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Peoples and Cultures of Europe Week 4

# **Happy Valentine's Day**

We're scheduled for a little Romantic Love in class on Tuesday, the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 2015 (Week 06 Day 11) . . . .

## **Romantic Love is a European invention.**

Meanwhile, this week we have **Valentine's Day**, allowing for a little practice time.

"The day first became associated with romantic love in the circle of Geoffrey Chaucer [1343-1400] in the High Middle Ages, when the tradition of **courtly love** flourished"

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valentine%27s\\_Day](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valentine%27s_Day)). We'll be seeing that courtly love flourish in the video "**Strange Relations**" on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

Garrison Keillor points out that "The ancient Romans had a fertility festival celebrated at mid-February of every year. The festival was called Lupercalia in honor of Lupa, the wolf who was said to have suckled Romulus and Remus, who went on to found the city of Rome. Lupercalia was a pagan fertility festival celebrated with sacrifices of goats and dogs, with milk and wool and blood. Young men would cut strips from the skins of the goats then strip naked and run through the city in groups, where young women would line up to be spanked with the switches, believing it would improve their fertility. Lupercalia was still wildly popular long after the Roman Empire was officially Christian, and it's not difficult to see why the Church would have wished to have a different sort of holiday take its place." (The Writer's Almanac 14 February 2015

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/14b86d560933de1a>)

**This week think Chocolate . . . it's a Valentine's Day tradition . . .**

## **Why chocolate?**

No.

It's not **an aphrodisiac**—or at least if it is, there is no scientific proof of that. Phenylethylamine in chocolate *is* an aphrodisiac, but it's not likely that enough of it makes it to your brain while eating chocolate “to make a difference”, so to speak. But there's always **the power of suggestion** . . . and chocolate sugar pills (placebos) are powerful **psychosomatics** <<http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/troufs/anth4616/cpplacebo.html>>.

Giving chocolate goes back to the days of the Ancient Mesoamericans who “invented” chocolate, as a byproduct of beer making. So gifting chocolate has been around for a long time—probably for 3000 years. And people have probably been thinking that it is an aphrodisiac all of that time.

What's new for 2015 in the line of psychosomatics? From Belgian chocolatier Dominique Persoone comes a chocolate-sniffing device . . .

**[Chocolate snorting offers new way to a cocoa high](#)** -- [Reuters](#) (06 February 2015)

Week 12 or 13—time permitting—we'll have a look at the European Union's “Thirty-Years' War” a **“Chocolate War”**. The EU “Chocolate War” is a classic case study in business and marketing—with international regulations governed by the EU.

But this week you should sweeten things and people up a little with chocolate. . . . If you purchase chocolate for anyone (including yourself), be sure it is at least “70%” [cocoa solids and cocoa butter]. And *recipients of chocolate* take note: if your admirer gives you chocolate that's any less than “70%” it might be time to think about looking for a different admirer.

The single exception to the “at least ‘70%’” rule lies in baking. The *Cooks Illustrated* folks, the American (U.S.A.) gurus of practical scientific food preparation, say baking [adjective, not verb] chocolate for the holidays should be *no more than* “60%”. (So if your admirer shows up with Valentine *baked goods* with chocolate of “60%” quality, that's actually a plus; keep him/her.)

More information on chocolate is available from the class Chocolate page at

<<http://www.d.umn.edu/cla/faculty/troufs/anthfood/afchocolate.html>>.

**As for St. Valentine**, as in “St. Valentine's Day,” there are more than a dozen St. Valentines in the Roman Catholic Church, and neither of the two Valentines thought to be responsible for “Valentine's Day” ate chocolate (Valentine of Rome, and Valentine of Terni in Central Italy).

**Enjoy your chocolate this week; we'll visit romantic courtly love on the 24<sup>th</sup> . . . .**

Tim Roufs