

CET Syllabus of Record



Program: CET Florence

Course Title: Food and Culture in Italy

Course Code: FL/ITLS 245

Total Hours: 45

Recommended Credits: 3

Primary Discipline / Suggested Cross Listings: Italian Studies / Anthropology, Sociology, Cultural Studies

Prerequisites/Requirements: None

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 Italian history and culture. It offers 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. It examines the history of food in Italy and Tuscany from the Roman Times to the present, with references to the rich and varied historical, political, economic, social, and artistic past of the peninsula. 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 and onsite tastings of Italy's major quality products, with focus on their cultural significance, history, production and tasting techniques

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, written assignments, and active participation in and contribution to all discussions, activities and site visits.

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Students are expected to complete the readings listed for each lesson prior to each class meeting time (according to the Outline of Course Content), and to participate in class discussions.

Methods of Evaluation

- Participation 20%
- Midterm Examination 20%
- Assignments 15%
- Papers 15%
- Final Examination 30%

Primary Texts

Dickie John, *Delizia! A History of the Italians and their Food*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2008

Parasecoli Fabio, *Al Dente*, London: Reaktion Books, 2014

Harper D. and Faccioli P., *The Italian Way*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009

Goulding Matt, *Pasta, Pane, Vino: Deep Travels Through Italy's Food Culture*, London: Harper Collins, 2018

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.

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 as a Physical and Mental Space

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. Food in Ancient Rome. Religion, Feasts and Fasting during the Middle Ages. Food, Pleasure and Health in the Renaissance. Artusi: the Founder of Modern Italian Cuisine.

TOPIC 4 – Tastes of Paradise: The Columbian Exchange. Sugar, Stimulants and New Food from the Americas.

TOPIC 5 – 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 6 - 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.

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Florence and the *provincia*: key dishes and important products. Differences and similarities across Tuscany: key themes.

TOPIC 7 - 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 8 - 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.

TOPIC 9 - Immigrants and food in Italy

Immigrants to Italy and their role in the production of food. 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.