

IDH 2930

Delicious: The Evolution of Flavor and How It Made Us Human

Class meets in person

Tuesday, Period 3 (9:35–10:25 AM)

Little Hall, Room 117

Instructor

Dr. David C. Blackburn

Curator and Associate Chair

Department of Natural History, Florida Museum of Natural history

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352-273-1943

Office Hours

After class: 10:30 AM–Noon; or by appointment. Dickinson Hall, room 261 (or Zoom)

Required Textbook

Dunn, Rob and Monica Sanchez. (2021). *Delicious: The Evolution of Flavor and How It Made Us Human*. Princeton University Press. ISBN: 9780691199474

Additional supplemental readings (provided by instructor) from:

Dunn, Rob. (2018). *Never Home Alone: From Microbes to Millipedes, Camel Crickets, and Honeybees, the Natural History of Where We Live*. Basic Books.

Newman, Lenore. (2019). *Lost Feast: Culinary Extinction and the Future of Food*. ECW Press.

Course Synopsis

In this course, we'll read "*Delicious: The Evolution of Flavor and How It Made Us Human*", which weaves together information from paleontology, molecular biology, anatomy, cultural history, and more. This book seeks to understand how and why we find certain foods tasty and how that has shaped our biological and cultural histories. During weekly discussions, students will learn about what shapes our perception of flavor and how biologists and anthropologists leverage information from different fields to ask questions about our past. There will also be additional selected readings and guest speakers.

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

Describe major cultural and biological factors that shape our perception of flavor

Explain the concept of "culinary extinction" and explore the ethics of eating

Understand how scientists weave together diverse data to understand our past

Food Allergies and Preferences

This is a course about food and eating. It is likely that our classes will feature food to sample related to the topics discussed each week. Please let the instructor know ASAP about any food allergies, dietary preferences, cultural and/or religious requirements, etc. Eating is a diverse and culturally rich activity. The goal is to create an inclusive environment in class so that everyone feels equally able to participate.

Student Assignments

- (1) Reading & Discussion – Each week, we will discuss a chapter of the assigned book and/or another reading. In several classes, we will have guest speakers attend class to provide insights from their expertise. Students are expected to actively engage in weekly discussions. Before each class, students will submit via Canvas two written discussion questions based on the weekly reading. For each class, one or two students will lead discussion of the readings.
- (2) Recipe Assignment – Students will write a short essay (~2 pages maximum, not including citations) about a recipe of their choosing (pending approval from the instructor). The essay must explain the cultural and historical context of the recipe, discuss the geographic origins of all ingredients, briefly discuss the cooking methods, and describe to the best of their ability the way that the human body “tastes” the flavor of this dish. Each student will give a ~3-minute presentation (with one slide) in class on March 7th. The goal is to get you thinking about what you eat, why you eat it, and how you eat it.
- (3) Final Project – Students will work in pairs on a project on a topic of their choosing related to the course that includes (1) a two-page essay, (2) an infographic explaining a concept related to the topic, and (3) a ~10-minute presentation in one of the two final classes. The goal is to go deeper into learning about any of the topics discussed in the readings or class discussion and then sharing that new knowledge with the class. If necessary, the instructor is prepared to bring appropriate food to accompany these presentations.

Anticipated Schedule (subject to change)

Week	Date	Reading/Assignment	Topic
1	January 10		Introduction to class and discussion of syllabus
2	January 17	Prologue: Eco-Evolutionary Gastronomy; Chapter 1: Tongue-tied	<i>How do we taste?</i>
3	January 24	Chapter 2: The Flavor Seekers	<i>Early humans, primatology</i>
4	January 31	Chapter 3: A Nose for Flavor	<i>How do we smell?</i>
5	February 7	<i>Guest Speaker: Dr. Steve Munger</i>	UF Center for Smell & Taste
6	February 14	Chapter 4: Culinary Extinction; "The Pear King" from <i>The Lost Feast</i>	<i>Culinary extinctions</i>
7	February 21	Chapter 5: Forbidden Fruits	
8	February 28	Chapter 6: On the Origin of Spices	
9	March 7	<i>Recipe Presentations</i>	<i>Favorite recipes!</i>
10	SPRING BREAK		
11	March 21	Chapter 7: Cheesy Horse and Sour Beer	<i>Fermentation</i>
12	March 28	"Flavor of Biodiversity" from <i>Never Home Alone</i>	<i>Of bread and microbes</i>
13	April 4	Chapter 8: The Art of Cheese	<i>Mmm, cheese!</i>
14	April 11	Chapter 9: Dinner Makes Us Human	<i>Art of the Meal</i>
15	April 18	<i>Final Group Presentations</i>	
16	April 25	<i>Final Group Presentations</i>	

Grading and Attendance Policies

Participation 75%

Recipe Assignment 10%

Final Project 20%

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found in the Undergraduate Catalog.

Grading Scale

A	93–100%	C+	77–79%
A-	90–92%	C-	70–72%
B+	87–89%	D+	67–69%
B	83–86%	D	63–66%
B-	80–82%	D-	60–62%
C	73–76%	F	<60%

More information on grades and grade points can be found in the Undergraduate Catalog.

Class Demeanor

Students are expected to be to class on time and behave in a manner that is respectful to the instructor and to fellow students. Please do not use cell phones during class. Opinions held by other students should be respected in discussion, and conversations that do not contribute to the discussion should be held at minimum, if at all. Emails sent to the instructor must follow professional etiquette.

Accommodations

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the [Disability Resource Center](#). It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester. Faculty can expect to receive a student's accommodation letter within the first 3 weeks of classes; however, if a student registers with the DRC later in the semester faculty are still obligated to facilitate accommodations. Neither faculty nor administrators may independently deny a request for accommodation that is approved by the Disability Resource Center.

Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this class, as it constitutes intellectual theft and academic dishonesty. I will use Turnitin on all written assignments. This is a class about the joys of food; don't cheat. UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." [The](#)

[Honor Code](#) specifies behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

All students must conform to UF's Honesty Code regarding cheating, plagiarism, and the use of copyrighted materials, which you can find at the [Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code](#).

Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

1. Stealing, misquoting, insufficiently paraphrasing, or patch-writing.
2. Self-plagiarism, which is the reuse of the Student's own submitted work, or the simultaneous submission of the Student's own work, without the full and clear acknowledgment and permission of the Faculty to whom it is submitted.
3. Submitting materials from any source without proper attribution.
4. Submitting a document, assignment, or material that, in whole or in part, is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment the Student did not author.

Evaluations

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at [GatorEvals Public Data](#).

Additional Resources

- **U Matter, We Care:** If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit umatter.ufl.edu/ to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
- **Counseling and Wellness Center:** Visit counseling.ufl.edu/ or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
- **Student Health Care Center:** Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit shcc.ufl.edu/
- **University Police Department:** Visit police.ufl.edu/ or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
 - **UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center:** For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; [UF Health Emergency room/trauma center](#).