

Agrégation interne d'anglais

Session 2022

Épreuve EPC

**Exposé de la préparation
d'un cours**

**EPC
454**

Ce sujet comprend 3 documents :

- Document 1 : Extract from "Food trucks find new life in the suburbs amid the pandemic", *www.today.com*, October 2, 2020.
- Document 2 : Richard J. Williams, "Why we love 'interruption': urban ruins, food trucks and the cult of decay" in S. Jordan and C. Lindner (eds), *Cities Interrupted: Visual culture and urban space*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016.
- Document 3 : Tim Carman, "Should white chefs sell burritos? A Portland food cart's revealing controversy", *The Washington Post*, May 26, 2017.

Compte tenu des caractéristiques de ce dossier et des différentes possibilités d'exploitation qu'il offre, vous indiquerez à quel niveau d'apprentissage vous pourriez le destiner et quels objectifs vous vous fixeriez. Vous présenterez et justifierez votre démarche pour atteindre ces objectifs.

Document 1: Extract from “Food trucks find new life in the suburbs amid the pandemic”, *www.today.com*, October 2, 2020.

Document vidéo (2'56") à consulter sur la tablette multimédia fournie.

Document 2 : Richard J. Williams, "Why we love 'interruption': urban ruins, food trucks and the cult of decay" in S. Jordan and C. Lindner (eds), *Cities Interrupted: Visual culture and urban space*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016, pp. 25-26.

The motorized kitchen has a history as long as the automobile itself but its recent, mostly American, iteration is a product of the post-recessionary city. An object of much critical fascination, it has been accompanied by a boom in highly aestheticized forms of food criticism, in which the object of attention is, to all intents and purposes, indistinguishable from art (*Lucky Peach*, a sort of *Artforum* of food launched in 2011, is a good example).

The food truck is a perfect object in this case. It not only has the requisite look of austerity (it looks cheap) but also, we could say, performs an interruption in urban space. Its attraction is that of the carnival, albeit on a small scale: it rolls into town (or the school yard, or parking lot) and temporarily interrupts daily life. It does this partly through food: its contemporary iteration is big on spectacular culinary fusions, all colour and strong flavours. And it does it through the social life it temporarily engenders: the trucks are physical spectacles in themselves, and they make places out of non-places, while the inevitable lines to be served provide an opportunity to socialize (waiting in line is indeed part of the experience). The waiting and socializing usually have some ancillary support: buskers, music groups, etc. The overall effect of the food truck is unique, but it draws on a number of precedents from the 1960s: it resembles any number of temporary, performative, participatory actions in the realm of art.

Arte Povera would be a good comparator. Initially an Italian tendency defined by the art critic Germano Celant, it became an international label describing an art of intentionally poor materials and austerity, a riposte to the 'rich' art of the museums. The New York-based critic Lucy Lippard's book *Six Years* (1997) surveys the late 1960s' and early 1970s' art scene and contains any number of possible precedents for the food truck's aesthetics. And as she makes clear in the introduction and postscript, the aesthetic of these projects had an explicit politics too. To make an art of poor materials, a temporary, informal, low-key art was a form of cultural resistance. To engage with this stuff was to engage with the low, rather than the high, the street, not the museum, the mass of people, not the elite. Something of that rhetoric survives in the food truck, and it does not greatly matter if customers recognize it or not. The radical aesthetics of the 1960s have, one way or another, become part of the wider culture.

Document 3 : Tim Carman, "Should white chefs sell burritos? A Portland food cart's revealing controversy.", *The Washington Post*, May 26, 2017.

Portland, Ore., has become the epicenter in a growing movement to call out white people who profit off the culinary ideas and dishes swiped from other cultures.

5 In the days since two white women were shamed into shutting down their pop-up burrito cart after telling a reporter that they had "picked the brains of every tortilla lady" in Puerto Nuevo, Mexico, Portland has become all but fed up with cultural appropriation within its city limits. One writer has stated, flat out, that "Portland has an appropriation problem," going on to explain (the boldface emphasis is the writer's):

10 Because of Portland's underlying racism, the people who rightly own these traditions and cultures that exist are already treated poorly. These appropriating businesses are **erasing and exploiting** their already marginalized identities for the purpose of profit and praise.

15 Someone in the City of Roses has even created a Google doc, listing the white-owned restaurants that have appropriated cuisines outside their own culture. For each entry, the document suggests alternative restaurants owned by people of color. One "Appropriative Business" is Voodoo Doughnut, the small doughnut chain accused of profiting off a religion thought to combine African, Catholic and Native American traditions.

20 Who can't identify with a campaign to support the people whose voices are muffled in a culture still dominated by white males? Some immigrants might take this the wrong way coming from a white guy from the Midwest, who works at a mainstream newspaper, no less. Yet, I must confess that I have trouble accepting this all-or-nothing mission to pry white chefs' fingers from
25 any dish not of their own culture. Part of it has to do with the country we share, a land of immigrants, whose food is available to anyone with even a tiny sense of curiosity. A white diner is bound to fall in love with some of it.

The problem, of course, is not that a white diner falls in love with an immigrant cuisine. It's that a white person profits from the cuisine or, more
30 troublesome for many, becomes the leading authority on it, rather than a chef born into the culture. I'm thinking specifically about chefs and/or authors such as Rick Bayless (with Mexican cuisine), Andy Ricker (with Thai food) and Fuchsia Dunlop (with Sichuan cooking). Bayless, a James Beard Award winner multiple times over, has faced the question of cultural
35 appropriation so often, he once wondered aloud if it's a matter of reverse racism. [...]

In fact, Krishnendu Ray, an associate professor and chair of the Department of Nutrition, Food Studies and Public Health at New York University, argues

40 in favor of cultural appropriation, but only if the outsiders embrace more than the plate of food sitting in front of them.

“If you pay attention to the food and to the language and to their lives, that is not a colonizing act,” Ray told *The Washington Post’s* Lavanya Ramanathan. “I, in general, do not think appropriation is a bad thing. There’s all this discussion about cultural appropriation. Should we all be
45 imprisoned in our little holes, with our cultural walls, completely closed off to others? If you are eating another’s food, engaging with their lives, engaging with their ways of conceiving the world, that is a welcome engagement. That is how newness enters the world.”

Ray’s position starts to get to the heart of my own feelings on the subject. Accusations of cultural appropriation are often grounded in an underlying
50 assumption: that privileged white folks contribute nothing to the culture from which they steal. The two white women in Portland were accused, for instance, of not compensating the Mexican women who shared some of their tortilla secrets. On that micro scale, I suspect there are indeed countless
55 interactions between curious white chef and immigrant home cook that go unrewarded to the latter, all in the name of research.

But on a macro scale, the involvement of white chefs and restaurateurs with foreign cuisines can benefit all. Take Josh Phillips, a white partner in Espita Mezcaleria, a Shaw establishment dedicated to the food and drink of
60 Oaxaca. The “vast majority” of Espita’s roughly 65-member staff is Mexican, Phillips says. They’re paid decently, and all full-timers are offered health benefits. The restaurant employs not just one full-time tortilla maker, but four of them.

Those tortilla makers use only heirloom corn from Mexico. Phillips says 99
65 percent of it comes directly from Oaxaca. Before he even opened Espita, Phillips made a promise to mezcaleros in Oaxaca never to sell mezcal from corporate distillers. “I want to make sure there is an economic impact on mezcaleros,” he adds.

To my ears, this sounds more like cultural ambassadorship than cultural
70 appropriation. And like it or not, as Francis Lam noted several years ago for the *New York Times*, U.S.-born chefs and restaurateurs have easier access to the media than their foreign-born counterparts. They have, in other words, the ability to sing the praises of Mexican, Thai, Sichuan or whatever cuisine they love. There is power in that, which should not be dismissed out
75 of hand by those quick to decry cultural appropriation at every turn.