

Seminar Series 2024-2025

Emotional Grammars  
of Globalization

Mediterranean Emotions



**MEEM**

A Global Research Hotspot



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**Feeling Emotional  
about Food  
in the Early Middle  
Ages.  
Some Notes  
on Food  
Ambivalences**

**3 June 2025**

**15.00-17.00**

**University of Florence  
Via San Gallo 10  
Aula Parva**

**[meet.google.com/chc-uogc-kwg](https://meet.google.com/chc-uogc-kwg)**

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SOCIETY FOR THE  
**HISTORY of  
EMOTIONS**





## ABSTRACT

Early medieval thought regarding food is primarily shaped by ecclesiastical views. Theoretically, food can serve one of two roles concerning the human body: it can resemble the forbidden fruit, contributing to the body's decay due to original sin, or it can function like the Eucharistic host, nourishing and maintaining the glorified body and preparing it for eternal life. There is a necessary understanding of food that must be cultivated, ensuring it does not act as the fruit that deprived humanity of Paradise but rather as the viaticum that will ultimately restore it at the end of time. These concepts seem to be opposing and, at first glance, mutually exclusive. However, in this seminar, I will argue that early medieval thought about food can move beyond these contrasting metaphors—the forbidden fruit and the host—by presenting a more nuanced and ambivalent perspective on food. This ambivalence may evoke various emotional responses related to food, including fear, disgust, contentment, and, perhaps, anxiety. To support this argument, I will re-examine well-established writings by scholars such as John Cassian, Augustine, Bede, and Alcuin, in light of contemporary insights from the field of the history of emotions.

## THE SPEAKER

**Wanessa Asfora Adler** is a historian who specializes in Medieval Food History. She has published several articles in scholarly journals that explore the relationship between food and medicine during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Additionally, she authored a book in 2014 focused on the medieval history of the Roman cookbook attributed to Apicius. Currently, she is a faculty member at Syracuse University in Florence. She is also a researcher at the Centre for Classical and Humanistic Studies at the University of Coimbra and at the Laboratory of Theory and History of Medieval Media (Lathimm) of the University of São Paulo and Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. Furthermore, she is a correspondent member for Latin America of the journal *Food & History*, published by the Institut Européen d'Histoire et des Cultures de l'Alimentation.