Sociology of Food
and
Mediterranean Diet
SOC 240 (3 credits)

WINTER 2024

Class Meetings: M, T, W, Th: (11am -2pm)
Room: 308
HAU: 22 Massalias Str.,
Office Hours: 2-3 & by Appointment
Athens, 10680 Greece

Instructors:

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QC STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM - GREECE

Course Description

This course explores the social, cultural, economic, and political dimensions of food production, distribution, consumption, and representation. Through a sociological lens, students will analyze the complex relationships between food, identity, power, inequality, globalization, and social change.

In addition, this course explores the Mediterranean lifestyle and diet, emphasizing its cultural, nutritional, and health aspects. Students will learn about the history, components, and benefits of the Mediterranean diet of the local Greek region, as well as how to integrate key lifestyle practices into their daily routines for overall well-being.

READING LIST – Core Texts

A. Key texts that present developed and contested approaches highly influential in sociology of food studies. (Material compiled by the instructor; it can be accessed at HAU's Blackboard. Please contact the instructors for more information)

1. *Counihan, Carole and Penney Van Esterick, eds. 2012. Food and Culture: A Reader,* 3rd ed. New York: Routledge.

B. Articles on Food and on the Mediterranean Diet and Lifestyle.

C. (Optional) A Concise History of Greece. Richard Clogg. Cambridge Press, 1999 or more recent
Introduction to Sociology Textbook - Selected Chapters
Introduction to The Mediterranean Diet and Lifestyle - Selected Chapters

Course Objectives: By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Understand key sociological theories and concepts related to food and its role in society.
- Analyze how food practices and choices are shaped by cultural, economic, and social factors.
- Critically examine issues of food access, inequality, and sustainability.
- Explore the impact of globalization on food systems and culinary practices.
- Discuss the intersection of food, identity, and social hierarchies.
- Evaluate the role of media and representation in shaping perceptions of food.
- Develop an appreciation for other cultures and their values.
- Become more globally competent citizens.

and

- Describe the cultural and geographical context of the Mediterranean region we visit.
- Explain the nutritional components and health benefits of the Mediterranean diet.
- Apply Mediterranean cooking techniques and recipes to their own meals.
- Incorporate physical activity and relaxation practices from the Mediterranean lifestyle.
- Recognize the importance of local social connections and local community engagement for well-being.
- Analyze the environmental and sustainability aspects of the Mediterranean lifestyle.
- Develop a personalized Mediterranean-inspired lifestyle plan.

II. 3 -Response Papers:

There will be a formal essay (3-5 pages - Minimum) requiring meta-reflection, which is, simply put, reflecting about reflecting. You will reread your class material and notes generated during the course and write a short essay each week about what you have learned and how your thinking has changed over time about Food, Greece, the United States, and the Mediterranean Diet.

III. PARTICIPATION

Engagement through participation will be the most important piece of your learning experience in this course. For the purposes of this course, quality participation will entail:

- being fully prepared for the day's discussion and/or activities
- engagement in discussion and/or activities
- initiate and facilitate class discussion

GRADES

The final grade will be based on:

1. Class participation and effort – 20%
2. Three (3) Response papers (one for each week) – 20% each
3. Cooking Demonstration: 10%
4. Lifestyle Plan Project: 10%

COURSE OUTLINE

January 2nd – January 24th

WEEK 1: January 2-7

Tue 2	Departure from the U.S.A.
Wed 3	**Arrival** – Travel to TBA Hotel by University's Bus and Check-In
7:30pm	Meeting at Hotel, (6th Floor Lounge)
8pm:	Welcome Dinner - TBA
Thurs 4	Breakfast at the Hotel **(All Days)**
10:30AM	Meeting at Hotel's Lobby and Short Walk to the University **(All School Days)**
11 – 2	Campus and Program Orientation at HAU
2PM	Lunch at TBA Restaurant (All School Days)
4PM	**FREE:** Exploring the City of Athens (All School Days)
Fri/Sat/Sun 5-7	Exploring the City - Guided Tour at the Acropolis and The New Museum

Suggesting Reading (Optional): A Concise History of Greece. R. Clogg

WEEK 2: January 8-14

Mon 8 — 1st class meeting
Introductory Remarks. Concepts and Perspectives
- Discussing the implications of sociological perspectives on food for the broader society: What is sociology of food? Historical overview of food sociology; Key concepts and theories

- **Introduction to the Mediterranean Lifestyle**
  - Geography, culture, and history of the Mediterranean region
  - Key principles of the Mediterranean lifestyle

Response Paper 1 – DUE

Tue 9 — **Food and Identity**
Cultural and regional identities through food; Food as a marker of social status; Ethnicity, migration, and food

- **Cooking Techniques and Culinary Traditions**
  - Traditional Mediterranean cooking methods
  - Use of herbs, spices, and flavor profiles

Wed 10 — Food Production and Consumption; Industrial vs. alternative food systems

- **Physical Activity and Movement**
  - Importance of physical activity in the Mediterranean lifestyle
  - Different forms of exercise practiced in the region

Thurs 11 — Fast food and its societal implications; Consumer culture and food choices

- **Social Connections and Community Engagement**
  - Role of social interactions in the Mediterranean culture
  - Building and maintaining strong social networks

Fri 12 — Educational Excursion (Eleusis Museum – Sounion/Temple of Poseidon)
Sat 13 — Educational Excursion: Delphi/Arachova
Sun 14 — 1-Day 3-Islands Cruise

WEEK 3: January 15-21 **Globalization and Food**

Mon 15 — Food deserts and access to nutritious food; Hunger and food insecurity; Socioeconomic disparities in diet-related health outcomes. Food and the Environment: Sustainable food production and consumption; Food, Ecology, Climate change and food systems

Response Paper 2 – DUE

- **Stress Management and Relaxation**

- Incorporating relaxation techniques into daily life
- Mindfulness, meditation, and leisure activities

Tue 16 **Gender and Food**

Gender roles and food preparation; Eating disorders and body image; Feminist perspectives on food

- **Sustainability and Environmental Impact**

- Sustainable practices in the Mediterranean region
- Relationship between diet and environmental impact

Wed 17 **Food and Social Inequality**

Global food trade and supply chains; Culinary globalization; and hybridization; Food imperialism and cultural resistance

- **Adapting the Mediterranean Lifestyle**

- Implementing Mediterranean principles outside the region
- Overcoming challenges and personalizing the lifestyle

Thurs 18 Food justice movements; Advocacy for food policy change; The role of NGOs and grassroots organizations

- Refugee Center: Visiting/Volunteering

Fri 19 - Sun 21 Educational Excursion: Sparta-Mycenae-Epidavros-Nafplion

Food and Social Change - Food revolutions and cultural shifts; Alternative food movements; The potential for food to drive broader social change

- **Future Trends and Modern Adaptations**

- Contemporary interpretations of the Mediterranean lifestyle
- Exploring potential future directions

WEEK 4: January 21-24 Concluding Remarks - Student Presentations and Reflection

Mon 22 Oral Presentations
Tue 23 Oral Presentations

- Sharing personal experiences and insights
- Reflecting on growth and changes throughout the course

Response Paper 3 – DUE

Epilogue – Farewell Dinner
Wed 24 **Departure**

WEEKLY READING MATERIAL

WEEK1 - JAN 2-7

WEEK2 - JAN 8-14

WEEK3 - JAN 15-21