

FOOD, BODY, POWER
ANTHROPOLOGY 135
COLLEGE OF THE HOLY CROSS

Purpose of the Course:

This course on the anthropology of food worldwide draws on medical anthropologist/physician Paul Farmer's work on poverty as structural violence, to ask: *How can anthropologists best understand global and U.S. food insecurity issues?* Are hunger, famine outside the U.S., but also social class-linked obesity rates in America instances of 'structural violence,' in Farmer's sense? What are some of the ways that food, eating, and body relate to power, in the US and beyond? Our focus throughout the semester will be on social structural forces that shape matters of food, body, and vulnerability to harm.

The course begins with a consideration of some of the **general anthropology of food scholarship (Weeks 1-4)**, to set a backdrop for our work. Then (**Week 5**), we'll read some of **Paul Farmer's work on structural violence and poverty** to explore that theoretical framework as a part of our toolkit for thinking about the material from the whole rest of the course. Then, in **Weeks 6-9**, we'll read **historical accounts** such as Sidney Mintz's *Sweetness and Power* (on Caribbean sugar economies, plantations, and slavery) and Psyche Williams-Forsen's *Building Houses Out of Chicken Legs: Black Women, Food, and Power*, in preparation for analyzing food and power issues today. **Weeks 10 and 11 will be devoted to the study of the origins of famines, worldwide.** We'll end the class (**Weeks 12-15**) with **small group examinations of food insecurity in other parts of the world and also in the contemporary United States, including issues of food insecurity right here in Worcester County.** In this part of the course, you and your small group-mates will investigate topics of your choice within these rubrics and teach two classes on your group's findings.

Learning goals for this class: this cultural anthropology course is designed to arm the student with a variety of social analytical 'lenses' useful in beginning to answer large social structural questions about food, body, and power, worldwide, in the contemporary U.S., and more locally. Each student will become familiar with Paul Farmer's structural violence concepts and will practice applying these to issues of food insecurity. Students will also become familiar with some of the core ideas within the anthropology of food. Students will also practice and refine their anthropological writing skills, to interrogate our course material with a critical eye. Students will also practice their skills at working together in small groups to craft classroom presentations.