The UO Food Studies Graduate Specialization selected the following awardees for the 2013 Food Studies Graduate Student Research Award

Jaime Dexter, Anthropology:
Documenting Ancient Foods: Unearthing Paleoindian Diet in Oregon

With the gracious support of the UO Food Studies graduate research grant, I had the opportunity to visit two early American archaeological sites in Oregon to collect paleoethnobotanical samples for my PhD research. In June, I met up with Geoff Smith, a faculty member in the Anthropology Department at UNR, and his archaeological field school students just outside of Plush, Oregon. We spent a week working at LSP-1 rockshelter, an early Holocene hunter-gatherer camp site located in the Warner Valley. I sampled the archaeological deposits for both pollen and macrobotanical remains in order to determine what plant resources were targeted for food and medicine by the site’s prehistoric occupants. Paleoethnobotanical research is integral to reconstructing Paleoindian diet and also to gain a broader understanding of which plant taxa were culturally important during the colonization of the Great Basin at the end of the last ice age.

Brooke Havlik, Environmental Studies:
Eating in Urban “Frontiers:” Alternative Food and Gentrification in Chicago

As a recipient of the 2013 Food Studies Research Grant for my master’s thesis titled: “Eating in Urban Frontiers: Alternative Food and Gentrification in Chicago,” I was able to examine how alternative food both contributes to and is a form of resistance against the uprooting of longstanding Puerto Rican and Mexican communities on Chicago’s westside. With this invaluable opportunity, I have been able to do in-depth, primary research on the intersections of race, food and urban spaces while providing prescriptive analyses for combating injustice. I could not be more grateful.
Brian Ott, Sociology:
“Sense Work”: An Analysis of Third Wave Coffee Shops

I spent a few weekends this summer visiting specialty coffee shops in Portland as well as one week visiting shops in New York. Visiting many coffee shops and participating in cuppings has helped provide me with some good data for my research on how third-wave baristas become connoisseurs of coffee tasting and in developing my concept of "sense work" where I am analyzing taste as a social, and not simply a biological or physiological, process. In addition to attending cuppings, I also took a week long barista training class.

Danielle Seid, English:
Asian Food and the Cultural Politics of Las Vegas Chinatown

My research this summer took me to the Las Vegas desert, where a pan-ethnic “Chinatown” is thriving. Over a period of two weeks, I observed the growth of this food community firsthand. I observed and conversed with visitors and residents and dined at some of the newer restaurants inside and outside of what is formally identified in Las Vegas as Chinatown. As a signifier, “Asian” has a wide and somewhat unusual currency in Las Vegas. Many of the hotels and casinos seek to attract Asian visitors through various cultural offerings—lucky Buddhas in hotel lobbies, ornate Chinese New Year altars, and “authentic” Asian high cuisine restaurants. But not far from these “attractions,” I found Asian American residents and visitors simply living their lives. In such a fast-paced and chaotic city, the mundane tasks of eating, food shopping, and cooking keep a steadier rhythm for many Las Vegas residents and visitors.

Ívan Sandoval-Cervantes, Anthropology:
The Importance of Corn in a Transborder Community

My project seeks to document the importance of subsistence agriculture in multi-sited transborder communities. More specifically, I have worked with a Zapotec community that exists simultaneously in Oaxaca and in Oregon. For the Food Studies project, I am particularly interested in understanding the role of agriculture, especially the production of corn, in this transborder community. During the summer I conducted interviews in Salem and in Woodburn, Oregon. Even though, many of this community’s migrants have lived in Oregon for long periods of time, their connections to agriculture is still important in their daily lives, especially because it relates to their families and social networks in Oaxaca. Remittances and subsistence agriculture support each other, and allow this transborder community to continue to grow local corn varieties.
James Daria and Samantha King, Anthropology:
Mushroom Plant Workers and Unionization: A Comparison of Two Plants in Oregon and California.

Although farmworkers occupy an important and essential link in food systems and commodity chains, they remain largely invisible in contemporary movements for sustainability and food security. Discourses prioritizing organic and healthy agricultural products for the consumer market often hide the exploitation of the labor used in their harvest. Worker rights and fair labor standards should be integral to healthy food, sustainable agriculture, and environmental concerns. To this end, our ethnographic film seeks to document the voices of agricultural workers in Oregon’s heartland. Through the testimony of immigrant workers in the fight to organize an agricultural plant in Salem, Oregon, the global connections between agriculture, immigration, and food justice are made apparent in the voices of the protagonists themselves. Our research team spent the summer and fall of 2013 conducting field research and interviews to reconstruct this important aspect of local history. This research was made possible due to our support from the Food Studies grant.
We can offer this support thanks to a grant from the Graduate School that is funding the first year of the Food Studies Graduate Specialization. In addition, Global Oregon is generously supporting the following two projects with strong international dimensions:

**Avi Conant**, Asian Studies:
The Agro-Industrialization of Pork Production in China

My Food Studies Graduate Research Grant enabled me to fly to the People’s Republic of China ahead of schedule, and begin my preliminary research on the political geography of food, animals, and meat in Mainland China.

**Maureece Levin**, Anthropology:
Food Production, Culture, and Environment in the Tropical Pacific: An Archaeological Case Study from Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia

My project looks at prehistoric and early historic food production systems in Pohnpei, Micronesia. A significant portion of the project involves analysis of phytoliths from archaeological sites. Phytoliths, which are made of silica absorbed into plants, can provide a record of what plants grew or were used in and around archaeological sites. My summer work has focused around the laboratory. Last spring, I collected plant reference materials in Hawai‘i for both phytolith and plant macroremain analysis, in collaboration with the University of Hawai‘i Herbarium and Lyon Arboretum. These materials are important for archaeological analysis as they provide something to which archaeological samples can be compared. I completed processing these botanical materials and have been recording their phytolith content using an optical microscope. I have also processed a large number of sediment samples from agricultural-related features in Pohnpei. The content of these sediment samples contains important information as to what types of plants people were growing in their gardens or storing in pits for later use.
The awardees will share the results of their research with the UO food studies community in next year’s “Food Talks” series—our first talk featured Environmental Studies MA student Brooke Havlik and our second features PhD Candidate Jaime Dexter.

The Food Studies Awards Committee and Advisory Council hope that graduate students will consider complementing their degree with a Food Studies Graduate Specialization. For more details on this new program, please contact Program Assistant, Lindsay Naylor (naylorja@uoregon.edu) or check out our website: http://foodstudies.uoregon.edu/