

NUTR 210 Food and Culture
Winter 2025-2026
Online

Instructor: Jen Zuercher, PhD, RD, LD

Email: jzuerch@siue.edu

Office Hours: By Appointment

Office Location: VC 2607

Office: 618-650-5801

Cell: 919-206-4332

Welcome:

I am glad to have the opportunity to share knowledge about many different cultures and their cuisines with each and every one of you. I will strive for our class to be a dynamic learning environment, and to encourage and empower your capabilities in pursuit of your educational and career goals.

Bio:

I originally came to the field of nutrition out of a desire to learn more about fueling my body for healthy living. Today, I focus on individuals and groups and the food choices they make – the whys and the what of different people and places. In addition, I'm interested in learning how to help people make changes in their behaviors, particularly related to eating and movement, that will promote health and prevent disease.

Teaching Philosophy:

This class is about experience. Please use this opportunity to both learn what “fits” for you and to branch out beyond this border. There is a whole world of food and related cultural practices to explore. Use this course as your jumping off point.

Communicating with the instructor:

The best way to communicate with me is through email (jzuerch@siue.edu).

- Typical response time to student emails is within 24 hours.
- It is very likely that I won't be able to respond to emails on the holidays (Christmas, New Year's Eve).
- To better assist you, please include NUTR 210 in the subject line and your name in the body of your email.

Land Acknowledgement

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville exists in and serves a region that includes the lands of the Kiikaapoi (treaty in Edwardsville, 1819); The Illinois Confederacy, including the Peoria, Kaskaskia, Michigamea, Cahokia, and Tamaroa (treaty in Edwardsville, 1818); Dhegiha Siouan peoples; and others. We affirm their contemporary and ancestral ties to the land and their contributions to this place. In alignment with the academic mission of the institution, we are committed to building responsible relationships with indigenous communities through the development of educational pathways and opportunities for indigenous students and the advancement of research and knowledge about indigenous peoples, cultures, and histories.

About the Course:

Course Description:

Cultural beliefs and practices are important to groups, with those related to food being among the most prominent. Food-related practices function to create social unity, but also to distinguish cultures. With the melding of different cultures within this country, these traditions begin to cross lines. This course is structured so that students will experience concepts of cultural beliefs and practices through cooking and learning. Cooking and eating together is both a tool for understanding concepts and a means for teaching us how to cooperate and engage with other communities.

Along the way, we will consider food as a symbol, food as a marker of social hierarchy and individual identity, food as a part of religious and moral practices, and food as a part of migration and movement. Reading, lecture, and discussion will broaden and deepen the understanding gained through labs and vice versa.

ACEND Core Knowledge Objectives (KRDN)

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|-----------------|---|
| KRDN 1.3 | Apply critical thinking skills. |
| KRDN 2.1 | Demonstrate effective and professional oral and written communication and documentation. |
| KRDN 2.6 | Demonstrate cultural humility, awareness of personal biases and an understanding of cultural differences as they contribute to diversity, equity and inclusion. |

Course Objectives:

- To increase our understanding of how an individual's behaviors are shaped by the food ways of their religion, family traditions, economics, politics, and the social and historical meanings of food and food related behaviors of other cultures, and the way these patterns influence food consumption patterns among each other.
- To increase knowledge about the evolutionary and biological basis of the human diet.
- To increase knowledge of globalization on food selection and health.
- To learn about how the culture of food attitudes and behaviors affect counseling strategies of health care professionals.
- To help us recognize how our own food habits result from meeting biological requirements within a cultural context.

Required Text:

Furstenau, N.M., Safaii-Waite, S., Sucher, K.P., Nelms, M.N., and Kittler, P. G. 2023. Food and Culture, 8th Ed. Cengage. Boston, MA

Course Requirements:

The important components of this course include sharing of food traditions, discussions, and class activities that occur in and outside of the classroom. Evaluation of student performance will be based upon completion of the following assignments:

#1 Syllabus Quiz. I would like to be sure you're aware of the expectations and happenings of this course. The link to this quiz can be found in the Course Materials tab. You are able to retake this quiz until you receive 100%. **This will be a great way to start off with a great grade.**

#2 Food Diary and Reflection will not only focus on the food you eat, but also the context in which these foods are eaten. You'll maintain a personal journal of foods eaten and the circumstances in which they are consumed for a specified amount of time. Note the kinds of food, the times they were consumed, what activity accompanied food consumption and the social context – what kinds of interactions occurred. A final summary of your observations and lessons learned will accompany your food journal. Additional details are provided on the assignment directions on blackboard.

#3 Choice Activity Paper will be your opportunity to choose a cultural exploration for yourself/on your own. Additional details will be provided on blackboard.

#4 International Market Assignment directions can be found on blackboard.

#5 Lab Experiences will consist of preparation and discussion of foods from two of the cultures we will be studying throughout the term. You will select one dish from each of the cultures to prepare and critique. Additional instructions can be found on blackboard.

#6 Quizzes: There will be 10 short (5-10 question) quizzes based on assigned readings to help prepare you to participate in corresponding class discussions. These quizzes will be completed online and are due by 11:59pm on the date due.

#7 Journal Entries: There will be 5 journal entries related to the course materials and activities. For each entry, you will be provided a thought question/prompt to get you started on analysis of the topic.

Points

Assignment	Points	Points Earned
Syllabus Quiz	10	
Food Diary and Reflection	30	
Choice Activity Paper	30	
International Market Assignment	30	
Lab Experiences (2)	60	
Quizzes (10)	100	
Journal Entries (5)	75	
Total Points Possible	335	

Grading Scale: *If any of the class assignments are unclear, it is the student's responsibility to discuss and clarify expectations as soon as possible.*

Points	Percentage	Grade
> 301.5	90-100%	A
268 – 301.4	80-89%	B
234.5 – 267.9	70-79%	C
201 – 234.4	60-69%	D
< 195	<60%	F

Class Expectations:

Assigned Readings: Students are expected to read the assigned textbook and other readings **before** completing other work for the unit. While students are responsible for all assigned materials, lectures, assignments, and journal entries will only cover selected topics related to the readings.

Blackboard: All course materials, assignments, and grades will be posted on Blackboard. It is the student's responsibility to check Blackboard regularly for announcements, handouts, discussions, and assignment instructions. If you have never used Blackboard before, please see the instructor.

Participation & Attendance Policy: Attendance, meaning checking and submitting work on blackboard and viewing course content, including videos, is necessary and required. Students should make every effort to contact the instructor should periods away from course content be necessary, and make up any work or activities covered in class as soon as possible.

Online class behavior

- ✓ **Reflect** before you post an emotional journal entry and reread what you have written to be sure it is professional. Communicate as if your comments are printed in a newspaper.
- ✓ **Communicate** effectively.
 - Do not use all caps or multiple punctuation marks (!!!, ???, etc.).
 - Be sure to define or explain acronyms, jargon or uncommon terms so everyone can understand.
- ✓ **Be constructive.** Challenge ideas and the course content, but do so in positive ways. It's fine to disagree, but when done in a thoughtful manner, you have more opportunity to grow and to demonstrate that growth.

Written Materials/Assignments: There will be a variety of written assignments to complete throughout the term (described above). Additional guidelines as well as grading rubrics are available on Blackboard. Should additional clarification be necessary, it is the student's responsibility to discuss such issues with the instructor as early as possible, but certainly *prior* to the date the assignment is due.

Late Work: It is in your best interest to turn your work in on time. That said, I realize that things happen. Any assignment will earn a 10% deduction of the total points available for that assignment for **EACH CALENDAR DAY** it is submitted late. Exceptions are noted in the discussion of make-up work. Please speak to me as soon as possible if you realize that something is or is going to be late. I *will not* chase you down to get work turned in.

Make-up work: A doctor's excuse or an excuse from the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs (extension 2020) will be required for make-ups. If you will be away from school due to a university sanctioned event or emergency, such as a death in the family, you should contact the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs (x2020) and request a note be sent to all your instructors.

Withdrawal Policy: Please refer to the Registrar's webpage for information specific information on [withdrawing](#) from this course.

Incomplete Policy: Please refer to the Registrar's webpage for specific information on [Incomplete Grades](#).

Course and University policies

Academic integrity/plagiarism: Students are reminded that the expectations and academic standards outlined in the [Student Academic Code \(3C2\)](#) apply to all courses, field experiences and educational experiences at the University, regardless of modality or location.

Plagiarism is the use of another person's words or ideas without crediting that person. Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated and may lead to failure on an assignment, in the class, or dismissal from the University, per the [SIUE academic dishonesty policy](#). Students are responsible for complying with University policies about academic honesty as stated in the [University's Student Academic Conduct Code](#).

Turnitin: This course will utilize the Turnitin plagiarism detection software. A Turnitin link will be available for select written work submitted in the course. [Find out more about using Turnitin](#).

Additional policies: University policies and guidance that address teaching, learning, and student support services are available at: <https://kb.siue.edu/132378> Students are encouraged to visit this resource site for current information on:

Policies

- Academic integrity/plagiarism
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Pregnancy and Newly Parenting Policy
- Recordings of Class Content
- Regular and Substantive Interaction

Additional Support

- Academic and Other Student Services (Library, Academic Success, Tutoring, etc.)
- Cougar Care
- Military Service and Attendance
- Office of Military and Veteran Services (MAVS)
- Services for Students Needing Accommodations (ACCESS)
- SIUE Campus Climate Reporting Form
- Student Success Coaches
- TimelyCare

Tentative Course Outline

Date	Topics	Readings	Assignments DUE ⁺	Assignment Due Date
PART 1: WHAT IS FOOD? WHAT IS CULTURE?				
Class 1	Introduction to Course		✓ Syllabus Quiz ✓ Journal Entry #1	Dec 16
Class 2	Origins of Food & Culture International Food Guides	Chapters 1&2 See Blackboard	✓ Quiz: Chapter 1 & 2 ✓ Journal Entry #2	Dec 17
Class 3	Intercultural Communications	Chapter 3	✓ Quiz: Chapter 3	Dec 17
PART 2: MERGING CUISINES AND CULTURES				
Class 4	Native American Culture and Cuisine	Chapter 5	✓ Quiz: Chapter 5	Dec 18
Class 5	Africans, African American, and Black American Culture and Cuisine	Chapter 15	✓ Quiz: Chapter 8	Dec 19
Class 6	Religion and Cuisine	Chapter 4	✓ Quiz: Chapter 4	Dec 22
Class 7	The Balkans & the Middle East	Chapter 13	✓ Quiz: Chapter 13 ✓ Food Diary & Reflection	Dec 23
Class 8	Culture and Cuisine of Spain	Chapter 6 (pg 139-154)	✓ Quiz: Chapter 6 (section r/t Spain)	Dec 24
Class 9	Culinary Arts from India	Chapter 14	✓ Quiz: Chapter 14 ✓ Lab #1	Dec 26
Class 10	Chinese Culture and Cuisine	Chapter 11 (Pg 275-292)	✓ Quiz: Chapter 11 (section r/t China)	Dec 29
Class 11	Pacific Island Culture & Cuisine	See Blackboard		Dec 29
Class 12	Cuisine of Japan	Chapter 11 (Pg 292-301)	✓ Quiz: Chapter 11 (section r/t Japan) ✓ Lab #2	Dec 30
PART 3: FOOD, CULTURE, AND THE MEDIA				
Class 13	Food Sustainability	See Blackboard	✓ Journal Entry #3 ✓ Choice Activity Paper	Dec 31
Class 14	Food Insecurity	See Blackboard	✓ Journal Entry #4	Jan 2
Class 15	Stretching the Boundaries	See Blackboard	✓ Journal Entry #5 ✓ International Market Assignment	Jan 3

Subject to change (you will be notified)

At the end of the day, you are solely responsible for your success and your failure. And the sooner you realize that, you accept that, and integrate into your work ethic, you will start to be successful. As long as you blame others for the reason you aren't where you want to be, you will always be a failure.

-Erin Cummings