

# CET Syllabus of Record



**Program:** CET Florence

**Course Title:** Food and Culture in Italy

**Course Code:** FL245

**Total Hours:** 45

**Recommended Credits:** 3

**Suggested Cross Listings:** Anthropology, Cultural Studies, Sociology

**Language of Instruction:** English

**Prerequisites/Requirements:** None

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## Description of the Course

How does our relationship to food reflect who we are? How can an understanding of food practices enrich our experience abroad? This course uses food as a lens through which to deepen students' understanding of their new home and community abroad. This course is an interdisciplinary analysis of foodways in Italy, with a special focus on Tuscany. Methodologies used stem from the fields of anthropology, history, geography, sociology, journalism and marketing. The course examines the issues that affect the world's food, the changing nature of food production and consumption, and Italy's strategies for protecting its diverse food traditions.

## Objectives

During this course, students:

- Increase their knowledge of Italian and Mediterranean food history as a mirror of Italian and Mediterranean history, politics, economy, society, and culture;
- Critically analyze how food, its consumption, production, and traditions are essential to examine how cultures grow, develop, and change;
- Analyze modern day issues, controversies and strategies prevalent in the food world.
- Use food-related topics to broaden critical thinking and communication skills.

## Course Method and Requirements

This course includes in-class lectures and:

1. on-site visits to relevant sites such as food shops, markets and food producers in and around Florence;
2. in-class tastings of Italy's major quality products, with focus on their cultural significance, history, production and tasting techniques
3. excursion to sites such as the Chianti Classico winery, the *frantoio* (mill) or cheese farm;

Class time will be set aside for discussion: students are expected to actively participate in these sessions.

Course requirements include regular attendance, midterm and final examinations, in-class presentations, one paper, and active participation in and contribution to all discussions, activities and excursions. Students are expected to complete the readings listed for each lesson prior to each class meeting time (according to

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the Outline of Course Content), and to participate in class discussions. Reading assignments are indicated in the Outline of Course Content and generally consist of 20 to 30 pages for each class session.

### Methods of Evaluation

- Participation 20%
- Midterm Examination 20%
- Paper 20%
- Presentations 20%
- Final Examination 20%

### Primary Texts

A course reader will be made available with articles and excerpts from the following texts:

Belasco, W. (2008). *Food: The Key Concepts*. Oxford: Berg.

Capatti, A. & Montanari, M. (2003). *Italian Cuisine: A Cultural History*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Counihan, C. M. (2004). *Around the Tuscan Table: Food, Family and Gender in Twentieth-Century Florence*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Counihan, C. & Van Esterik P. (Ed). (1997). *Food and Culture: A Reader*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Dickie, J. (2007). *Delizia! The epic history of the Italians and their food*. Chatham: Sceptre.

Diner, H. R. (2002). *Hungering for America: Italian, Irish and Jewish foodways in the age of migration*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Donadio, R. (2010, January 10). Race Riots Grip Italian Town, and Mafia Is Suspected. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/11/world/europe/11italy.html>

Fisher, I. (2006, January 12). The Bread Is Famously Good, but It Killed McDonald's. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/12/international/europe/12italy.html?scp=3&sq=altamura&st=cse>

Flandrin, J.L. & Montanari, M. (Ed.). (2000). *Food: A Culinary History*. New York, NY: Penguin.

Helstosky, C. (2004). *Garlic and Oil: Food and Politics in Italy*. Oxford: Berg.

Levenstein, H. (2002). The American Response to Italian Food: 1880-1930. In Counihan, C. M. (Ed.), *Food in the USA: A Reader* (pp. 75-90). New York, NY: Routledge.

Mintz, S. W. (1989). "Food and culture: an anthropological view," in Hirschhoff, P.M. and N.G. Kotler, eds., *Completing the Food Chain*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 114-21.

Montanari, M. (2004). *Food is Culture*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Parasecoli, F. (2004). *Food Culture in Italy*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press. pp. xv-xix.

Petrini, C. (2001). *Slow Food: the case for taste*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Petrini, C. (2007). *Slow Food Nation: Why Our Food Should Be Good, Clean and Fair*. Rizzoli Ex Libris.

Piras, C. (Ed.).(2007). *Culinaria*. Ullman.

Pollan, M. (2006). *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History in Four Meals*. London: Penguin.

### Outline of Course Content

Note: Fall/Spring students cover approximately 1 topic every 1 to 2 weeks. During the summer, when class periods are longer, students cover just over 1 topic per week.

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## TOPIC 1 – Food and culture

Introduction to food and culture. Why is it important to study what people eat? Overt differences in American and Italian foodways, American expectations of Italian food and food practices before arrival. Food meanings: personal, interpersonal, societal, cultural levels. The "omnivore's dilemma": why we have food rules and taboos, and how they evolve. Cross-cultural differences and patterns.

## TOPIC 2 - Focus on Italy and "a sense of place"

Major points of Italian history and geography, effect on regional foodways. Major themes of cuisines, from region to region. Campanilismo and a sense of place: *terroir* in Italy

## TOPIC 3 - Italian foodways in history

Major points of Italian history and geography, continued. Case studies: foodways during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Regional dishes. Case studies: foodways leading up to Italian unification, and the Italian diaspora. Case study: foodways after Italy's industrial boom.

## TOPIC 4 - Italian foodways continued

Image and myths of Italian food in Italy and abroad by the media and marketing. The "Mediterranean diet", and its representation in the media, marketing and nutrition guidelines today.

## TOPIC 5 - Focus on Tuscany and Florence

Tuscan foodways in geographical, historical and socio-economic context: the *mezzadria* and *cucina povera*. Folklore, food-centered customs. Gender roles, family, commensality and food. Florence and the *provincia*: key dishes and important products. Differences and similarities across Tuscany: key themes.

## TOPIC 6 - Food issues today, in Italy and the world at large

Who is growing and producing food today: small versus large production and distribution. The issues behind "organic", "OGM free" and "local". Supermarkets versus small stores. Market culture and product sourcing. City versus country. Changes in production, buying and eating habits.

## TOPIC 7 - Food issues: focus on Italy

Italy's answer to contemporary food issues: "Slow Food" here and around the world. Strategies: education, product protection, "quality" and food diversity. Regional products: the advent of DOP, DOC, DOCG. Slow Food's *presidia*. Regional products and localism as a marketing strategy. What is Quality? *Buono, pulito e giusto*. How important is tradition in determining quality?

## TOPIC 8 - Immigrants and food in Italy

Immigrants to Italy and their role in the production of food, Case study: Rosarno. Immigration, tradition and identity. Protectionism, Case study: Lucca. Americanization and McDonald's. What about food in Italy makes it "resistant" or not to outside cuisines? Case studies: Mcltaly, Altamura.

## TOPIC 9 -Italian food abroad

Italian emigration vis-à-vis Italian food's assimilation and establishment in food cultures abroad. Case study: USA.