

**Tutorial 100-12  
Fall 2002**

**We Are What We Eat: Food, Culture, and Identity in Literature and Film**

**TuTh 8:00-10:00 a.m. ARH 317**

**Instructor: Jin Feng  
(641) 269-4464; [fengjin@grinnell.edu](mailto:fengjin@grinnell.edu)  
Office: ARH 217C**



(Taken at the local tofu factory, September 2002)

---

Syllabus | [Discussion Forum](#)  
[Groups for First Informal Presentation](#) (September 3, Tuesday)  
[First Groups for Discussion Board Questions](#)  
[Some Suggestions for Your Final Project](#)  
[Final Groups for Discussion Board Questions](#)  
[Sign-up Sheet for Individual Pre-registration Meetings](#)  
[Sign-up Sheet for Individual Meetings for Your Final Projects](#)

---

**Course Description:** Welcome! In this tutorial we will examine the cultural and political significance of food in literature and film. We will focus on the way national cultures and personal identities are described and defined through narratives of the preparation, consumption, and appreciation of food in twentieth-century Chinese and Chinese American literature and film. Additionally, the course will integrate samples from other cultures and periods as points of comparison. Extracurricular activities, such as a restaurant visit, will also be included to facilitate our understanding and analysis of the culture of food.

**Course Objectives:** In this tutorial, you must utilize both the discussion forum and your peer group(s) to improve your writing and oral presentation skills.

1. **Reading:** You will learn the skills of close reading and critical thinking in this course. Before every class, you must take detailed notes on the themes and arguments present in each text as well as write critical comments to share in your class and use in your essays.
2. **Writing:** The papers you write fall under the category of "persuasive/argumentative writing," in which you **make a point** about a text (or texts) and/or its author (or their authors) and then **prove your point** (i.e., to **convince** your reader that your point is **valid**). We will be working through this semester on the required argumentative structure containing the following basic components:
  - a. **Title**, which needs to identify the text(s) and/or author(s) to be discussed in your paper and reflect the thesis of your paper.
  - b. **Thesis**, which is an arguable (controversial) point (NOT a piece of commonsensical knowledge, a well-established and/or commonly known fact, or universal, axiomatic truth.), whose validity is to be proven through your argument. The thesis needs to be stated in focus and in clear, specific terms. The thesis and the argument of a paper form a master-servant relationship.
  - c. **Argument**, which constitutes the main body of your paper. It is a process in which you prove the validity of your thesis. The key to developing a powerful, persuasive argument is an in-depth analysis of evidence. Your argument needs to focus on the thesis and to be presented clearly, coherently, and convincingly. You need to pay close attention to the thematic, logical, and stylistic coherence (or connection) between the thesis, argument, and conclusion, as well as between individual components (i.e., sentences, paragraphs, and passages) of the argument. The argument should flow toward the conclusion, allowing no "ripples" and/or "crosscurrents." In other words, your argument should form a critical mass rather than a "critical mess."
  - d. **Conclusion**, which needs to be drawn logically from your argument. A conclusion needs to be substantive and conclusive, not merely rhetorical and inconclusive. It is not a mere repetition of the thesis, but a confirmation of thesis that draws strength and support from the argument.
3. **Speaking:** You will also practice the skills of oral presentation in this course. These include: leading and participating in classroom discussions, informal presentations, and two formal presentations.

### General Information:

1. **Grading:** The general criteria for grading your writing are **creative thinking, critical thinking, and clear thinking**. Specifically, the following criteria are used individually as well as holistically in evaluating your writing:

- **Originality** (thematic, analytical)
- **Analyticity** (textual, contextual, referential)
- **Focus** (thematic, analytical)
- **Coherence** (thematic, logical, stylistic)
- **Clarity** (conceptual, logical, semantic)
- **Accuracy** (conceptual, logical, factual, theoretical, semantic)
- **Specificity** (factual, theoretical)
- **Depth** (analytical, theoretical)
- **Persuasiveness** (factual, theoretical, & analytical)

**Grading Scale:** Your final grade will be determined on your leadership and participation in class discussions (15%); discussion board contribution (10%); Paper One (5%); Paper Two (10%); Paper Three (15%); Final project (including an annotated bibliography) (30%); Presentation One (5%); Presentation Two (10%).

## 2. Discussion Forum:

The Discussion Forum ([http:// blackboard.grinnell.edu](http://blackboard.grinnell.edu)): The class will be divided randomly into groups of three or four; each group will take turns to frame two questions about each piece of work we are considering. The questions must be completed by midnight Sun. for Tues.'s class, and noon Wed. for Thurs.'s class. The group responsible for questions will also be asked to lead class discussion. The rest of the class will need to think about these questions in some depth before class. Additionally, students who are not posting questions must post a short paragraph about the historical and/or critical evidence for each piece of reading, where applicable, to share with your classmates by 5 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays, respectively. I will not participate in the discussion forum.

3. Final Project: Towards the end of the semester, you will be asked to think of one type of food, food event, or food custom that is central to your own cultural heritage(s). You will then be asked to research on and examine the representation of it in literature and/or film, and finally write a paper to present your discovery and argument.

4. Help For Your Reading and Writing: I will schedule individual or group meetings with you throughout the semester to give you feedback and help you improve your performance in this class. You should also go to your peer group(s) to ask for feedback on your draft and **always revise** before your paper is due. Additionally, advisors in the reading and writing labs are available by appointment, and reference librarians of the college are always willing to help you with your research projects.

5. Meetings out of Regular Class Time: In addition to our normal Tues. and Thurs. classes and scheduled individual sessions, we will also view several films throughout the semester. Some of these viewing may be out of class time but your attendance is still required. I will also organize some form of extracurricular food event for this class.

## **Required Texts:**

Amy Tan. *The Kitchen God's Wife* (available at the college bookstore).  
 Course pack on reserve at the Burling Library for your photo-copying.  
 Occasional handouts will also be distributed in class.

### **Fall 2002 Course Calendar (subject to revisions)**

#### **Sunday, Aug. 25: First Tutorial Meeting (ARH 317)**

Self-Introductions; Discussion of registration at Grinnell; Sign up for advising sessions.

#### **Monday, August 26: Individual Tutorial Advising Sessions (ARH 217)**

#### **Tuesday, August 27: Individual Tutorial Advising Sessions (ARH 217)**

#### **Wednesday, August 28: Registration for classes (Harris Center)**

### **Week 1**

#### **Thursday, Aug. 29: Organizational Meeting (Meet at AV Center in ARH)**

I. Introduction of course. II. Discussion: Writing at college level. III. Reference librarian session. IV. Exercises: 1) Academic Honesty; 2) In-class writing.

### **Week 2**

#### **Tuesday, Sept. 3**

**Readings:** Michael Ashkenazi and Jeanne Jacob, "A Framework for Discussion," in their The Essence of Japanese Cuisine: An Essay on Food and Culture (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), pp. 15-36. **(Underline topic sentences while reading)**  
 Discussion: Vocabulary, concepts, and methods involved in the discussion of food; Thesis Statement and Topic Sentences; How to write an outline  
**Assignment due:** Academic Honesty Exercise (required but not graded); first Discussion Board Assignment (revised version of in-class writing)

#### **Thursday, Sept. 5**

**Readings:** Yuan Mei and Li Yu;

Discussion: the significance of food in classical Chinese culture; Video "Taste of China"

### **Week 3**

#### **Tuesday, Sept. 10**

**Readings:** "A Madman's Diary"

Discussion: Lu Xun and "A Madman's Diary"; peer critique of first outline

**Assignment due:** Outline for your first paper; **First mini-research-key word: "the May Fourth Movement"**

#### **Thursday, Sept. 12**

**Assignment due:** Paper One draft (1 page) due and peer critique in class.

### **Week 4**

#### **Tuesday, Sept. 17**

**Readings:** "Dogshit Food"

**Assignment due:** Paper One final version; **Second mini-research-key word: "the Great Leap Forward"**

**Thursday, Sept. 19**

I. Library session. II. Discussion: Cannibalism; the comparison of premodern and modern Chinese narratives of food. III. Peer Critique of Paper Two Outline

**Assignment due:** Outline of Paper Two

**NOTE: Film viewing this weekend: "Eat, Drink, Man and Woman" (ARH 305)**

**Week 5****Tuesday, Sept. 24**

Paper Two draft due. Peer group meetings with me.

**Thursday, Sept. 26**

Paper Two draft due. Peer group meetings with me.

**NOTE: Film viewing this weekend: "Chung-king Express" (ARH 305)**

**Week 6****Tuesday, Oct. 1**

Discussion and comparison of the two films; **Formal Presentation One**

**Assignment due: Paper Two final version (2pps.).**

**Thursday, Oct. 3**

**Readings:** "The Gourmet" pp. 50-78.

**Assignment due: Third mini-research-key word: "the Cultural Revolution"**

**Week 7****Tuesday, Oct. 8**

**Readings:** "The Gourmet" pp.78-111.

**Peer group meetings outside of class for Paper Three.**

**Thursday, Oct. 10**

**Readings:** "The King of Chess" I pp. 29-48

**Peer group meetings outside of class for Paper Three.**

**Week 8****Tuesday, Oct. 15**

**Readings:** "The King of Chess" II & III 48-81

**Thursday, Oct. 17**

**Readings:** "The King of Chess" IV pp.81-93

Paper Three (2-3 pps) draft due on Friday, Oct. 18, 5 p.m.

**Week 9 Have a great fall break! Start thinking and researching for your final project!**

**Week 10****Tuesday, Oct. 29**

**Individual meetings for pre-registration. Let me know the topic of your final project.**

**Thursday, Oct. 31**

Peer critique for Paper Three in class.

**Week 11****Tuesday, Nov. 5**

**Readings:** Taking stock of the Chinese literature and film we have discussed so far; mechanics of writing

**Assignment due:** Paper Three final version (2-3 pps.)

**Thursday, Nov. 7**

**Readings:** The Kitchen God's Wife: chaps 1 & 2

**Week 12****Tuesday, Nov. 12**

**Readings:** The Kitchen God's Wife: chaps 3-8

**Thursday, Nov. 14**

**Readings:** The Kitchen God's Wife: chaps 9-12

**Assignment due:** Final Project proposal (simple version)

**Week 13****Tuesday, Nov. 19**

**Readings:** The Kitchen God's Wife: chaps 13-19

**Thursday, Nov. 21**

Individual meetings to discuss the proposal of your final project

**NOTE:** Film viewing this weekend: *"What's Cooking?"* (ARH 305)

**Week 14****Tuesday, Nov. 26**

**Readings:** The Kitchen God's Wife: chaps 20-24

**Thursday, Nov. 28**

**Have a great Thanksgiving!** Think about the significant role food plays in the definition of cultures and identities when you have your Thanksgiving dinner with friends/family!

**Week 15****Tuesday, Dec. 3**

**Readings:** The Kitchen God's Wife: chaps 25-26

**Assignment due:** Final Project proposal (second draft) and first draft of bibliography

**Thursday, Dec. 5**

**Discussion:** Asian American Experiences and multi-cultural heritages in literature and film; final project proposal informal presentation and brainstorming

**Week 16****Tuesday, Dec. 10**

**Final Presentation (Formal Presentation Two)**

**Thursday, Dec. 12**

**Final Presentation(Formal Presentation Two)**

Paper Four final version due on Dec. 18, Fri., at 5 p.m.

**Thanks for taking this tutorial! Have a great winter break!**

[return to top](#)

[Department of Chinese](#) | [Grinnell College](#)

Last updated: December 6, 2002