



JINDAL SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES & LITERATURE

India's Global School of Language & Literature Studies



Tasting Stories: Writing/Translating Food

Course Information

Cross Elective & Minor course for Jindal School of Languages and Literature, Fall Semester 2026

Course Code: **LLFA05-BLL-ENGL-1127**

Course Credits: 4 Credits

Course Duration: 15 weeks

Meeting Hours: TBD

Instructor Information

Dr Somdatta Bhattacharya, Associate Professor, JSLL

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Course Description

“There are three important things in life. The first is to eat well, and. . . I have forgotten the others.” -- Marquise de Sévigné

Food is never merely sustenance; it carries meanings of identity, memory, power, class, gender, and culture. This course explores how **cooking, eating, hunger, and food practices** are represented in literature and cinema. Through short stories, selections from novels, poetry, memoirs, and films—particularly from the Indian context and translated world literature—students will examine how food structures narratives of migration, belonging, caste, gender, colonialism, and globalisation.

The course is particularly interested in seeing how food travels across languages, cultures, and media through acts of translation, and for this, students will engage with texts originally written in Indian languages in translation, as well as global works where food plays a central narrative role. The course situates these texts within frameworks from **translation studies, food studies, and cultural theory**, paying attention to issues of **untranslatability, authenticity, domestication vs. foreignisation, and sensory experience**.

Particular emphasis will be placed on the Indian context, where food is deeply entangled with **caste, region, religion, gender, and memory**, and where translation mediates between local specificity and global readership. Films will be analysed as a form of “audiovisual translation,” where food is rendered through image, sound, and performance, often negotiating between realism and aestheticisation.



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By examining how recipes, culinary vocabularies, and food practices are carried across linguistic and cultural boundaries, the course encourages students to think of translation not merely as a linguistic act, but as a **cultural and sensory negotiation**. Students will critically analyse how food narratives construct identity, evoke nostalgia, and circulate within global cultural economies.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. analyse literary and cinematic representations of food and eating
2. understand food as a marker of identity, memory, caste, class, and gender
3. Engage with theoretical frameworks from food studies, translation studies and cultural theory
4. compare food narratives across cultures and languages to understand what is translatable and what is not
5. Critically read and write about translated texts, both written and visual

Primary Readings

- Sidney Mintz — selections from *Sweetness and Power*
- Arjun Appadurai — “**How to Make a National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India**”
- Jhumpa Lahiri — “**Mrs Sen’s**” (from *Interpreter of Maladies*)
- Madhur Jaffrey — selections from *Climbing the Mango Trees*
- **The Lunchbox** (Ritesh Batra, 2013)
- Laura Esquivel — selections from *Like Water for Chocolate*
- Toi Derricotte— “My Dad & Sardines”
- Ismat Chughtai — “**Nanhi ki Nani**” (from *Contemporary Indian Short Stories*)
- Rohinton Mistry — “**Auspicious Occasion**” (from *Tales from Firozsha Baag*)
- **The Great Indian Kitchen** (Jeo Baby, 2021)
- Baby Kamble — selections from *The Prisons We Broke*
- Documentary clips on caste and food practices

Course Evaluation

Food Narrative Assignment-15% (Students write a **personal or ethnographic essay about a food memory** of about 800 words, linking it to theoretical readings from the course.)

Translation Assignment-15% (An 800 word translation work; a **recipe OR food passage** from an Indian language text into English with brief commentary on challenges)



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Oral Group Presentations-20% (Students analyse a **food scene in literature or cinema** using theoretical frameworks.)

Final Term Paper-50% (3000-word research essay on a topic such as:

- Food and caste in Dalit literature
- Culinary memory in diasporic writing
- Food and sensory aesthetics in literature
- The politics of hunger in Indian narratives

Academic Integrity

A Note on Classroom Punctuality and Conduct:

JSLI conducts all classes on a foundation of professionalism. It is *absolutely* expected that students be present in class by the start time of the class. The instructor will not wait for you to begin a regular class, and you will not be given extra time if an assignment has already begun.

Show courtesy to your instructor and co-learners by engaging with the class and by not being on a device (laptop/mobile phone) during a lecture. Please also note that the classroom is a place for free expression and critical thinking and this comes with a responsibility on the part of students to respect opinions expressed by others and actively participate in the classroom discussion.