

Call for Papers: The Henri Peyre French Institute Food Seminar: SALT

Generally viewed as the ultimate dietary malefactor in contemporary Western cultures, salt has adopted many meanings and held many functions in a long historical period, both in the West and in lands impacted by Western colonialism. France is no exception in that respect.

As the first section of the Henri Peyre French Institute's six-semester series on Food and Foodstuffs in the French and Francophone worlds (*Food, Power, Exchange and Identity: Food and Foodstuffs in the French and Francophone Worlds*), the Fall 2014 Seminar on Salt includes online visual exhibits and an online forum and culminates in a full-day colloquium on December 5, 2014.

The December 5th Colloquium at The Graduate Center of CUNY seeks to bring together scholars who are currently working on any aspect of SALT in French cuisine, gastronomy, food culture, economics, political and social history, and the arts. Rather than the traditional "conference paper," we encourage fifteen-minute presentations of ongoing work, especially those including digital components, although full papers are also welcome as long as they fit the time limit. The seminar's work is open to any time period, from medieval and early modern to the contemporary world.

The seminar seeks to provide a forum to present work, test hypotheses, and exchange conclusions with other scholars interested in examining the place of SALT in French and Francophone cultures within a distinctly interdisciplinary framework. The seminar's one-day colloquium should bring together literary scholars and social historians with art historians, anthropologists, sociologists, specialists of political economy, and researchers working at the confluence of the sciences and the humanities. The colloquium will also honor the groundbreaking work of the late Claude Gaignebet, a distinguished French ethnologist, on the symbolic and ritual meanings of salt in early modern and folk cultures.

Culinary uses of salt have impacted the way that French food has developed into its own particular style between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. Its presence and dosage in food and food cultures are also of considerable importance in the Caribbean and other areas of the "Francophone" reach. Salt's early functions range from medical applications to its indispensable role in the preservation of meat and fish. Satirical themes in literature evoked the combination of heavy drinking with consumption of salty foods, and, well before Reformation attacks on the theology of Lent, took aim at the wretched foods imposed by the Lenten diet. The development and exploitation of salt marshes in several regions of France had a profound impact on local economies and cultures: Protestant investment in such enterprises in early modern Western France adds an intriguing dimension to the social history of religious strife in the 16th and 17th centuries. The French monarchy's much reviled tax on salt was a significant factor in early modern unrest up to the Revolution. Salts of different origins also were present in early industrial applications and the development of distinctive methods to process salt has local economic and cultural implications. Salt was precious enough to warrant containment in special and valuable vessels. Salt's symbolic implications have informed hermetic doctrines, literature and art in myriad ways into the modern period...Salt is ubiquitous, familiar, ordinary, complex, and mysterious...

Themes and topics might include, but are not at all limited to, the following:

The symbolic uses of salt in art or literature.

The symbolic registers of Salt and saltiness in interpreting food culture.

Salt in regional or Francophone cuisines.

Imagery and discourses on the excess of saltiness in the food regimen of Lent.

The culinary and/or symbolic function of salt in the preserving of foods.

Representations of the relation of salt and wine, especially in late medieval and early modern texts.

Salt, culinary registers, and the health regimen.

Salt in early medicine. Salt in alchemical treatises and practices.

Salt in material culture; objects that preserve and/or present it

The salt industry in French history, especially in local economies and communities. “Villes de sel” in French cultural history. The “route du sel” between Hyeres and Torino.

Saltmarshes and salt works in local economies, especially in the early modern period, and especially in the Western regions of France and in the Aigues-Mortes area. The role of Protestants in operating such salt production centers.

The hated *gabelle* or salt tax. Local conflicts over the control and trade of salt.

Salt production: processing and immigration.

Industrial applications of salt and different types of salts in early industry, such as the dying of textiles.

Salt extraction enforced by French colonial authorities.

Religious and Ritual uses of salt. For instance, but not limited to: Salt in hospitality or funerary rites. Salt and conjuring. Belief that ingesting salt frees the *zombi* and allows return of the soul (Haiti).

Please send a brief abstract (or description of your ongoing work) on any aspect of the theme of salt) no longer than one page, accompanied by a current CV, to the Henri Peyre French institute (<http://www.henripeyrefrenchinstitute.org/contact.php>) by October 31. Responses to submissions will be sent out within two weeks. The languages of communication are English and French. If you are coming from outside of the New York City area, please inform us of any urgent travel needs.

For more information on the three-year Food seminar, please visit the Henri Peyre French Institute’s website at

<http://www.henripeyrefrenchinstitute.org/events-programs/2014/food-and-foodstuff/index.php>