COURSE DETAIL

FOOD AND DINING IN FRENCH ART
Country France
Host Institution UC Center, Paris
Program(s) French in Paris,Food, History, and Culture in Paris
UCEAP Course Level Upper Division
UCEAP Subject Area(s) History Art History Anthropology
UCEAP Course Number 126
UCEAP Course Suffix
UCEAP Official Title FOOD AND DINING IN FRENCH ART
UCEAP Transcript Title FOOD IN FRENCH ART
UCEAP Quarter Units 5.00
UCEAP Semester Units 3.30

Course Description

This course explores the place of food in art in France, with a focus on the modern and contemporary periods. Throughout the course, representations of food are studied as a means to survey the evolution of French art within a global context, and as significant markers of social, ethnic, and cultural identity. The analysis of these depictions provides the opportunity to learn about dietary and dining customs, habits, and beliefs prevalent in France from the early modern period to the present. The course begins by decoding the archetypal representations of succulent food in the still life and genre painting of 16th-17th-century Holland, which established the conventions of the genre for centuries to come. It then examines how the rise of these previously minor artistic genres in 18th-century France coincided with the birth of French gastronomy. Frivolous depictions of aristocrats wining, dining, and indulging in exotic beverages like coffee and hot chocolate then give way in post-Revolutionary France to visions of austerity and “real life,” featuring potato-eating peasants. The focus then shifts to representations of food and dining in the age of modernity, when Paris was the undisputed capital of art, luxury, haute cuisine, and innovation. The course analyzes how Impressionist picnics and café scenes transgress social and artistic codes. Building on their momentum, Paul Cézanne launches an aesthetic revolution with an apple. Paul Gauguin’s depictions of mangos and guavas speak to his quest for new, “exotic” sources of inspiration, and allow discussion of questions of race, gender, and French colonialist discourse. Drawing from these pictorial and social innovations, the course subsequently observes the place of food and dining themes in the avant-garde movements of early 20th-century Paris, whose defiance of conventional society and art leads them to transform previously comforting themes into troubling ones. It questions the place of food—or its absence—in art to capture the suffering and violence of upheavals like the Second World War and consider the place of food and dining in contemporary art: from the Pop Art movement’s calling into question postwar consumer society through its representations of mass-produced food; to contemporary creators in a plural and globalized art scene who use these traditional themes to challenge the status and roles of the artist, the spectator, and the work of art itself; to how depictions of food in visual art

grapple with multiculturalism in France today.

Language(s) of Instruction
English

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Host Institution Course Details
https://uceap.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/DocumentLibrary/IQAs5e8fa4oaSKbIVpRnHU5MARl2…

Host Institution Campus

Host Institution Faculty

Host Institution Degree

Host Institution Department

Course Last Reviewed
2024-2025

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