracy and Right to Food" BB; Ghosh, "Political Economy of Hunger," BB

Th 2/28  Group 1: Debates over the "right-to-food" and how to legislate and implement it

8  Tu 3/5  Feasting: fieldtrip and meal on M Street

Th 3/7  Class will not meet

9  SPRING BREAK!

10 Tu 3/19  Gandhi's fasts
Read: Jordens, "The Power of Fasting," BB

Th 3/21  Group 2: Contemporary political uses of fasting

11 Tu 3/26  Taste of modernity, part 1: food and its meanings in cosmopolitan contexts
Read: Srinivas, "As Mother Made It"
Guest: Tulasi Srinivas, Professor of Liberal Arts and Interdisciplinary Studies, Emerson College, Boston will join us for a discussion of her work on Indian food, cosmopolitanism and globalization

Th 3/28  Taste of modernity, part 2: food and its meanings in rural contexts  
Read: Gold, "Tasteless Profits," BB

Tu 4/2  Food and health in India from a nutritional scientist's point of view  
Read: TBA, BB  
Guest: Dr. Sudha Raj, Department of Public Health, Food Studies and Nutrition, Syracuse University will join us for a conversation on nutrition, health and culture

Th 4/4  Group 3: debates around agricultural technologies  
Workshop on agrarian crisis at Cornell University (further information to be provided)

\textit{fictions of food and feelings} (2 weeks)

Tu 4/9  Cooking and consuming  
Read: select at least two items from "Meals and Restaurants" & select at least two items from "Kitchens and Cooks," Table

Th 4/11  Emotion: food and love  
Read: select at least three of the six items in "Discourses of Desire," Table

Tu 4/16  Memory: food in diaspora  
Read: select at least three of the six items in "Nostalgia, Memory and Diaspora," Table

Th 4/18  India Shopping  
Read: Mankekar, "India Shopping"  
if possible: trip to Kashmiri groceries during class time

\textit{expressions of food knowledge} (1.5 weeks)

15 Tu 4/23  \textit{independent project presentations}

16 Tu 4/30  Concluding discussion, evaluations, snacks  
& any remaining \textit{independent project presentations}  
\textbf{** due date for written report on independent project **}
In keeping with University-wide concerns to assess learning outcomes in undergraduate courses, the religion department advises all students of the following goals. You will learn:
- to understand better what we mean by "religion" and to think more critically about the subject;
- to become more aware of a diversity of perspectives within the study of religion;
- to know and understand better diverse manifestations of religion within human cultures and societies, and be able to describe and interpret them.
Your grades in this course, based on written and classroom performance, will reflect your achievement of these goals, at the broadest level.

IMPORTANT NOTICES REGARDING FAITH TRADITION OBSERVANCES, DISABILITY, INTEGRITY AND COURTESY: PLEASE READ CAREFULLY

faith tradition observances  SU’s religious observances policy recognizes the diversity of faiths represented among the campus community and protects the rights of students, faculty, and staff to observe religious holy days according to their tradition. Under the policy, students are provided an opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirements that may be missed due to a religious observance provided they notify their instructors before the end of the second week of classes. For fall and spring semesters, an online notification process is available through MySlice/Student Services/Enrollment/My Religious Observances from the first day of class until the end of the second week of class. If you need to miss any class session of "Eat, Feed, Fast" during the spring semester due to a faith tradition observance, please make sure to take care of filing your notification(s) immediately.
http://supolicies.syr.edu/emp_ben/religious_observance.htm

disability Students who are in need of disability-related academic accommodations must register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS), 804 University Avenue, Room 309, 315-443-4498. Students with authorized disability-related accommodations should provide a current Accommodation Authorization Letter from ODS to the instructor and review those accommodations with the instructor. Accommodations, such as exam administration, are not provided retroactively; therefore, planning for accommodations as early as possible is necessary. For further information, see http://disabilityservices.syr.edu

academic integrity The Syracuse University Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the Policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about instructor and general academic expectations with regard to proper citation of sources in written work. The policy also governs the integrity of work submitted in exams and assignments as well as the veracity of signatures on attendance sheets and other verifications of participation in class activities. Serious sanctions can result from academic dishonesty of any sort. Students in REL/ANT/SAS 400 found violating academic integrity in any aspect of their class work will receive the grade F for that assignment. Students have a right to appeal. Please see http://academicintegrity.syr.edu/

academic courtesy All students are expected to follow simple rules of academic courtesy to fellow students and instructors. Please come to class on time to avoid disrupting the class; for the same reason, please do not leave and return while class is in session. Once class begins, you must refrain from personal conversations. You must put away all non-course reading materials (e.g. newspapers). Normal practice is to turn off and put away all electronic devices unless they are specifically required to access course materials; if that is the case, inform instructor. Please avoid premature preparations to leave class; your instructor will let you know when class is over. Eating is not allowed during class. You may be asked to leave the class for the day if you do not follow these rules.
recommended readings available on Blackboard as PDFs


some recommended books