

Call for Applications
Off the Menu: Appetites, Culture, and Environment
International Junior Research Group at the University of Augsburg

2 Doctoral Positions (4 years)

Funded by the Elite Network of Bavaria

Deadline: 16th July 2023

The *Off the Menu: Appetites, Culture, and Environment* Junior Research Group at the Faculty of Philology and History at the University of Augsburg invites applications for **two funded doctoral candidate positions** (up to pay group 13 according to the collective agreement for the public service (TV-L), dependent on the assignment of tasks and qualifications, 65 % of the regular working time, duration of 4 years)

Off the Menu bridges food studies, environmental history, and the environmental humanities to spotlight the history of culturally shaped eating practices as key sites of ecological transformations and to study the intimate connections between cuisine, culture, and the environment. The project charts how ecological and culinary shifts have intersected over time and the historical contours of such shifts. To do so, *Off the Menu* roots itself in the blue humanities and focuses on water and seafood to consider the emergence of environmentally conscious cuisines and sustainability as a culinary practice from the eighteenth century to the present-day.

The two doctoral candidates (m/f/d) will pursue projects to advance research related to one of the following topics:

- 1) Culinary extinction and the ethics of endangered foods
- 2) How cuisines accept or reject so-called invasive species

The history of culinary extinction and endangered foods—from silphium to passenger pigeons and from shark’s fin to eels—exemplifies how human appetites harm plants, animals, and ecosystems. Turtle soup is one example and tells the history of the transformation of a local food in the Caribbean to one for sailors, the slaveholding elite, and at aristocratic banquets on both sides of the Atlantic. In 1973 green sea turtles were classified as endangered, but their canned meat had hit markets only one century before. Therefore, turtle soup remembers and memorialises environmental transformations and represents the threat appetites pose to particular species. Charting the entanglement between imperial appetites, conservation, and endangered flora and fauna between the 1700s to the 1900s, this first topic focuses on culinary extinction. Additionally, it begs the question of what comes first: the food or the appetite?

In contrast to culinary extinction, the organization Slow Food believes that to save certain foods people must eat them. How can eating be a means of managing ecosystems and promoting conservation? Although the blue crab’s Latin name translates as “beautiful savoury

swimmer,” this description is not universal. In the western Atlantic, its home, locals consider blue crab culturally and culinarily significant and a keystone species. But in Italy it is an aggressive “alien” “colonising” the Mediterranean. How does a plant or animal’s classification as “native” or “invasive” influence its acceptance as a food? And what role do invasive species play in constructions of climate-conscious cuisines? The lionfish—which hails from the Indo-Pacific and is considered invasive in the Caribbean—provides an example of where humans are encouraged to eat a species to mitigate ecosystem destruction. This second topic zooms in on culinary narratives of “invasive” species in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Thinking with and beyond these preliminary examples, potential candidates are invited to suggest a specific research focus and are encouraged to propose other ideas that speak to the project’s core concepts and historical periods of study. Geographically diverse perspectives are welcome.

Applicants (m/f/d) must have a completed degree (M.A., M.Sc., or equivalent) with above average grades, and preference will be given to those with backgrounds in history, cultural history, food studies or the environmental humanities. Those with experience outside of academia—especially in the cultural and culinary sectors—are most welcome to apply. The successful doctoral candidates (m/f/d) will be expected to actively contribute to the project’s activities, together with the PI, such as the organization of workshops, events, and publications. Applicants must have fluent oral and written communication skills in English. Fluency in additional languages is a plus.

The *Off the Menu* Research Group is funded by the Elite Network of Bavaria. The doctoral candidates will be based in Augsburg and affiliated with the International Doctorate Program (IDK) “*Um(Welt)Denken*”: *Rethinking Environment. The Environmental Humanities and the Ecological Transformation of Society*, a partnership between the University of Augsburg and the Rachel Carson Center (Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich).

Please submit your application by **Sunday, 16th July 2023** as a single PDF file to sekretariat.umweltgeschichte@philhist.uni-augsburg.de. The following documents are required:

- An academic curriculum vitae (including publications, if applicable);
- A statement of motivation summarizing a) your experience and academic interests; b) why you are applying for this position; c) what makes you the best candidate; and d) what food studies contribute to environmental history and the environmental humanities (max. 2 pages);
- A project proposal for one of the two research topics detailing how you plan to address it methodologically and theoretically (max. 3 pages);
- A writing sample in English, such as an article, book chapter or thesis excerpt (max. 20 pages);
- Copies of previous academic degrees;
- The names and contact details of two referees (one of whom is an academic).

Required qualifications must be demonstrated with the application materials.

Interviews will take place in July 2023. The positions will begin in autumn 2023.

Reflecting the University of Augsburg's commitment to excellence, we seek to increase the diversity of our doctoral student body to support this objective and particularly encourage applicants from underrepresented groups and regions. We especially welcome applications from qualified women. Our university stands up for compatibility of family and professional life. For more information, please contact our women's representative office. This position is suitable for the severely disabled. In the case of equally qualified candidates (m/f/d), applicants with disabilities (m/f/d) will be given preference.

For questions regarding the positions, please contact the PI Dr. des. L. Sasha Gora (sasha.gora@uni-a.de).