

A Proposal
You Eat What You Are: Food and Culture in America
A Freshman Seminar

“Ever wonder how the English managed to build an empire on which the sun never set? I’d like to think it was a big hearty breakfast” (*The Biology of Success*, “ Bob Arnot, MD, p59).

The relationship between health and adequate food intake is well established, especially for infants and young adults. Interestingly, the food selection and consumption by an individual is not simply a matter of preference, but also markedly affected by one’s cultural (Hertzler, Wenkam and Standal 1982), socio-economic, religious (Bynum 1997), environmental and technological (Goody 1997) heritage. Thus, “the topic of food and culture is inherently complex” (Kittler and Sucher 1989). The primary purpose of this seminar is to delineate the intricate relationships that exist between food and culture and their effect on food consumption patterns of an individual in a culturally diverse society.

Purpose: The rationale for offering a Freshman Research Seminar that focuses on Food and Culture include:

- Selection of good foods and proper eating habits play a critical role in both the short and long term health of an individual.
- The subject of food is one of the few themes in freshman education program that transgresses all disciplinary barriers.
- Relationships between food and culture can be examined with relative ease from various perspectives, including, but not limited to, anthropology, sociology, nutrition, business, engineering, food technology, psychology, performing arts, and medicine.
- Food choices and quality appear prominently in the complaint lists of many freshman students who reside on university campuses. Thus, a research seminar that focuses on the relationship between food and culture is likely to attract considerable interest and contribute to the enhancement of freshman experience at OSU.

Number of Students expected to participate: 18 students maximum per class.

Suggested quarters for teaching this course:

It is advisable to teach this course twice a year: Fall and Winter every year, Spring quarter if demanded. Students participating in this program will be encouraged to participate in the Denman Research Forum held annually on this campus during spring quarter.

Credit hours: 1 credit for lecture credits. This class meets Monday or Wednesday for 48 minutes.

Required Textbook: 1) **Food and Culture in America** by Pamela Kittler and Kathryn Sucher

Course Objectives:

1. Students should gain a better understanding of relationships between food and culture.
2. Students would build awareness of their own limitations with reference to diverse foods and cultures.
3. Students are expected to develop strategies to cope with various cultures and foods in a culturally diverse society.
4. Cultural immersion programs are designed to enhance cultural experiences of the participating students.

How learning will be structured: The proposed course will consist of two major components, viz., Seminar and Cultural Immersion Projects

Week	Topics
1	- Introduction of the course & discussion of the syllabus - Food and Culture in America: Cultural heritage of American food habits – Chap 1
2	- Food and Culture in America: Cultural heritage of American food habits – Chap 1 – - Project update and due dates set.
3	Food and Religion: Religions of the world. Cultural aspects of food and religion – Chap 2
4	Ethnicity and Food: Euro-Americans and their food habits Chap 4 Discussion: Beef and America – How did we get here?
5	Ethnicity and Food: Native Americans and African Americans and their food habits Chap 3 and 5 Video Presentation –
6	Ethnicity and Food: Asian Americans and Latinos and their food habits - Chap 6 and 7
7	Ethnicity and Food: People of Mediterranean, Middle East and their food habits Chap 8
8	Discussion of Cultural Immersion projects – sharing students’ experiences.
9	Evolution of American Eating habits – American Dining Etiquettes presentation Guest Presentation
10	Tastes of the world – tasting selected foods from around the world (brought by volunteer students and the teacher). Video Presentation –
Finals Week	Critical Review Papers Due TODAY

1. Cultural Immersion Projects :

- At the beginning of the quarter, students will inventory their own food habits and personal preferences with reference to cultural diversity and food habits. During the quarter, the class will be assigned four ‘*cultural immersion*’ projects to enhance

students' awareness of cultural diversity. These projects are designed to permit exploration of food and culture by participation and experience.

- Examples of Cultural Immersion projects relating food and culture may include topics such as:
 - 1) Visiting an ethnic restaurant which was never been visited before by a participating student.
 - 2) Tasting a nonalcoholic beverage of an ethnic origin.
 - 3) Visit a vegetarian / vegan restaurant in Columbus (faculty member would provide the names and locations if necessary).
 - 4) Prepare and bring an ethnic dish of one's choice to the class and explain the cultural significance of it. Each student will have an opportunity to taste the presented foods.
 - 5) Each student may see a movie/play from a foreign country and share one's reflections with the class. Course instructor will make an effort to provide titles of selected movies or students may pick a movie of their choice with instructor's approval.
- After the exploratory participation project, students will share their experiences and their reflections of the 'cultural immersion' project with the class. In addition, each student will write a three-page summary illustrating their experiences with new cultures they have explored and the adaptation strategies to those cultures.

Guest Presentations / Site visits: To enhance students' learning experience, the instructor plans to arrange one or two site visits to food processing plants or cultural centers of academic interest located within Columbus metropolitan area. If that is not feasible, guest speakers may be invited to the class to discuss the topic.

Supported by Carmen: Course will be supported by Carmen.

Course evaluation and grading:

Enrolled students will be evaluated on their critical thinking as demonstrated in review reports and their ability to apply various academic theories in diverse cultural settings.

Critical review reports (5 papers x 20 points each) = 100 points

Cultural Immersion (4 topics. x 25 points each) = 100 points

Class attendance and participation* = 50 points

Total points = 350 points

* = Emphasis is placed on attendance and participation since this is a freshman course and students need to learn the value of participating in class discussions.

Grading policies follow university guidelines for Freshman Research Seminars (A to E).

A+ = Not available

B+ = 89.99-87.00

C+ = 79.99 - 77.00

D+ = 69.99 - 67.00

A = 93.00 or greater

B = 86.99 - 83.00

C = 76.99 - 73.00

D = 66.99 - 63.00

A- = 92.99 - 90.0

B- = 82.99 - 80.00

C- = 72.99 - 70.00

E = 62.99 or less.

Faculty member and past experience on this topic:

The author has developed and taught a similar course titled “**Multi-cultural Food Experience**” for three years at another major university. The enrollment during the first semester was twenty-two. By the third semester, the student enrollment was capped at 80 with a waiting list.

The faculty member has a multidisciplinary academic background. He holds degrees in Chemistry, Biology, Food Science, and Hospitality Management with a focus on Marketing. He has research grounding in natural sciences as well as social sciences. He has an established research track record and ongoing research agenda. He is a past member of Institute of Food Technology, and currently active in various hospitality management organizations with a focus on foodservice management. In addition, he has over 12 years of management experience in the foodservice industry.

His research interests include food habits and cultural differences. One of his papers titled “*Cultural Heritage of American Food Habits*” was published in the *Journal of Marriage and Family*. During the past three years, at OSU, he guided over 30 undergraduate research projects on various topics. Currently, he guiding several graduate students on various topics related to food and food management. He plans to enrich freshman seminar class discussions by sharing the results from his current research on this topic.

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by

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