

Degrees & Majors



Feed your mind....and your stomach By Kathryn Brackett

Food is a necessity of life, but it's also important in the classroom. Dr. Corrie Norman's freshman honors seminar, *Food, Meaning, and the Sacred*, explores the relationships between food and religious traditions around the world. The twelve-week interdisciplinary course pays special attention to gender ideologies and

women's history, particularly balancing theoretical and experiential approaches to food.

Not only do students participate in thorough discussions based on various reading assignments, but they also test their appetites with a range of cuisines that apply to course themes. Students have expanded their taste buds with Afghani bread, Japanese tea, and even BBQ made by a notable pitmaster. Converse students also explore the foods of religious communities like Cambodian Buddhists, Greek Orthodox, and African American Baptists.

To experience religious foodways firsthand, students participate in excursions, such as attending ethnic festivals and ceremonies. While it may be impossible to attend all of the scheduled trips, students are encouraged to participate in as many as they can.

There are also several opportunities to hone analytical writing and communication skills. Three main projects are designed to challenge the student's intellect by addressing issues of theory in connection with food across time and culture.

Project material includes conducting research from Converse students and then analyzing the results in short essays, and two community assignments in which dossiers are submitted at the end of term.



The course concludes with a chocolate tasting, based on analysis of two recent novels. This learning opportunity is intended to be stimulating, engaging, and maybe even a little fattening.

Primarily, the religion course aims to feed and challenge the student's mind. Strong working skills, proficiency on assignments, active participation, but most importantly an open mind, is greatly encouraged. Through intensive study and observation, students learn to view food not only as a necessity of life, but also as a useful category in understanding religious belief and cultural practices around the world.