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Religion And Food (RELG 019) Syllabus

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Religion 19 First-year seminar: RELIGION AND FOOD

Fall 2022
Pearson 210 x8041

Professor Chireau/ychirea1
Office hours Mondays 10-12

Note: this is a provisional schedule. You must log on to Moodle to see the complete schedule for this course. In order to use Moodle and the class website, you must be enrolled in the course.

Religion and Food is an introduction to the academic study of religion, in which we focus on food as the primary motif for investigating the world's religious traditions. We will read cases from Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Mesoamerican, Native American and African-based traditions in different periods and places, and from different points of view. The driving questions that will **consume** us this semester are: what is Religion? How does one study "it?" How is food conceived in the study of Religion? This includes metaphors of eating, styles of eating, material substances, not-eating/fasting, diet practices, rituals of food service, food arts, and other concepts.

Course goals: By the end of the term, you will be able to think much more broadly about Religion in both its theoretical and historical aspects, and you will have attained general religious literacy. In viewing the ways that food has been treated in traditions in both contemporary and ancient periods, you will begin to understand **why** and **how** these ideas are used to make sense of the world...that is what religion is all about. If you engage the course materials thoughtfully, by the end of the semester you will have acquired a helpful "toolbox" for making sense of ideas,

practices, and experiences that are strange, mysterious, or otherwise incomprehensible to most people. You will gain a respect for the fascinating worlds of sacred meaning and value that are created and inhabited by human beings no matter how different from your own they might be.

REQUIREMENTS:

Religion 19 is a seminar, which means that it is reading and discussion-intensive. You are expected to participate in every session. You are expected to stay current on the readings. It is absolutely necessary that you come to class prepared, so that you can argue for or against the merits of the assigned text(s), and offer your informed opinions on the issues. If you do not understand something that you have read, or if you have questions, PLEASE ask for clarification. There are no "dumb" questions, ever.

Requirements: 1200-1500 word midterm paper (25%); group presentation on a religion theorist or a religious tradition (20%); active in-class participation; (15%); participation in group food-related project (15%); final exam (25%).

Criteria for evaluation in this course: 1) accuracy and precision in oral expression and written prose; 2) scholarship and research; 3) creativity, critical judgment, and imagination; 4) contribution to the class discussions; and 5) timely completion of written assignments

Food allergies and sensitivity: Religion 19 requires student participation in preparing, serving, and sampling a variety of food items. Please let me know *before* class if you have any food restrictions so that I may provide appropriate substitutes or accommodations.

Required text: Daniel Pals, NINE THEORIES OF RELIGION, 2014 (for purchase)

Readings, including articles and book excerpts, can be found on Moodle or in general reserve. However, there is always a possibility that library books will not be available for you when you want them. I SUGGEST THAT YOU CHECK TRIPOD EACH WEEK FOR READING AVAILABILITY AND PLAN YOUR SCHEDULE CAREFULLY. DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE. I recommend that you spend a minimum of 3-4 hours per week on reading and home for this course. Please contact me if there you have problems acquiring any of the online materials, but ITS-Help Desk is always for technical assistance, or for help signing into TRIPOD or Moodle off campus.

SCHEDULE

9/2 WELCOME! Introduction to the course.

9/9 EATING THE BODY

The dietary habits of medieval Christians.

9/16 MAGIC AND RELIGION

Is magic the earliest form of religion?

9/21 INDIGENOUS FOODWAYS

Campus foraging with Lars Rasmussen.

9/30

10/7 SCIENCE AND RELIGION

Consuming Graham Crackers & Grape Juice.

10/14 FALL BREAK

10/21 AZTECA COSMOLOGY

Human bodies as divine food.

10/28 VODOU IN THE KITCHEN

Eat and drink with African spirits.

11/4 ALTARS & DOMESTIC RELIGION

Feeding the dead on All Souls Day.

11/11 INGESTING PLANT DEITIES

Sacred plants are people too.

11/18 BLACK MUSLIM CULINARY

Race and dessert priorities in America.

11/25 THANKSGIVING SPECIAL

American Civil Religion.

12/2 Last class and review for final exam.