

## History 3515

### *Food for Thought: History and the Culinary Cultures of the Islamic World*



Class: McCain bldg. 2190  
 Instructor: Dr. Amal Ghazal  
 Office: 2171 McCain Bldg., phone: 494-1508  
 Office Hours: Wednesday 3:00-5:00 or by appointment  
 Box for paper delivery # 78, McCain bldg.

*Pleasures may be divided into six classes: to wit, food, drink, clothes, sex, scent and sound. Of these, the noblest and most consequential is food.* (Muhammad ibn al-Katib al-Baghdadi).

#### **Course Description**

The symbol and meaning of food in our daily lives transcend pleasure and necessity. As one author puts it, “Behind every dish lies a world, a culture, a history.” This course explores aspects of Islamic history through the lens of the culinary cultures in Muslim societies, with a focus on Middle Eastern societies. It treats food as an essential factor in creating and shaping identities, social space and political discourses.

This course has no prerequisites. It is of relevance to students interested in Islamic history, cultural studies, anthropology and any field related to food studies.

#### **Objectives:**

1. to analyze historical developments and changes through the lens of culinary traditions
2. to understand the significance of food cultures in Muslim societies
3. to emphasize the correlation between food and identity
4. to create an appreciation for different traditions and cultures and the social and intellectual vigor behind them

#### **Readings**

\*Karen Armstrong, *Islam: A Short History* (Modern Library, 2000)

\*Sami Zubaida and Richard Tapper (eds.), *A Taste of Thyme: Culinary Cultures of the Middle East* (Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2000)

**ONE** of the following three books:

\*Diana Abu Jaber, *The Language of Baklava: A Memoir* (Anchor, 2006)

\*Madhur Jaffrey, *Climbing the Mango Trees: A Memoir of a Childhood in India* (Vintage Books, 2007)

\*Salah Jamal, *Arabian Flavors: Recipes and Tales of Arab Life* (Souvenir Press, 2003)

\*A course-reader available for purchase from Julia's Photocopy Service

\*A list of books on reserve in Killam Library.

All the books are available at Outside the Lines Bookstore, 6265 Quinpool Road.

### Grade Scale

<b>A+</b>	<b>90-100</b>	<b>C+</b>	<b>67-69</b>
<b>A</b>	<b>85-89</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>61-66</b>
<b>A-</b>	<b>80-84</b>	<b>C-</b>	<b>55-60</b>
<b>B+</b>	<b>77-79</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>50-54</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>73-76</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Below 50</b>
<b>B-</b>	<b>70-72</b>		

### Grade Breakdown

Attendance/Discussion:	15%
Presentation:	15%
Mid-Term:	15%
Book Review:	15%
Excursion Report	10%
Banquet Participation	5%
Paper:	25%

Students are expected to follow the reading schedule and come to class prepared for discussion. Tuesdays are devoted for lectures and Thursdays are devoted partly for lectures and partly for discussion and student presentations.

**Attendance** is required and participation is not only required but also highly recommended and rewarded. This is a good practice that allows students to express themselves and articulate their ideas and opinions as they develop throughout the term. Moreover, lecture notes are an essential component of this course and thus, missing classes would result in poor performance.

**Discussion:** The textbooks and the course reader are material open for discussion. Thursdays are partly devoted to discuss the issues and themes raised in the literature you are required to read.

**Presentation:** There are six presentations that will be assigned for six different groups. Each group consists of a certain number of students (details below and on BLS). Topics for the presentations are listed in the weekly lecture schedule and on BLS. Students should use BLS to sign up for the topic in which they are interested. Details of each presentation will be discussed with the corresponding group.

### **Mid-Term. October 23**

It is based on lecture notes and reading material. Details about the readings included for the mid-term exam and the format of the exam will be discussed in class.

### **Book Review. Due November 12. Length: 5-6 double spaced pages.**

You have two options.

**Option 1:** You either buy ONE of the following novels:

\*Diana Abu Jaber, *The Language of Baklava: A Memoir*.

\*Madhur Jaffrey, *Climbing the Mango Trees: A Memoir of a Childhood in India*.

(I will be providing an optional reading on ‘Food and Family’ as a guide to analyzing the novel. More details will be discussed in class. Students should write an analytical review of the novel. The review should provide a short summary, followed by an analysis of the novel’s themes and major issues.).

### **Option 2:**

\*Salah Jamal, *Arabian Flavors: Recipes and Tales of Arab Life*.

This cookbook, in addition to recipes, has many anecdotes. It provides a ‘popular’ presentation and representation of food history and its meaning and it is also a sort of a *memoir*. You are required to analyze its content in light of the information you will acquire in the lectures and other material. More details will be discussed in class.

### **Food Diary or Food Excursion Report. Due December 01**

Students are required to write a short report (no more than 1000 words) on a food experience they have had during the term. It can be based on a shopping trip(s) or on a food experience while eating out. Students are required to visit stores or restaurants of communities that come from Muslim majority or minority societies or of communities whose culinary cultures are part of the Muslim ones (for example, since the Armenian cuisine is part of the Ottoman one and of the Levantine one, any experience that relates to it is acceptable. Same applies to Sephardim or Mizrahi Jewish cuisine). That excursion can also be based on an experience outside of the Halifax metro as long as it takes place during this term. Students may write an analytical statement about what they see and observe in terms of food labels, food habits, food display, etc. or of any pre-conceived notions they might have had, expectations, disappointments...

Some suggestions:

- you may visit a Lebanese (or Syrian), a Greek and a Turkish restaurant and compare your experience in each one of them. You can especially compare the menus and see what is common (or not) between them and how each represents the menu as a particularly ‘national’ one. This will be accepted as a group-report (maximum 3 students) and evaluated as such.
- You may eat in one particular ethnic restaurant and describe your experience (the food, the drinks, the decoration, the service... you may ask the waiters or the cooks questions you have and analyze their answers).
- You may visit an ethnic store (Mid-Eastern, Indian, etc...) and talk about your experience (the items, their presentation, the flyers and posters in that store, the clients....)

- You may compare the ethnic food section in Superstore or Sobey's to an ethnic store and describe the differences or the similarities.

### **Final paper. Due December 11. Length: 10-12 double-space pages**

The paper should be well-researched and well-written. The focus of the paper can be a topic pertaining to culinary cultures in Muslim societies, or any other aspect of cultural, political or social history of the Muslim world, including minorities in the Muslim world. Details will be discussed in class. Due December 11.

### **End-of-Term Banquet**

Students are required to cook for this session. The dish should be based on a recipe from any part of the non-Western world. Be prepared to give us an explanation of the origin (and meaning, if any) of your dish.

### **Plagiarism**

All students in this class are to read and understand the policies on plagiarism and academic honesty as referenced in the Undergraduate Calendar at <http://registrar.dal.ca/calendar/ug/UREG.htm#12>. Ignorance of such policies is no excuse for violations.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities are encouraged to register as quickly as possible at the Student Accessibility Services if they want to receive academic accommodations.

To do so please phone 494-2836, e-mail [access@dal.ca](mailto:access@dal.ca) , drop in at the Killam, G28 or visit [www.studentaccessibility.dal.ca](http://www.studentaccessibility.dal.ca)

### **In-Class-Food Regulations:**

Yes, you may bring food anytime you want and share it with the rest of the class. It is best to do so when you have your presentation and it would be ideal if the food you prepare is related to the topic you are discussing or the books on which you are presenting.



### **Schedule**

#### **Readings Relevant to Weeks 1, 2, 3 and 4: Part I in Zubaida and Tapper**

**\*Week 1 (Sep. 10): Introduction to the Course**

**\*Week 2 (Sep. 15, 17): Introduction to Islam/Introduction to the Food Cultures of Arabia and the Near East**

**Tuesday: Lecture**

**Thursday: Presentation 1:** Ramadan: The Meaning of Food and Fasting (5 students).

**\*Week 3 (Sep 22-24): The Expansion of Islam and the Muslim Agricultural Revolution**

**Tuesday: Lecture**

**Thursday: Class Discussion** – Readings: Marvin Harris, “The Abominable Pig” (course-reader)

**\*Week 4 (Sep 30- Oct 02): Hybrid Empires: From Baghdad to Cordoba/ The Medieval Cookbook Tradition**

**Tuesday: Lecture**

**Thursday: Lecture**

**Readings Relevant to Week 5: Part III in Zubaida and Tapper**

**\*Week 5 (Oct. 07-09): Food, Piety and Literature**

**Tuesday: Lecture**

**Thursday: Presentation 2:** Table Manners based on al-Ghazali’s *Table Manners* (to be distributed in class)

**\*Week 6 (October 13-15): The Ottoman Empire: An Introduction**

**Tuesday: Lecture**

**Thursday: Guest Speaker** Dr. Sami Zubaida

Students are also **required** to attend Dr. Zubaida’s lecture at 7:30 (preceded by a reception at 6:30 that you are also welcome to attend).

**\*Week 7 (Oct. 20-22): Revisions//Exam**

**Tuesday:** Revisions/Informal Discussion

**Thursday October 23: MID-TERM**

**\*Week 8 (October 27-29): The Ottoman Empire: Consumption and the Politics of the Public Sphere (I)**

**Tuesday: Guest Speaker:** Dr. Jeremy Lundholm.

Possible themes to be discussed by Prof. Lundholm: “Domestication and Spread of Crop Plants” and “Muslim Chinese Cuisine.”

**Thursday: Lecture**

**\*Week 9 (Nov. 03-05): The Ottoman Empire: Consumption and the Politics of the Public Sphere (II)**

**Tuesday: Lecture**

**Thursday: Class Discussion**

Readings:

Selma Akyazici Özkoçak. Coffeehouses: Rethinking the Public and Private in Early Modern Istanbul. *Journal of Urban History* 2007; 33; 965 and Jim Bowman, “Time to Smell the Sweet Smoke: Fantasy Themes and Rhetorical Vision in Nargile Cafe’ Cultures”, *The Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 42, No. 3, 2009

**Presentation 3:**

Hookas, Shishas and Narguiles. What is in it? (based on the reading material plus some online resources posted on BLS and anything else you come across or know). Be creative!

**\*Week 10 (November 10, 12): Book review Due on Tuesday, Nov. 10**

**Tuesday: Presentation 4 & Presentation 5**

Jaffrey, Madhur, *From Curries to Kebabs: Recipes from the Indian Spice Trail*. (On Reserve) and **Presentation 5** Habeeb Salloum, *Arab Cooking on a Saskatchewan Homestead* (On Reserve)

**Thursday: Cooking Class. Details to be provided in class. Attendance Required!**  
Readings Relevant to Week 11, 12 and 13: Part II in Zubaida and Tapper

**\*Week 11 (November 17-19): Claiming History: Food and the Construction of Nationalist Identities Part II**

**Tuesday: Lecture**

**Thursday: Class Discussion**

“The Fragile Tale of Egyptian Jewish Cuisine” course-reader. (On BLS)

“The Politics of Taste and Smell: Palestinian Rites of Return.” (course-reader)

**\*Week 12 (Nov. 24-26):**

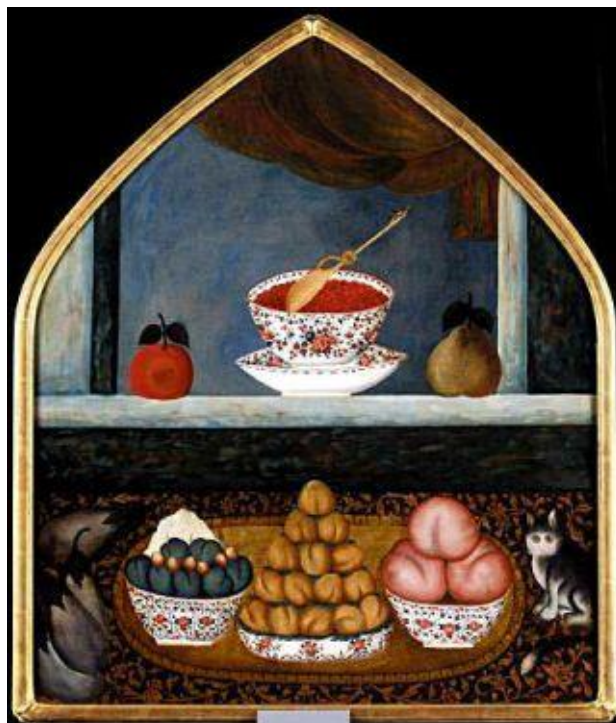
**Tuesday:** Guest Speaker Dr. Elizabeth Fitting

**Thursday: Presentations 6:** Based on the two cookbooks *Aromas of Aleppo: The Legendary Cuisine of Syrian Jews* and *The Book of Jewish Food*

**\* Week 13 (Dec. 1-3)**

**Tuesday: Summary. Food Excursion Report Due.**

**Thursday: Class Banquet**



**Pandemic H1N1 Influenza Advisory in relation to Academic Continuity**

In the event of an escalation of the pandemic H1N1 influenza virus, the University may need to authorize Academic Units to change elements of class schedules and/or evaluation plans as outlined in course syllabi. Any change is intended to support the primary goal of reducing the risk of spreading a pandemic influenza among students, faculty and staff.

Although it is difficult to predict the severity of the pandemic, the University is committed to minimizing the impact on student's academic progress. Therefore, every effort will be made to provide students with options for continued learning and for continued fair evaluations.

Changes may include but are not limited to:

- . Adjustments to course assignments;
- . Changes to the dates of exams;
- . Arrangements for alternative evaluations for students affected by H1N1 influenza virus;
- . Adjustments to work terms;
- . Modification of marks awarded for participation;
- . Adjustments to attendance policies.

Any alternative plan made in individual courses may be superseded by University-wide or Government measures to reduce the spread of the pandemic H1N1 influenza virus.