

## **The 3<sup>rd</sup> International Interdisciplinary Conference (online)**

### **'Food and Drink as a Curse'**

**13-14 September 2021**

#### **Organizers:**

Pedagogical University of Krakow

Technological University Dublin

For much of society, food and drink is a blessing, where various cultures thank their gods for bountiful supply, however, on occasion and for certain people, it can also prove to be a curse. Eating and drinking are never solely purely utilitarian activities aimed at satisfying hunger and thirst; both are cultural acts laden with significance. For example, anthropologist Michael Dietler considers alcohol 'as a special class of food with psychoactive properties.' Food and drink choices reveal one's views, beliefs, assumptions, prejudices, and personalities. We eat and drink to celebrate special occasions; we often consider food and drink as a reward, and we turn to them at times, for comfort and relief, whether alone or in company. Nature's bounty of wild herbs and fungi are a perennial blessing for many, yet prove a curse to those who consume their poisonous varieties. Contaminated food and drink result annually in multiple fatalities around the globe. Another modern 'food curse' paradox is that in the US and many parts of the developed globalized world, hunger and obesity are now affecting the same population, due in part to low cost foods and fast foods of poor nutritional quality.

Christian doctrine links the curse of original sin with Adam and Eve's disobedience to God by eating the forbidden fruit. Similar motifs appear in literature and mythology all over the world. Eating and drinking are a vehicle for expressing friendship, for smoothing social interactions, and for showing concern. Commensality is a hugely important social activity, with evidence in archaeological records of communal feasting going back at least 12,000 years; yet the fear of poisoning tormented lords and royalty in foreign courts and within their own castles. Food terrorism is the deliberate tampering of food to harm individuals or society; food and drink have been weaponized for millennia in times of war. The refusal of food or drink can also be a powerful act, whether fasting to distain, political hunger strikes or a symptom of anorexia nervosa.

Historically, human's domestication of animals and development of towns and cities resulted in the gradual resistance of certain individuals to animal related viruses and diseases. The germs that European explorers brought with them to the New World proved more deadly to the native populations than either their guns or steel. The current pandemic of coronavirus is an example of the so-called 'zoonotic spillover' resulting in zoonotic diseases. Food may have been at the root of this Covid-19 curse, and many societies are experiencing elevated levels of the curse of alcoholism and related diseases during the subsequent lockdowns.

The organisers welcome proposals for papers that explore various aspects of food and drink as a curse. Possible themes for presentations include but are not limited to:

- The environment (global warming, food waste, intensive farming, drought)
- Foodborne and food related diseases (Covid-19, cholera, typhoid, botulism etc.)
- Food-related health issues (gluttony, drunkenness, obesity, diabetes, eating disorders)
- Food scarcity (hunger, famines, political sanctions, patenting seeds etc.)
- Food terrorism and weaponization (contaminating food to inflict harm, food and war)
- Folktales / Folklore, Literature, Mythology (e.g. fairies cursing food etc.)
- Sumptuary laws (historic and current)
- Manipulation (hunger strike, as a weapon of torture, force feeding)
- Elitism (status, symbolism, etiquette, hierarchies, material culture)
- Disruption (Brexit, food policies, taxation, supply chains etc.)
- Power (geopolitics, colonialization, appropriation, gastrodiplomacy etc.)
- Modern food and drink (almond milk, soya milk, alternative milks, food intolerances)
- Fast food/ junk food and sugary beverages - a curse for human health

**Submissions should be sent to [food.and.drink.as@gmail.com](mailto:food.and.drink.as@gmail.com) by 1st May 2021.** You will be notified of the panel's decision by 21st May 2021.

All submissions should include:

- title of the presentation
- abstract of no more than 500 words
- a brief biography of the presenter or presenters
- contact details

Before the abstract submission the author(s) should proceed with the Online Registration on the conference website: **foodascourse.weebly.com**

Accepted abstracts will be included in the conference Book of Abstract on the conference website.

Selected papers will be published in a peer-reviewed monograph.

**Please note that there is no conference fee for either presenters or for attendees.**

**Please forward this notice to any interested parties.**