Course Outline
FOLK 267: Food and Culture

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January 3 to April 3, 2007
CE 320

Calendar description
An examination of the role food plays in traditional and contemporary culture. Topics to include food as material culture, food and economy, food and the environment, the food and drink in ritual and custom, food and dietary taboo, culinary tourism, and traditional foodways in contemporary culture. Fieldwork and/or archival work required.

Required Texts
At the Bookstore

Supplied Readings

Evaluation
Research Assignment 30%
Fieldwork Assignment (inc. 5% for presentation) 45%
Reading Responses 2 x 5% 10%
Final Exam 15%

Assignments
Research assignment Due February 28
Write an essay on ONE of the topics listed below. Always define the concepts and terms you use. Draw your illustrations from the coursework, related readings, and from your own experience. Develop your points in as much detail and depth as possible. See the attached listing of CBU library resources that can assist you in your work. Anticipated length: 8-10 pages double-spaced (exclusive of bibliography).
• Take a quotidian food from your diet and discuss it according to where the constituent ingredients come from, how they are produced and processed, and through which channels they arrived at your Cape Breton dinner table.

• Is there such a thing as ‘Cape Breton’ food? How does it differ from – and how is it similar to – the food of other regions? What makes it ‘Cape Breton’?

• Identify a food that you did not, could not, or would not eat in your past, and explain the processes by which it has entered your food repertoire. Conversely, identify a food that you do not, can not, or will not eat now and explain the processes of its exit.

• Identify a food that is ‘necessary’ for the proper observance of a custom (a ritual, a calendar custom, a rite of passage, etc.). Trace its origins both in a larger, historical context and in your own personal history.

• Contrast a typical meal/food event that you may prepare for ‘intimates’ (friends, family) with one you may prepare for ‘strangers’ (important guests, potential romantic partners, etc.). What constitutes ‘special occasion’ food and why?

Fieldwork assignment / essay Due March 30
Conduct a short ethnographic exercise in which you observe and participate in a food event, documenting as much of the process as you are able through fieldnotes, subsequent interviews with participants, photography, etc. An essay will provide a synthesis of your research, in which you should describe the food event from conception to culmination, locate it within the larger food repertoire of the particular group and the group’s socio-cultural tradition, and relate it to other cultural performances. Students should consult and cite the relevant literature for analogous food performances in different contexts. A short presentation (approx. ten minutes) at the end of the semester will allow for discussion prior to the assignment being handed in. Anticipated length: 10-12 pages double-spaced (exclusive of bibliography).

Reading response Due on the day of the assigned reading
At the beginning of the semester students will sign up to act as discussion leaders for two of the assigned readings. They are to provide a summary of the reading (200-300 words) which they may consult in the class time discussions, as they can be called on for their specific response to that day’s reading.

Each response will also be posted – uncorrected by me – on the class blog (folklore267.blogspot.com) as a study guide and reference for your classmates: you should therefore aim at distilling the main points of the article into sharp relief. Responses can be e-mailed to me ahead of time or on the day due.

Final Exam
Multiple-choice and short answer questions based on readings and lectures, written in exam period.
Course Breakdown and Reading Schedule

Unit 1: What is foodways?
    January 3 – Introduction
    January 5 – Yoder, “Folk Cookery” (attached)

Food and Culture

Unit 2: Food, Meaning and Voice
    January 10 – Mead, “The Changing Significance of Food”
    January 12 – Douglas, “Deciphering a Meal”

Unit 3: Commensality and Fasting
    January 17 – Meigs, “Food as a Cultural Construction”
    January 19 – Bynum, “Fast, Feast, and Flesh”
    January 24 – Devault, “Conflict and Deference”

Unit 4: Food, Body and Culture
    January 31 – Sobo, “The Sweetness of Fat”

Unit 5: The Political Economy of Food
    February 2 – Allison, “Japanese Mothers and Obentōs”
    February 7 – Goody, “Industrial Food”
    February 9 – Mintz, “Time, Sugar, and Sweetness”
    February 14 – Richardson, “What is it About Chocolate?” (attached)

Culinary Tourism
    February 16 – Long, “Culinary Tourism: A Folkloristic Perspective”

Unit 6: Public and Commercial Contexts
    February 28 – Molz, “Tasting an Imagined Thailand”
    March 2 – Pilcher, “From ‘Montezuma’s Revenge’ to ‘Mexican Truffles’”

Unit 7: Private and Domestic Contexts
    March 7 – Rudy, “Of Course, in Guatemala, Bananas are Better”
    March 9 – Rotkovitz, “Koshering the Melting Pot”

Unit 8: Constructed and Emerging Contexts
    March 13 – Bentley, “From Culinary Other to Mainstream America”
    March 15 – Wilson, “Pass the Tofu, Please”

Presentations March 20-27
Review March 30
Resources at CBU’s Library

A good enough place to start

**Foodways sources**


**Journals**

*Anthropology of Food* (online only: www.aofood.org)  
*Béaloideas*  
*Canadian Folklore canadien* (becomes *Ethnologies*)  
*Culture & Tradition*  
*Ethnologies* (continues *Canadian Folklore canadien*)  
*Folk life*  
*Folklore*  
*Folklore Forum.*  
*Food and Foodways: History and Culture of Human Nourishment* (online)  
*International Folklore Review.*  
*Journal of American Folklore* (available online)  
*Journal of Folklore Research.*  
*Keystone Folklore*  
*Medieval Folklore.*  
*Ulster Folklore*  
*Western Folklore*

**Navigating the Library**

The Library of Congress numbers for foodways are GT 2850 to GT 2999; the numbers TX 341 to TX 953 cover such topics as ‘Nutrition; Foods and food supply,’ ‘Cookery,’ ‘Dining-room service,’ ‘Hospitality industry,’ and ‘Taverns, barrooms, and saloons’; whereas HD 1401 to HD 2210 is devoted to agriculture as an industry, and HD 9000 to 9495 to agriculture as a trade, all of S is devoted to agriculture as a science, with subclasses SB (‘Plant culture’), SF (‘Animal Culture’), SH (‘Aquaculture’) and SK (‘Hunting sports’) being possibly relevant; RA601–602 concerns ‘Food and food supply in relation to public health’; and, just for fun, BJ 2021 to BJ 2078 covers ‘Etiquette of entertaining’ (of which there is only one book in our library).

The best way to use a library is to go to it and look through the shelves. It seems like silly advice, but, whereas online resources will help you with precise searches, browsing the tangible holdings will help you with a more heuristic approach.