

Dear Students,

Welcome! I want to take a moment to set expectations. Although an intriguing course title, I hope it also conveys the meaningful exploration of the topics we will do. The material we cover is intellectually rigorous and will require your active engagement, critical thinking, and consistent effort.

To succeed in this course:

- Be prepared to complete all readings and assignments thoughtfully and on time.
- Actively participate in discussions, as they are a significant component of your learning experience.
- Approach the material with an open mind and a willingness to engage deeply with complex topics.

The workload and expectations are designed to challenge you and help you grow as a scholar and thinker. If you put in the effort, you will find this course rewarding and enriching. I have added the syllabus overview so you can get an idea of what this course will cover.

Looking forward to learning together,

Professor AJ

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Food and Sex, Culture and Power

Spring 2025
Monday & Wednesday 8:30–9:50 AM
THH 211

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Office Hours:

Mondays 12:00–1:00 PM
Thursdays 10:00–11:00 AM (Zoom)

Book here: <https://calendly.com/aaljames>

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Feeding and fornicating are said to be two of our most basic human drives: we eat to survive, we have sex to multiply. These primal instincts, often regarded as fundamentally biological processes, are far from basic: they are forms of human expression, intricately intertwined with social, cultural, and political dimensions that shape our perceptions and experiences of them. Throughout this course, we will engage in a critical examination of the social and cultural influences on our views and encounters with food and sex. Students will learn to identify the similarities and differences in how various societies and cultures regulate, condone, and prohibit eating and copulating, peeling back the layers to reveal the often-invisible threads of power woven into the fabric of our everyday lives. Students will learn ethnographic methods including interviewing and participant observation to analyze how both

eating and sex are not only personal experiences but also socially constructed activities, shaped by power dynamics, cultural norms, and economic forces.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course is a GE Seminar in Social Analysis. After completing this course, students will be able to:

- Apply ethnographic methods of interviewing and participant observation to the study of food and sex in their cultural and social contexts;
- Assess the role of qualitative data in explaining complex social phenomena related to food and sexuality across diverse communities;
- Demonstrate a deepened awareness of how food and sex are not only essential components of human existence but also potent sites of expressing identity and exerting power within broader organizations, institutions, and social and cultural settings, paying particular attention to intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality, and disability; and,
- Think critically and creatively about various media (scholarly and popular texts, films, digital content) and discuss them in a thoughtful and informed manner, making connections between personal experiences and broader societal trends.

COURSE POLICIES & EXPECTATIONS

Absences. You are adults and responsible for your own learning. This course relies heavily on your participation and engagement. My policy is straightforward: if you will be absent, please notify me in advance. You do not need to provide a reason or documentation (and I kindly ask that you refrain from sharing things like ER selfies). While there are no distinctions between “excused” and “unexcused” absences, your attendance is crucial to your and your colleagues’ experience. That said, if you need support or are facing challenges, I encourage you to reach out—I’m here to help.

Academic Integrity. As members of the USC community, we are all expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. Engaging in dishonest practices not only undermines your education but also devalues the hard work of your peers and the reputation of our institution. Engaging in academic dishonesty can result in academic sanctions such as a failing grade on the assignment or in the course, or disciplinary action including suspension or expulsion from the university.

- Plagiarism. The act of presenting someone else’s work or ideas as your own is strictly prohibited. This includes copying text, ideas, images, or data from any source without proper attribution. Be sure to cite original sources when using direct quotations and paraphrasing.
- Use of Generative AI Tools. Generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, have become increasingly accessible and can assist in various academic tasks. Any use of AI must enhance your learning, not substitute it. Importantly, submitting AI-generated content as your own without proper attribution is considered academic dishonesty.
 - In this course, you must disclose your use of AI and how it contributed to your work. For instance: “ChatGPT was used to generate initial brainstorming ideas

and refine the structure of the argument.” It should not contribute meaningfully to your analysis, understanding, or voice.

- **Support Resources.** To support your academic success and uphold integrity, visiting the Writing Center is highly encouraged, and bonus points will be awarded for using this resource. You are also welcome to discuss any concerns or questions with me during office hours.

Accommodations. Please coordinate with the Office of Disability Services and Programs who can help you arrange relevant accommodations for this course.

Communication. For simple questions, email is the best way to reach me. Please allow 48 hours for a response. I will also generally arrive to class a few minutes early and stay a few minutes late if you have a quick question. For more extensive questions, please make an appointment to see me during office hours. Please sign up for a slot here to ensure you will have my undivided attention:
<https://calendly.com/aaljames>

Electronic Devices: This class is focused on learning together, so please be courteous to your colleagues by limiting the use of laptops and other digital devices to note-taking.

Exams. There is one midterm exam and one final exam, as scheduled on this syllabus. We will review in preparation for the exams in class. You will be allowed a single handwritten ‘cheat sheet’ for the exams.

Grade Disputes. Any disagreements with the grading of an assignment must be submitted by email within a week after the grade was received, specifying how an error was made in the assignment of points. There will be no makeup or extra credit assignments offered.

Lateness. All assignments must be submitted through Brightspace. Should you need extra time for reasons of illness, course assignment conflicts, or other, please let me know at least 48 hours in advance of the due date. Otherwise, late assignments will not be accepted. Exceptions will be made only for emergencies with appropriate documentation. You are responsible for tracking deadlines, checking Brightspace regularly, and seeking help proactively.

Reading and Participation. Students are expected to do the readings and come to class with thoughtful comments and reflections. This is a seminar class and your informed and enthusiastic *participation* (which goes beyond mere presence) is vital to the success of the course and your learning. You will not do well in the course if you do not read the texts, take good notes, and explore your thinking and interpretations in seminar.

- **A note on respect:** In this course, we will cover sensitive topics that intersect with race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, and more. It is essential that we maintain an environment of mutual respect and open-mindedness. Disagreements are natural in academic discussions, but please approach differing opinions with curiosity rather than judgement. Be mindful of the language you use and the perspectives of others, as they contribute to the richness of our discussions.

GRADING

Requirements	Points
In-Class Quiz	5 points
Seminar Participation	10 points
Fertile Mind	15 points
In-Class Mid-Term Exam	15 points
Dish Diaries # 1	15 points
Dish Diaries # 2	15 points
Final Exam	25 points
Total	100 points

REQUIRED TEXTS

Journal articles, book chapters, and other readings will be posted on Brightspace. For other materials, a web link will be provided on the syllabus.

Anita Mannur (2022). *Intimate Eating: Racialized Spaces and Radical Futures*. Duke University Press.
Anne Allison. (1994). *Nightwork: Sexuality, Pleasure, and Corporate Masculinity in a Tokyo Hostess Club*.
University of Chicago Press.

Edward F. Fischer and Peter Benson. (2007). *Broccoli and Desire: Global Connections and Maya Struggles in Postwar Guatemala*. Stanford University Press.

Parin Dossa. (2014). *Afghanistan Remembers: Gendered Narrations of Violence and Culinary Practices*.
University of Toronto Press.

Sabrina Strings. (2024). *The End of Love: Racism, Sexism, and the Death of Romance*. Beacon Press.

Recommended Texts

We will be reading extended or multiple excerpts of these texts, and they will be helpful to have access to.

Ashanté M. Reese. (2019). *Black Food Geographies: Race, Self-Reliance and Food Access in Washington, D.C.*
University of North Carolina Press.

Hanna Garth & Ashanté M. Reese, A. M., eds. (2020). *Black food matters: Racial justice in the wake of food justice*. University of Minnesota Press.

Jennifer C. Nash. (2014). *The Black Body in Ecstasy: Reading Race, Reading Pornography*. Duke University Press.

María Elena García. (2021). *Gastropolitics and the specter of race: Stories of capital, culture, and coloniality in Peru*. University of California Press.

Matthew Engelke. (2017). *How to Think Like an Anthropologist*. Princeton University Press.

Sarah Ives. (2017). *Steeped in Heritage: The Racial Politics of South African Rooibos Tea*. Duke University Press.