

Consuming Identity: Food and Foodways in Contemporary Ethnic American Literature

Special Topics in Multiethnic Literatures of the United States (ENGL 02.470-1)

Spring 2022, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.



Course Description

In his 1961 essay, “Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption,” French philosopher Roland Barthes muses, “it is fair to say that through his food the Frenchman experiences a certain national continuity. By way of a thousand detours, food permits him to insert himself daily into his own past and to believe in a certain culinary ‘being’ of France.” Consuming food is necessary to sustain life, but as Barthes’ reflection reminds us, it nourishes our desires to situate ourselves in particular ways, and it communicates to others information we may not even realize. What we eat, how we eat, when and where we eat (or, our “foodways”), provide insight into who we are individually and as part of larger cultural groups—and those conscious and unconscious individual assertions of self are inextricable from larger expressions of cultural and national identity. In this course we will analyze the political, social, cultural, religious, economic, and historical dimensions of food in literary texts to gain a better understanding of the diverse roles food plays in defining American culture. *Three semester hours.*

Course Texts

We will read four primary texts drawn from the following list:

- Diana Abu-Jaber, *The Language of Baklava*
- Louise DeSalvo, *Crazy in the Kitchen: Food, Feuds, and Forgiveness in an Italian American Family*
- Laura Esquivel, *Like Water for Chocolate*
- Ruth Ozeki, *My Year of Meats*
- Ntozake Shange, *If I Can Cook / You Know God Can*
- Michelle Zauner, *Crying in H Mart: A Memoir*

For more information, please contact:

Dr. Marci Carrasquillo
carrasquillo@rowan.edu
Department of English
345 Bunce Hall