CULINARY CULTURE IN BLACK RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE:
(Hi)STORIES OF FAITH AND FOOD

Wake Forest University
(Spring 2019)
As a result of this Magnolias Project 2019 workshop, I have the following thoughts on how better foreground and bolster sustainability in my Culinary Culture in Black Religious Experience course syllabus (find incorporated changes to the actual syllabus below in red):

- Add the following chapters from the edited volume Broken Finger Blues
  4:21 Richard Swift The Hex Indie Rock 0 for reading directly on sustainability in the AA experience
  - “Practicing Food Democracy: A Pragmatic Politics of Transformation” (Chp. 34)
  - “Food, Place and Authenticity: Local Food and the Sustainable Tourism Experience” (Chp. 35)
- Frame “sustainability” as part of the “in class/in semester” experience instead of solely as a final project
- Identify stakeholders in the process
- Convey that environmental issue are always associated with social issues and consider where sustainability fits within that reality.
- Expanding the options for “engaged” projects
  - Which would include in and out of class time work
- Assigning the book “Behind the Kitchen Door” to get students thinking about sustainability in terms of contributing to a society that everyone can benefit from. This is in part the book’s task as it probes models of a “sustainable restaurant” as a mode of doing justice work.
- Show how issues related to sustainability are not abstract things unrelated to everyday life
- Get the students to think about the placement of their bodies in sustainability work.
  - Relate them to its placement over and against “place” and what is available to them (i.e., migration dynamics)
- Recast places in the existing syllabus that already deal with sustainability without naming it
  - The Fannie Lou Hamer material
  - Black Panther Party’s Free Breakfast Program

3 Credits. No prerequisites. Letter Grade

Tuesdays: 12:30-3:00pm
Location: WING 301
Instructor: Derek S. Hicks
Office: WING 112

Office Hours: Tuesday, 10-11am
(or by appointment)
E-mail: hicksds@wfu.edu
DESCRIPTION

This course will explore the historical, social, cultural, theological, ethnographic, and practical components of African American religious life and foodway culture. We will interrogate the convergence of food, faith, community, and identity formation. Particular attention will be paid to the historical relationship between eating and church life, highlighting diverse and creative forms of culinary expression in the African American faith tradition and the ways in which food becomes transformative for those struggling for human dignity. Among several topics, this class will (1) chart a history of African American religio-culinary culture; (2) draw attention to the historical significance and cultural implications of “soul food” and staple dishes like Gumbo; (3) interrogate perceptions of African American cooking and food consumption in terms of its uniqueness and perceived peculiarity; (4) consider the connection of African American food culture to religious life; (5) discuss the significance of the fellowship table as an extra-religious space and its role in maintaining a complex religious life; and (6) examine contemporary issues of wellness, food insecurity, and sustainability in the African American Christian community.

FORMAT

This will consist of lectures and seminar discussions. Accordingly, keeping up with the readings is of primary importance to maintain vibrant dialogue in class. This course will make significant use of story for the purpose of articulating history and our respective food and faith autobiographies.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1) To understand that there are many ways to approach the study of religion.
2) To introduce and acquaint the student with theories regarding the convergence of African American foodways and black religious life.
3) To analyze the historical, social, and political settings that give rise to a distinct food culture and religious experience.
4) To highlight particular ways these distinct cultural productions directly respond to racial oppression and maltreatment.
5) To consider the malleable and complex nature of African American food and religious cultures in the face of ever changing social landscapes.
6) To study contemporary issues relation to food justice in African American life.

REQUIRED READINGS


**ARTICLES and CHAPTERS**


**SUPPLEMENTAL READINGS**

**African American Foodways & Food Justice**


**Black Religious Experience**


Raboteau, Albert J. Canaan Land: A Religious History of African Americans

Religious and Foodways Studies (selected)


*Articles and supplemental readings will be supplied via Sakai

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Regular attendance and participation in class discussion drawn from the readings (5% of final grade).
2. Three Reflection papers (30% of final grade).
3. Food-Faith autobiography and discussion question (20% of final grade).
4. Final research project (45% of final grade).

Class Participation Requirements

Class participation is extremely important in this class. Your participation will be evaluated on the frequency and quality of your comments, as well as responses to your classmates' comments. Our class meetings are meant as a place for you to exchange information, share ideas, share opinions, form opinions, and help each other throughout the semester.

Assignment Specifics

1. All readings are to be completed by the beginning of class of the posted date.
2. Your three reflection papers should be 3-4 pages in length, double-spaced. Each reflection should include the following components:
   a. A statement of the central argument (or thesis) from the reading;
   b. A brief summarization of that argument (how does the author lay out this central idea?)
   c. A brief section on what you have drawn from the author's idea regarding the nature of African American foodways/religious life;
   d. A critique their argument (Does it work? Does it make sense?)
3. Each student will present a Food & Faith Autobiography wherein they will critically engage at least one critical question taken from the readings that week in order to generate class discussion.
4. Final project:
   a. Each student is required to conduct a food and justice investigation
      i. Options:
         1. Conduct an investigation of findings drawn from a site visit of any organization addressing food insecurity in an African American community (either in Winston-Salem or another city)
            a. Include an assessment of food insecurity, sustainability, and access in the African American community
            b. Consider the ways in which cultural food and religious practices, customs, norms, and traditions pose challenges to the work of food justice.
         2. Develop of a workshop addressing wellness in the black community
            a. Include an assessment of food insecurity, sustainability, and access in the African American community
b. Account for cultural food and religious norms, customs, and traditions and the ways they may affect such a program adversely or otherwise.

3. Write a well-researched cultural history of food and religious life for a chosen African American community and offer this work back to that community.

ii. Guidelines
   1. Paper should be 12-15 double-spaced pages in length;
   2. Student will briefly summarize and discuss the paper in one of the final two class meetings and should be prepared for critical discussion of their topic.

All assignments are to be turned in as a hardcopy. Emailed work will be accepted only under special circumstances and must be pre-arranged with the professor.

All written work must conform to the most recent edition of ONE of the following style formats:


Miscellaneous Guidelines

1) If you have a disability that may require an accommodation for taking this course, please contact the WFU Learning Assistance Center (758-5929) within the first week of the course. To make accommodations for you, please provide a written statement from the WFU Learning Assistance Center.

2) Students are expected to adhere to the Honor Code of the University. Please refer to the Divinity School Bulletin and Student Handbook.

3) Students are not permitted to use papers submitted in other courses. Papers used in other classes will not be accepted to meet requirements in this class.

4) Policies related to Late Papers and Incompletes: All papers are due in class on the due date. Final papers are due in my mailbox by the date designated below. Early papers are happily accepted, however, late papers will not be accepted. However, at the professor’s discretion, you may be given extra time to complete an assignment due to other school work, ministry responsibilities, life circumstances, etc. This will be a one-time opportunity
and must by requested in writing. Requests for incompletes must be for reasons that meet Divinity School Compliances and are given out at the discretion of the professor.

5) Note on Laptops (and PDAs/iPads/Tablets/iPhones/Smartphones): In order to foster a present and engaged community during class, laptops are acceptable for note taking or as a class resource (as directed by the instructor) only. If laptops become a distraction, they will be disallowed. The additional devices mentioned above are disallowed during class time.

**Please note that the syllabus is subject to change at professor’s discretion**
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<td>Part I. Origins and Metaphorical Concepts of Black Religion &amp; Foodways Studies</td>
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| Jan. 15 (1) | **Part One:** Introductory Matters  
**Part Two:** What is meant by “Black Religion” | 1) Course Introduction & “I Am Statements”  
2) Overview  
Readings:  
1) DuBois, “Of Our Spiritual Strivings”  
2) Long, “Perspectives for a Study of Afro-American Religion in the United States” |
| Jan. 22 (2) | The Gumbo Metaphor and What is meant by “African American Foodways” | 1) **Reading(s):** Hicks, “The Unusual Feast: Gumbo and the Complex Brew of Black Religion”  
2) **Gumbo Tasting**  
• In what way(s) does gumbo function as a metaphor for understanding African American religious life?  
• What are examples of the cultural complexity of African American foodways?  
• What do African American foodway culture and religious life share in relation to community formation and identity? |
| Jan. 29 (3) | NO CLASS                                                                   | I will be giving the MLK Lecture at Claremont School of Theology                       |
| Part II. African American Food & Religious History |
| Feb. 5 (4) | Early African/African American food & religious culture                   | 1) **Reading(s):** Harris, 5-60 & 87-110  
2) **Reading(s):** Raboteau, “The Invisible Institution” in Canaan Land  
3) Food & Faith Autobiographies  
4) **Reflection Paper #1 on any of the ‘Origins’ Readings Due** |
| Feb. 12 (5) | African American food & religious culture during “Jim Crow”               | 1) **Reading(s):** Harris, 111-196  
2) **Reading(s):** Raboteau, “From Plantation to Ghetto” in Canaan Land  
3) Food & Faith Autobiographies |
| Feb. 19 (6) | African American food & religion during Civil Rights Era and “Black Power” | 1) **Reading(s):** Harris, 197-246  
2) **Reading(s):** Pinn and Pinn, “Liberation Thought and the Black Church” in Black Church History  
3) **Film:** Dirt and Deeds in Mississippi  
4) Food & Faith Autobiographies |
| Part III. Cultural Representations and Identity Formation |
| Feb. 26 (7) | Food/Religion as Complex Carriers of Meaning                              | 1) **Reading(s):** Susan Kalcik, “Ethnic Foodways in America: Symbol and the Performance of Identity” in Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States  
2) **Reading(s):** Bower, chapters 4 & 5 |
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| Mar. 5     | Politics of “Soul Food,” Stereotypes, Racial Implications, and Interrogations | 1) Reading(s): Bower, chapter 2  
2) Reading(s): Witt, chapters 3 and 5  
3) Film: *Soul Food Junkies*  
4) Food & Faith Autobiographies                                           |
| Mar. 19    | Gender in Black Foodways and Religion                                     | 1) Reading(s): Williams-Forson, chapter 5  
2) Reading(s): Witt, chapter 1  
3) Reading(s): Higginbotham, chapter 7  
4) Food & Faith Autobiographies  
5) Final project discussion                                                |
| Mar. 26    | Critiquing Media Representations of Black Foodways and Religion           | 1) Reading(s): Bower, Introduction  
2) Reading(s): Williams-Forson, chapter 7  
3) Media Resources: *Soul Food; The Wiz; Boondocks; Beloved; TBA*  
4) Food & Faith Autobiographies                                           |

**PART IV. ON JUSTICE, FOOD, CHURCH, AND THE COMMUNITY**

| Apr. 2     | Politics, Agency, Sustainability, and Insecurity in Winston-Salem: Community Visit | 1) Reading(s): Levenstein, “The Politics of Hunger”; Williams-Forson, “Practicing Food Democracy: A Pragmatic Politics of Transformation” (Chp. 34); & “Food, Place and Authenticity: Local Food and the Sustainable Tourism Experience” (Chp. 35)  
2) Reflection Paper #3 on ‘Gender’ Readings Due  
3) Community Visit: Rev. David Harrison at New Communion |

| Apr. 9     | Food & Faith Impacting Winston-Salem: Community Garden Visit               | 1) Reading(s): Lawson, “Cultural Geographies in Practice” in *Taking Food Public*  
2) Reading(s): Markowitz, “Expanding Access to Alternatives” in *Taking Food Public*  
3) Community Visit: Simon's Green Acre Community Gardens |

| Apr. 16    | Food and the Body in African American Faith Communities Case Study: Father’s Divine’s Peace Mission | 1) Reading(s): Griffith, chapters 3 & 4  
2) Reading(s): Dobson and Gilkes, “There’s Nothing Like Church Food”  
3) Film: *Father’s Kingdom*  
4) Food & Faith Autobiographies |

**PART V. STUDENT-LED DISCUSSIONS**

| Apr. 23    | Student presentations and class discussion                                 |
| Apr. 30    | Student presentations and class discussion                                 |

Final Semester Project is **Due May 10, 2019** (May 7th for those who are graduating)  
Projects are accepted via “snail mail” only, by 5:00 p.m. on date due, placed in my mailbox or sent to:  
Dr. Derek S. Hicks  
Wake Forest University