Andalusian Gastronomy: A Window to Spanish Culture

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Gastronomy is one of the most essential cultural phenomena defining any culture in general, and this is particularly true of Spain’s most southern province, Andalusia. This course aims to examine the complex world of gastronomy through an interdisciplinary lens with a dedicated focus on Andalusian cuisine, while also looking other Spanish regions’ culinary customs.

We will explore the history and tradition of food from an anthropological perspective and study the different theoretical approaches of early and modern anthropologists and gastronomic specialists along with their take on food studies. The pillar ingredients of the Spanish diet will inform the narrative of the course and will set the scene for a complex analysis of the gastronomic and cultural heritage of Andalusia.

Our objective will be to uncover the mystery behind how cuisine and food have created identities and defined individuals and communities in Spanish culture from antiquity to modernity. Our historical points of reference will be the early Mediterranean economic and political relationships (Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Greeks, Romans, Visigoths), the strong Arabic influence in Andalusia, the first Trans-Atlantic journeys and the political turmoil of the 20th Century.

In this course, we will tackle the differences between eating and dining. We will push the subjective boundaries of what authentic food/cuisine means and the social agents who decide that – is it the Spaniards themselves, or is it the tourists? We will question the very notion of food, the social status aspects and gender norms that surround it, and how these have transformed over the years, ending the course with a look at Spain’s renowned chefs and phenomena such as molecular gastronomy.

COURSE STRUCTURE:

In the virtual classroom, we will talk about different aspects of Andalusian gastronomy, such as the use of local ingredients and their production and history. We will learn about the tapa culture, the role of food in the culture, nutrition, aspects of the "Mediterranean diet", Spanish cuisine’s awards and recognitions, quality criteria, etc. Twice a week we will meet outside the virtual class. On Tuesdays, we will have virtual/ live stream visits to key cultural monuments and sites. On Thursdays, we will hold cooking workshops via Zoom featuring a chef from one of Seville’s cooking schools.

Course will be taught in English. All readings will be in English.
EVALUATION:

Active class participation – 10%
Attendance, active participation in discussions, exercises, individual or group work will all be taken into consideration.

2 critical responses – 30% (15% each)
In Weeks 2 and 3, students will be required to hand in a critical response reflecting on the topic discussed in class during that week. (500 words each)

Oral presentation – 10% (5-10 minutes)
Each student will present one of the readings during the class it has been assigned for.

Midterm – 20%
In-class, 90 minutes.

Final exam – 30%
In-class, 180 minutes.

LECTURE SCHEDULE AND READINGS:

- ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON FOOD: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Class 1. Introduction: Tapas in Andalusia, Food from Spain.


Class 2. The Anthropology of Food: A Critical Perspective. Readings:

- Levi-Strauss, Claude. ‘The Culinary Triangle’

- Barthes, Roland. ‘Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption’
  https://scholarblogs.emory.edu/sustainablefooditaly/files/2016/07/rolandbarthes.pdf

- Virtual tour/ Live stream visit: Torre del Oro, Torre de la Plata and Barrio Santa Cruz.

Class 3. The Anthropological and Historical Perspectives of Food. Readings:

- Mintz, Sidney. “Time, Sugar and Sweetness”

- Watch: Claude Fischler - Anthropology of Food:
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j8BONu3cn6E

- Watch: Andalusian breakfast. Visit a local cafeteria and interview the bartender. By the Instructor.

- INTERTWINED CUISINES: HISTORY & IDENTITY

Class 5. The Three Cultures of the Mediterranean Sea and their influence on Spanish Food: Arab, Christian and Jewish cuisine. Readings:

DUE DATE: CRITICAL RESPONSE 1.


Class 6. The Encounter with the New World: The First Transatlantic Products and how they changed the Spanish Diet. Readings:


- Virtual tour/ Live stream visit: Food Market Las Setas.

Class 7. The Social Function of Food. Readings:

- Cervantes, Miguel de. Don Quixote of La Mancha Part I Chapter 11 Of What Befell Don Quixote with Certain Goatherds.

- Douglas, Mary - ‘The Abomination of Leviticus’


Class 8. Hands on experience: Practical cooking class. Virtual/ Live stream.

- THE PRINCIPAL INGREDIENTS OF ANDALUSIAN CUISINE: ELABORATION AND SOCIOCULTURAL EVOLUTION

Class 9. Pillars of the Spanish diet. Readings:
MIDTERM – 90 MINUTES


Class 10. The olive, the grape and the pig: a gastronomical context. Readings:

- DUE DATE: CRITICAL RESPONSE 2


- Virtual tour/ Live stream visit: Góngora Winery.

Class 11. How we eat. Readings:


- Alison Leitch - ‘Slow Food and the Politics of “Virtuous Globalization”’ in Food and Culture - a Reader.


- CUISINE FROM SPAIN’S REGIONS

Class 13. Andalucía, Extremadura and San Sebastian. Readings:


Class 14. Master Chefs and Michelin Stars. Readings:


- Watch: Ferran Adrià & elBulli: the beginning of Creative Cuisine https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0U0ZM2ljg2k


- Watch: Dani García will leave the “haute cuisine” a year after getting his third Michelin Star https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UhtFxlQnQGo

- Virtual tour/ Live stream visit: Basilippo Olive Oil Factory. Olive Oil Tasting.

Class 15. Culinary Tourism: Readings

- Sutton, David. “Cooking Skills, the Senses, and Memory: The fate of practical knowledge”.


Class 16. FINAL EXAM.

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**ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED READINGS:**

Geertz, Clifford. ‘Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture.’


Pollan, Michael - ‘The Omnivore’s Dillema’.

Lane, Christel - ‘Diners: In Search of Gustatory Pleasure or Symbolic Meaning.’

Harris, Marvin 1987 *Food and Evolution: Toward a Theory of Human Food Habits* (editor)

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305429943_The_Biocultural_Perspective_in_Nutritional_Anthropology


The Gestation of Modern Gastronomy in Spain (1900-1936)  


Watch (for Spanish speakers): Comando Actualidad – Al pan pan, RTVE (audio in Spanish)  