

**Course Syllabus – Honors Abroad, 1 Credit**  
**Food, Culture and Power in Mesoamerica, Oaxaca**

Instructor: Walter Little, Professor of Anthropology, U Albany, SUNY

Course Overview:

This class is a one-credit study abroad course that builds on the regular semester class, TANT 243 (3 credits), **Food, Culture and Power in Mesoamerica**. This course will focus on the food cultural and politics of one of the regions of Mesoamerica, Oaxaca, that were studied in the spring semester 2019 class.

Students will learn through observation and practical application about indigenous foods and their meanings in Oaxaca. They will study the ways in which those practices have influenced regional and national Mexican food traditions from historical and political contexts by spending a week in Oaxaca City and making short day trips to two nearby towns.

All course activities will be through direct participation: visiting museums, touring marketplaces, learning to make food, and talking to those who make, sell, and consume food. Students and professor will do all activities together and the professor will lead or moderate daily class discussions.

Grades will be based on students' participation: attendance in all course activities and excursions, active engagement in daily class discussions that are in preparation to or after excursions and demonstrations.

There are no books or other required course readings. This is because the students will be applying knowledge that they already learned in the spring semester course.

Class Schedule: NOTE: the specific schedule is tentative and subject to change

Note – Each class day begins with a hybrid lecture/discussion related to the day's activities. All discussions and activities will be done jointly, students and professor

Day 1: Arrival to Oaxaca City, Orientation and overview of Oaxaca City: practical information and safety.

Day 2: Oaxaca City. Morning historical and cultural tour of downtown Oaxaca. Afternoon visit to the Museum of Cultures of Oaxaca, Santo Domingo ([http://sic.gob.mx/ficha.php?table=museo&table\\_id=105](http://sic.gob.mx/ficha.php?table=museo&table_id=105)).

The tour of the museum will provide us with the opportunity to see first-hand the material culture that constitute Oaxacan indigenous diets, learn Mexican perspectives of what these materials and plants mean. Students will be assigned activities to attune themselves to the specific items and exhibits that are related to food production.

Day 3: Oaxaca City. Morning tour of Jardín Etnobotánico de Oaxaca (<http://jardinoaxaca.mx/>). Afternoon tour of historical and cultural downtown Oaxaca.

The tour of the ethno-botanical garden allows us learn about the plants that constitute Oaxacan indigenous diets, learn how these plants have contributed to Oaxacan and Mexican identities. Students will be assigned activities to focus on the ways the plants used in food production and what makes some indigenous and others not.

Day 4: Oaxaca City. Lecture on Oaxacan food traditions and tourism at the Welte Institute.  
Class on making molé.

We will visit the Welte Institute (<https://institutowelte.org/>) and learn about the anthropological research traditions of Oaxaca and listen to a lecture on food politics and tourism in Oaxaca. We will, then, visit a kitchen and learn to make mole (a sauce served with meat or vegetables) that's roots are in pre-Colombian indigenous Oaxacan culture. The experience will be contextualized in the earlier Welte lecture/discussion of food politics and tourism.

Day 5: Oaxaca City. Tours of the Benito Juárez and 20 of November Markets with food sampling experiences and conversations with vendors.

These two markets are the main places that vendors of food (unprepared and prepared) work. We will spend the day learning about the kinds of foods that are sold, who sells them, and who buys them. We will eat lunch in one of the marketplaces.

Day 6: Excursion to the nearby town, Tlacolula de Matamoros, to visit the market. Lunch in the Market.

Tlacolula de Matamoros is a nearby indigenous town that has a well-known and busy Sunday market. Indigenous vendors come from the entire Oaxaca Valley to sell a large variety of food items. We will learn how the marketplace is organized and a bit about the people who work and buy there. We will eat in the marketplace at one of comedores (marketplace restaurant) that serves Goat BBQ, which is not barbeque as we know it in the United States, but a typical of stew. We will talk to the cooks and learn why this town is known for this dish.

Day 7 (Monday, May 27): Insects as food in Oaxaca. Indigenous to national to international consumption.

We will learn about and sample the main edible insects of Oaxaca: chapulines (grasshoppers), chicatanas (flying ants), and gusanos de maguey (maguey worms). We will visit the nearby indigenous village of Santa Ana del Valle to see a chapuline farm and learn how they are prepared.