

SCHOOL OF ARTS & SCIENCES PROSPECTUS FALL 2023

FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR

FREN/COML/AFRC/EALC 00xx.401

DECOLONIZING FRENCH FOOD

Subject to change**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Wine and cheese, baguettes and croissants, multiple courses and fresh ingredients straight from the market—these are the internationally recognized hallmarks of French food. Yet, even as the practices surrounding the mythical French table have been deemed worthy of a place on UNESCO’s World Heritage List since 2010, culinary traditions in France remain persistently rooted in legacies of colonialism that are invisible to many. In order to “decolonize” French food, this seminar turns to art, literature, and film, as well as archival documents such as advertisements, maps, and cookbooks. In what ways do writers and filmmakers use food to interrogate the human, environmental, and cultural toll that French colonialism has taken on the world? How do their references to food demonstrate the complex cultural creations, exchanges, and asymmetries that have arisen from legacies of colonialism?

We will interpret artworks, read literature (in English or in translation), and watch films (subtitled in English) that span the twentieth and twenty-first centuries by authors and directors from across the Francosphere—from Haiti, Guadeloupe, and Martinique in the Caribbean; to Mauritius in the Indian Ocean; from the Vietnamese diaspora in France, Canada, and the United States; to North, Central, and West Africa. Just as food can be examined from many angles, our discussions will focus on art, literature, and film, but also take into account perspectives from the fields of history, anthropology, and environmental studies. Moreover, we will employ the theoretical tools supplied by food studies, feminist and gender studies, critical race studies, and postcolonial studies.

LINGUISTIC EXPECTATIONS

A knowledge of the French language, while certainly useful, is not required for this course. All texts will be read in translation and all films will be subtitled in English.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Impart an overview of French colonial, anticolonial, and postcolonial histories and literatures that illustrates the complex relations between artistic production, society, and culture.
2. Familiarize students with the fundamental intellectual and ethical intersecting debates of critical race, gender, feminist, and postcolonial theories, particularly as these relate to literary and visual analyses and food studies.
3. Build reading and analytical skills through weekly readings coupled with written reflections to be submitted to the instructor prior to class.
4. Broaden and exercise specific writing and critical-thinking skills through targeted in-class activities based on readings.
5. Practice drafting, time management, and editorial skills through the elaboration of a formal academic paper, due in a series of incremental assignments throughout the quarter and to be completed in consultation with instructor, as well as with fellow students via peer review.
6. Develop research methodologies and citation skills through the elaboration of a formal academic paper and a bibliography.
7. Hone public-speaking skills through a final presentation during the colloquium.

COURSE STRUCTURE

For the Fall 2023 semester, all sections of the course are scheduled in person. The class will meet twice a week for 90 minutes. The semester-long calendar will be detailed in the course syllabus to be published at a later date. Detailed weekly programs will be posted on Canvas in order to inform students of what they can expect to do every class meeting and what they need to do outside of class meetings (in preparation for class or as post-class assignments). Office hours will be bookable online in order to give everyone more opportunities to receive personal attention.

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

Active Participation: Active participation demonstrates respect for your fellow students, your instructor, and the people whose stories you will learn about this quarter. It is essential that you attend every class, complete all reading and media assignments ahead of time, and bring all necessary materials with you to class. You are expected to share your ideas and support them with examples from course assignments. An important aspect of active participation is listening carefully to others, especially when their interpretations of course material differ from your own. If you anticipate that past experiences will inhibit your ability to discuss a specific piece of course content, you are invited to bring up your

reservations with the instructor outside of class and are ultimately trusted to make your own decision.

Weekly Assignments: Each week, you are required to complete short assignments to prepare for class discussion. Please see the weekly programs for each week's requirements. In almost every case, these are worksheets designed to help you engage critically and thoughtfully with the readings and media assignments. Sample worksheets ("Scholarly Source Worksheet" and "Media Worksheet") are included at the end of this syllabus, and they are available for download as Microsoft Word documents on Canvas. I will also periodically ask you to one-page reflections on the works we examine to allow you space to think and write freely.

Research Project: Your final project is a research paper about food and the (post)colonial Francophone world as represented by literature and/or film. Successful projects will address a pressing research question and engage primary and secondary sources. You have a series of assignments to guide you through the research and writing process. Further guidelines will be given throughout the quarter.

- SHORT PROPOSAL OF RESEARCH TOPIC (DUE WEEK 5): Write a brief (100 words) statement of your proposed research topic. Introduce the primary sources, the geographic area(s), and the type(s) of literature and/or film you will be researching.
- RESEARCH QUESTION AND PRELIMINARY BIBLIOGRAPHY (DUE WEEK 7): A good research question is the key to a good paper. Submit your research question and a preliminary annotated bibliography in MLA style (at least 5 sources).
- ARTICLE (DUE WEEK 10): Write a short article (5 pages) that summarizes your project and your argument for a non-academic audience.
- ORAL PRESENTATION (WEEK 14): Prepare a 5-minute presentation with a Powerpoint presenting your research to the class and invited guests.
- FINAL PAPER (DUE WEEK 15): Your final paper (10 pages) is an expanded version of the article submitted in Week 10. Now writing for an academic audience, explain your theoretical and methodological framework in more detail. Reference additional texts to further nuance your argument. Include in-depth analysis of multiple literary texts or films.
- *Creative Project Option:* You may choose to present your research in a format other than a research paper. Options include digital storytelling, oral history collection, musical performance or composition, film, interactive map, etc. *You must obtain approval for your creative project idea by Week 5.*

GRADING CRITERIA

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

Scholarly Engagement with Peers and Instructor: 50% of final grade

Active Participation: 20%

Weekly Assignments: 30%

Final Research Paper: 50% of final grade

Meeting with Prof. Collins: 5%

Short Proposal of Research Topic: 5%

Research Question and Preliminary Annotated Bibliography: 5%

Article (5 pages): 10%

Oral Presentation: 10%

Final Paper (10 pages): 15%

COURSE MATERIALS

You will be expected to acquire 4 books (average cost for a new edition is \$19/each for a total cost around \$75, average cost of a used edition is \$6/each for a total cost around \$24). All required books will also be on reserve in the library. The rest of the course materials will be available for download on Canvas. If you have concerns about acquiring course materials, please do not hesitate to let the instructor know.

POSSIBLE COURSE TOPICS

1. Food and Gastronomy in the French Nation

- Watch: "[Le repas gastronomique des Français](#)" / "[Gastronomic Meal of the French](#)" (2009) by the Mission Française du Patrimoine et des Cultures Alimentaires

2. Representation, Food, and the Colonies

- Read "Introduction," *Orientalism* (1978) by Edward Said
- Watch: *La France est un empire* / "France is an empire" (1939) directed by Jean d'Agraives

3. Colonial Foods at Home: Advertising Food and Teaching Race in France

- Read: "'Y'a bon Banania': Ethics and cultural criticism in the colonial context" (2000) by Anne Donadey
- Examine: Colonial ephemera archived at Bibliothèque nationale de France, Archives nationales d'outre-mer, and the Getty Research Institute.

4. Literal and Literary Cannibalism in Anticolonial Writings

- Read: *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (1939) / *Journal of a Homecoming* (2017) by Aimé Césaire, translated by N. Gregson Davis
- Read: Excerpts of *Le Grand Camouflage* (1941-1945) / *The Great Camouflage* (2012) by Suzanne Césaire, translated by Keith Walker

5. Slavery, Sugar, and the Black Body

- Watch: *Rue Cases-Nègres / Sugar Cane Alley* (1983) by Euzhan Palcy (based on Joseph Zobel's 1950 novel)
- Examine: "[A Subtlety or the Marvelous Sugar Baby](#)" (2014) by Kara Walker
- Read: "Kara Walker's Blood Sugar: *A Subtlety or the Marvelous Sugar Baby*" (2014) by Valérie Loichot

6. Environmental Devastation and Food Security

- Read: *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle* (1972) / *The Bridge of Beyond* (2013) by Simone Schwarz-Bart, translated by Barbara Bray
- Read: "Feeding the Nation" in *French Beans and Food Scares* (2004) by Susanne Freidberg

7. (Post)Colonial Continuities: Food, Servitude, Exploitation

- Read: Excerpts of "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1998) by Gayatri Spivak
- Watch: *La Noire de... / Black Girl* (1966) by Ousmane Sembène

8. Consuming the Colonial "Other"

- Read: "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance" (1992) by bell hooks
- Watch: *La Graine et le mulet / The Secret of the Grain* (2007) by Abdellatif Kechiche

9. Postcolonial Cooking and Writing: Women's Recipistolary Writing

- Read: "Consider the Recipe" (2013) by Kyla Tompkins

- Read: *Victoire, les saveurs et les mots* (2006) / *Victoire: My Mother's Mother* (2014) by Maryse Condé, translated by Richard Philcox

10. Postcolonial Migration and Cultural Creation

- Read: "Métissage et créolisation" (1995) by Édouard Glissant
- Read: *Mãn* (2013/2015) by Kim Thúy, translated by Sheila Fischman

11. Consumption and Neocolonial Capitalism

- Read: "Eating their Words" (2014) by Celia Britton
- Read: *Manger l'autre* (2018) / *Eat the Other* by Ananda Devi, translated by Jeffrey Zuckerman

Media Worksheet

Create a bibliographic entry for this source in MLA Citation Style.

Who is the creator of the piece?

What is the social and cultural context of the piece?

What is the genre?

What is the piece about? Who are the protagonists? What happens?

Please describe the piece in your own words. You may comment on form, tone, narrative, perspective, language, style, diction, syntax, style, audiovisual or literary techniques, imagery, and themes, as appropriate. (3-4 sentences)

What strikes you as interesting, strange, important, or innovative about this piece? Has this piece affected what you thought about the topic, or not? How so and why?

What discussion questions does this piece raise? (2-3 questions)

Scholarly Source Worksheet

Create a bibliographic entry for this reading in MLA Citation Style.

What are the author's qualifications and background?

What is the topic of the reading?

What is the author's thesis?

What evidence does the author provide to support their thesis?

What is the author's methodology? In other words, how did the author conduct their research?

What academic works does the author cite (histories, theories,)? Do they critique these sources? How do these works fit into the author's argument? (4-5 sentences)

What strikes you as interesting, strange, important, or innovative about this reading? Has this reading affected what you thought about the topic, or not? How so and why?

What discussion questions does this reading raise? (2-3 questions)

What words or concepts do you need to look up? (Include at least 3 words/concepts and succinct definitions)