FROM PUEBLO TO POSTMATES
FOOD AND CLASS IN LOS ANGELES

MAY 18 - JUNE 19

What can a taco tell us about gentrification? Is public transportation making access to food easier? Will Los Angeles ethically grow into its current vogue, or instead race to cash in? Join Professor Michael Petitti as we explore these issues and more in a comprehensive study of Los Angeles and its renowned food scene. During our Maymester, students will engage with a wide range of media, visit a number of neighborhoods and iconic food establishments, and converse with an assortment of guest speakers. Through discussions, readings, field trips, research, and in-class and on-site speakers—including chefs, food critics, historians, activists, and food entrepreneurs—students will come to better understand the issues inherent to every restaurant, neighborhood, and, most importantly, to the city of Los Angeles.
FROM PUEBLO TO POSTMATES: FOOD & CLASS IN LOS ANGELES

INSTRUCTOR

Professor Michael Petitti, Thematic Option Honors Program

WHEN & WHERE

May 18 - June 19 in Los Angeles, CA

COURSE DESCRIPTION

From celebrated Korean-Mexican fusion served from a truck (Kogi), to food the New York Times has praised as “highly Instagrammable” (Botanica), Los Angeles has segued from a renowned food scene into an international food mecca. In fact, the food scene in Los Angeles is so globally appealing that the late Jonathan Gold won a Pulitzer Prize writing about the city’s cuisine. But the A-list chefs, celebrity clientele, and famed or hidden gems of Los Angeles’ food scene only reveal half of the story about how Los Angeles eats and why.

Undergirding the success stories connected with the thriving food scene in Los Angeles—the taco truck or strip-mall noodle shop boosted by a newspaper article or feature television spot—major discrepancies abound: the global finance that masks exploitative business practices, the market research contrasted against the legislated food deserts, and the celebration of farm-to-table meals as food scarcity thrives. In other words, issues of food in Los Angeles often obfuscate issues of class. Who can eat where and what and why is itself a matter of class, and highly contested throughout Los Angeles. Heightened visibility for the food scene in Los Angeles demands that we take a closer look at how food is a conduit for class-based issues throughout the city.

During our Maymester, students will explore and investigate Los Angeles’ food scene in order to uncover the issues of class often hidden in plain sight. Students will read articles and literature, listen to podcasts and albums, watch films and television programs, and converse with an assortment of guest speakers in order to comprehensively track the progression and stratification of Los Angeles’ food scene. Additionally, various in-class and on-site speakers—luminaries from the LA food scene—will help students understand the particular issues inherent to every restaurant and neighborhood they visit, and to comprehend the efforts being made by those who wish to ethically sustain or champion the various cuisines of Los Angeles. Through research, writing, presentations, and food-preparation, students will discover that food, though it has class-based limits, can also be used as a tool for advancement, resolution, and empowerment.

HOW TO APPLY

Link to web application will be emailed from the TO office. Applications due December 2 by 5:00pm.

For inquiries, contact Professor Michael Petitti at petitti@usc.edu.

ESTIMATED COSTS

USC COSTS (charged to student account)

Special Session Commitment Fee $400 (non-refundable, applied toward tuition)
4 units of regular tuition* $7,712

OUT-OF-POCKET PROGRAM COSTS

Housing* $1,500
Food (course related) $400
Transportation $75
Books & Supplies $20

*Housing rate is a rough estimate. Costs will vary. Students are responsible for finding their own housing.

FINANCIAL AID & OTHER DETAILS

All costs are estimates and subject to change. Dornsife students will not be eligible to apply for partial funding through Student Opportunities for Academic Research (SOAR/SURF).

Most financial aid, including scholarships, grants, loans, and tuition assistance benefits, is transferable to official USC study abroad programs; however, the amount of aid will be adjusted based on the program-specific cost of attendance, as indicated on this cost sheet. Some types of financial aid may be reduced if the overseas program costs less than one semester of on-campus study.

Students and/or parents may be eligible to apply for additional educational loans through the Financial Aid Office in order to pay for programs with a total cost exceeding that of a standard USC semester.

Non-Refundable Commitment Fee: This will be charged upon commitment to program and will be credited to your USC student account after you begin your program. Please note that fee is NOT refunded if you withdraw from this course.

During the course of program operations, actual costs may vary. USC reserves the right to adjust fees at any time.