What to eat? Who to marry? This seminar examines food and sexuality in its relation to society in a comparative perspective. One strong regional focus will be South Asia, in particular India, while other regions of the world will be included. Students must be able to oscillate between different cultural and national contexts, confronting familiar phenomena inflected by unfamiliar frames of reference. The human body is frequently employed as a symbol of society. This seminar follows the contours of this symbol by investigating the ways in which food and sex form part of the formation of community boundaries. It focuses on how both are internal to forms of rejection, circulation of stigma and in occurrences of ethnic conflict. The investigation includes an analysis of the role played by the moral and humoral classification of food substances at work in ritual mechanisms and symbolic procedures such as pollution, purification, ritual inversion, and transgression, which frequently become inscribed onto individual and collective bodies. The seminar will place a strong emphasis on the analysis of foundational experiences, phenomena such as ingestion, incorporation, disgust, revulsion; as well as the facts of procurement, production and consumption of food substances such as animal slaughter and its logical inversion, the renunciation of meat, namely vegetarianism. The class will traverse several fields of knowledge while retaining a strong focus in socio-cultural anthropology and in empirical ethnographic accounts. The reading materials consist of a wide array of texts of different genres, including ethnographic exposition, religious treatises, semiological analysis, psychoanalysis, analysis of ritual and exchange, cultural materialism, as well as philology, sociology, and history. Besides scholarly texts the reading materials include contemporary religious manuals, autobiography, journalistic accounts, documentary and feature movies, as well as travel literature.

Course objectives:
The class will provide students with concrete knowledge of diverse cultural practices, beliefs, and life-ways in a range of cultural contexts with focus on South Asia, paying attention to the relationship of this knowledge to how groups are represented in scholarly and popular writing, as well as in commercial feature film.
The class will help students gain proficiency in the use of critical thinking skills in their assessment of...
articles, ethnographic writing, autobiography, history, philology, psychoanalysis and documentary film.
To provide students with an understanding of various aspects of Indian society, social structure, ritual, religion, identity, gender, social organization and politics.
To provide students with the training of reading and presentation skills, the use of a foreign language glossary, and a comparative approaches to cultural and social difference.

**Readings: All readings will be on electronic reserve (sakai.rutgers.edu).**

**Course Requirements and Grading Criteria**

Take Home **Mid Term Exam** (30%), 4-5 pages. Take Home **Final Exam** (30%), 4-5 pages. Students have to complete all the readings and **participate actively in class discussion** (30%). There will be two **class quizzes** on the content of reading materials and class discussion (10%). Attendance in each class is required. **No more than two absences will be accepted!** Generally, while not a requirement, students should be willing to spontaneously introduce reading material of the week in question.

Students found cheating on exams or quizzes, handing in exams or quizzes containing plagiarized passages, or otherwise violating academic integrity policies will not be tolerated. Please familiarize yourself, therefore, with the Rutgers academic integrity policy, posted online at [http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu).

If you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website [https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/](https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/) to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me. Do not miss class without a University absence report!

**General Class Policies:**

There will be no extra credit. Please note that the texts to be discussed in class have to be brought to the appropriate class session. There is no excuse for not having the readings with you. Technological devices that do not serve class proceedings, on the other hand, do not belong in class. **Laptops and tablets if used for tasks relating to class proceedings are permitted.** Checking email, face book, and various other activities are absolutely not. Please try to be on time when class begins and in case any class material is indeed missed, do communicate with student colleagues about the content. When it comes to visiting me in office hours, please do come prepared with concrete questions about the class material.

1. **Theme:** Introduction (Thursday Sept. 3– first class)


   **Jack Goody.** The high and the low: culinary culture in Asia and Europe, *In*

2. Theme: Defilement and Remainders (Tuesday Sept. 8/Thurs. Sept. 10)


3. Theme: Purity and Pollution (Mo. Sept. 14/Thurs. 17)


4. Theme: Orifice, Anality and Excrement (Mo. Sept. 21/Thurs. 24)


5. Theme: Labor and Commodification (Mo. Sept. 28/Thurs. October 1)


6. Theme: Hierarchy and Exchange (Mo. October 5/Thurs. 8)


**Mid Term Take Home Exam**

7. **Theme:** Symbolism and Ritual Inversion (Mo. October 12/Thurs. 15)


8. **Theme:** Society and Internal Boundaries: Caste (Mo. Oct. 19/Thurs. 22)

   - **Wendy Doniger O’Flaherty.** The dismemberment of the cosmic Person, Rig Veda, *In* Textual Sources For the Study of Hinduism, Wendy Doniger O’ Flaherty with Daniel Gold, David Haberman, David Shulman (ed.), 1988, pp. 27-28

9. **Theme:** Animals, Morality and Identification (Mo. Oct. 26/Thurs. 29)


10. **Theme:** Comparative Excursus: Papua New Guinea (Mo. November 2/Thurs. 5)


11. **Theme:** Celibacy, Consumption, and Renunciation (Mo. November 9/Thurs. 12)


**Source Material:**

**12. Theme:** The Obscure Object of Sexuality (Mo. November 16/Thurs. 19)


**13. Theme:** Body and Cosmology (Mo. November 23)


**THANKSGIVING RECESS NOV. 26-29**

**14. Theme:** Ingestion and Conflict (Mo. November 30/Thurs. December 3)


**15. Theme:** Conclusion and Exam (Monday, December 7/ Thurs. December 10)
Take-Home Exam!

Final Exam Due Date: December 15th, 2015