STFS 330: Sustainability and Food Production in Italy
Course Syllabus
Fall Semester 2017

Instructor: Elisa Ascione, Ph.D.
Credits: 3
Prerequisite: None
Class Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:00-13:30pm
Office Hours: By appointment
Email: eascione@umbra.org
Classroom: Aula 2
Lab/Site-visits fee: 150 €

Course Description
There are more than six billion humans on the planet, each of whom need to eat every day: ever-higher food production is contributing to faster use of non-renewable fossil fuels and environmental degradation. What modes of food production and consumption may be viable, sustainable responses to this problem? What are some alternative models of food production? How are people responding to increasing inequalities relating to food availability? What can we learn from Italian food cultures in terms of sustainability?

This course focuses on the radical increase in food production over the last 70 years and the ecological and social problems it has created, as well as on some possible solutions: the organic movement, Slow Food, and the shift towards local food. A critical eye on these movements and analysis of their ability to change the trajectory of the global food production system, which is rapidly heading for collapse, will be casted. In addition to classroom lectures and discussions, a field trip to the world-famous Tuscan butcher Dario Cecchini will be taken.

Course Objectives
This course will ask students to:
- consider the complex interplay of social and political factors in shaping national food systems;
- analyze aspects of production, distribution, and consumption of food to determine their sustainability;
- compare the geneses of the alternative food movements in Italy;
- integrate theory and practice as it applies to modern-day Italian foodways; and
- develop a more sophisticated understanding of how food productions and consumptions are shaped by a combination of economic, political, social, and cultural factors.

Assessment
20% Participation
20% Service Learning Project
20% Mid-Term Exam
20% Presentation
20% Final Exam

Grading
Grading will be done on a percentage basis:

Letter Grade Range	Numerical Score Equivalent	Student Performance
A	93% - 100%	Exceptional
A-	90% - 92%	Excellent
B+	87% - 89%	Superior
B	83% - 86%	
B-	80 - 82%	
C+	77%-79%	Satisfactory
C	73% - 76%	
C-	70% - 72%	
D+	67% - 69%	Unsatisfactory
D	63% - 66%	
D-	60% - 62%	
F	59 % or less	Fail (no credit)

Course Requirements
Course grades are based on the mid-term and final exam, service learning project, presentations, , and participation.

Class Participation and Required Readings (20%)
Attendance Policy: Class attendance is mandatory. Students are allowed **two "free" absences** during the semester, which they do not need to justify. Each additional absence, unless it is for a very serious reason, will lower students' final grade by one grade level (i.e., a final grade of a B+ would be lowered to a B). It also the policy of the Institute that any student who has eight or more absences automatically fails the class.

Please Note: Presence during mandatory field trips is especially important for student performance in this class. Missing a mandatory field trip, unless for a very serious reason that is communicated to Umbra staff in a timely manner, will lower students' final grade by one grade level (i.e., a final grade of a B+ would be lowered to a B).

Class Participation: For a spirited discussion, students' active attention and participation are required. Class participation grades are based on four points:

1. Being on time in class and respectful behavior
2. Working in pairs/in groups, helpfulness towards classmates
3. Interest in the course and its topics
4. Attitude towards the instructor

Required Readings: Readings should be done for the class the day they are assigned. Failure to do the readings will lower students' participation grade.

Mid-Term Exam (20%)
An exam covering all topics presented in the first half of the course. It will consist of short answers. The exam will take approximately 90 minutes to complete and is closed book/closed notes. *No alternative exam dates will be offered.*

Service Learning Project (20%)
Synergistic gardening - see the Syllabus Appendix for more details.

Presentation (20%)
A 10-15-minute presentation on one or two concrete case-studies on best practices in food and sustainability (i.e., the sustainable policies of a multinational company; a farm that applies an alternative form of agriculture; the achievements of a consumer movement; an educational program for food and health, etc.). I expect: a brief theoretical introduction, a description of your case-study, an evaluation of its achievements, counter arguments, a clear conclusion, slides with not more than five words. You should not read your presentation from written text, but rehearse it in advance.

Final Exam (20%)
An exam covering all topics presented in the second half of the course. It will consist of short answers. The exam will take approximately 120 minutes to complete and is closed book/closed note. This is the only time the exam will be given. *No alternative exam dates will be offered.*

Academic Misconduct
This includes all forms of cheating i.e., copying during exam either from a fellow student or making unauthorized use of notes and plagiarism, i.e., presenting, as one's own, the ideas or words of another person for academic evaluation (i.e., papers, presentations, written tests, etc.) without proper acknowledgment. This includes also insufficient or incomplete acknowledgement, or failure to acknowledge a source that has been paraphrased.

Classroom Policy
All students are expected to follow the policy of the Institute. They are expected to develop the appropriate respect for the historical premises which the school occupies. Please note that cell phones must be turned off before the beginning of each class. Computers cannot be used during class lectures and discussions.

Office Hours
Email me for an appointment (eascione@umbra.org).

Textbook
There is one required text, James McWilliams' *Just Food*. All other readings will be in the course reader. Additional reading assignments, both optional and required, will be made available by the instructor.

All the activities, topics, lectures, and readings may be subject to change, always with due warning.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

WEEK 1

5 Sept (Tue): **Food and Sustainability**
Lecture Themes: This lecture presents the study of food and the movement for greater sustainability in its production as an interdisciplinary exercise. In this first class, the instructor will explain the structure of the course, with special reference to food systems.

7 Sept (Thu): **The "Green Revolution" and Conventional Agricultural Production**
Lecture Themes: Between 1943 and the late 1970s, a combination of new plant varieties and the widespread use of fossil fuel-based fertilizers and pesticides dramatically raised world food production and changed the relationship between the industrialized world and the developing world. The class will talk about how the Green Revolution began, and its effects.
Required Readings: Standage 199-220

WEEK 2

12 Sept (Tue): **Introduction to Agro-Ecology and Permaculture.**
Lecture Themes: This course will be an inquiry into sustainable food production: What exactly does that mean? Today, the class will explore the idea that "mimicking nature" is a good principle in order to construct more sustainable modes of production. The class will also look at polyculture in Italian agriculture before modernization.
Required Readings: Jacke 11-15, 240-245, 250-254, Nowak 1-4

14 Sept (Thu): **Orto Sinergico Visit and Field Lecture** (Meet at 5.30pm in the courtyard.)

WEEK 3

19 Sept (Tue): **Global Food Systems: Power and Concentration**
Lecture Themes: Supermarkets have become more popular in Italy since the economic boom in the 1960s as companies have been able to offer more processed food to the market, with important consequences on Italian food cultures and health.
Required Readings: Abritton 342-30, Blythman xiii-xviii; 48-56

21 Sept (Thu): **Local Food Systems: Urban Agriculture**
Can the countryside and the city grow to be closer? Today, we will rethink the relationship between urban dwellers and their source of food. Can cities become more sustainable by growing food?
Required Readings: Mougeot 1-11; 71-78; Incredible Edible case-study

WEEK 4

26 Sept (Tue): **The Organic Movement (Part 1)**
Lecture Themes: What is the history of organic food production and labelling? The class will discuss the positive aspects of organic agriculture, but will also offer a critique of the "supermarket pastoral" around "natural" food.
Required Readings: USDA 3-20; Guthman 53-59; Pollan 134-140

28 Sept (Thu): **Meat and Vegetarianism**
It takes at least seven pounds of grain to make a pound of meat. The class will look at the true costs of meat-eating as we investigate CAFO's and explore the possibility of "sustainable meat."
Required Readings: Pollan 65-84; Niman 140-144

30 Sept (Saturday): **Daytrip to Dario Cecchini**, Sustainable butcher in Chianti region, Tuscany (Be prepared to walk, wear tennis shoes, and bring water and an umbrella in case of rain.)
Required Readings: Cecchini 1-6

WEEK 5

3 Oct (Tue): **No lecture today, moved to tomorrow**

4 Oct (Wed instead of Tue): **Local Food Systems: The Farmers' Market**
Lecture Themes: Local foods have been the genesis of re-emerging local economies. The class will visit a market and ask questions to local artisans and producers.

5 Oct (Thu): **Alternative Economies: Fair Trade Products and Nadir Local Restaurant**
The case-study of Nadir Restaurant and Ponte Solidale Fair Trade store. The class will meet the people that are making alternative choices for their food businesses.
Required Readings: Charter of Fair Trade Principles 1-12

WEEK 6

10 Oct (Tue): **"Good, Clean and Fair": The Case of Slow Food**
Lecture Themes: From the beginning, Slow Food was a "political" food movement. Students will discuss Carlo Petrini's turning away from the mainstream left and creating the group that would become Slow Food. In addition, we will look at Slow Food's current stance and decide whether it is the blueprint for global sustainability.
Required Readings: Andrew vi-ix 3-11; Laudan 133-144

12 Oct (Thu): **The Organic Movement (Part 2)**
Lecture Themes: We expect organic to use fewer fossil fuels and to be better for both humans and the environment - is it though? James McWilliams offers a critique of what we think as an alternative to industrial agriculture.
Required Readings: McWilliams 53-80

WEEK 7

17 Oct (Tue): **Mid-Term Exam Review**

19 Oct (Thu): **Mid-Term Exam**

23 OCT – 27 OCT: SEMESTER BREAK – NO CLASSES

WEEK 8

31 Oct (Tue): **A Critique of the "Locavore" Movement**
Lecture Themes: Is local more sustainable than organic? The concept of Life-Cycle Analysis (LCA) and the true food miles (and carbon footprint) of many "local" foods will be introduced.
Required Readings: McWilliams 17-51

2 Nov (Thu): **Final Presentation Class Rehearsal**
Stand-up and present to the class your topic and the main ideas of your final presentation: 3 minutes per person + Q&A at the end.

WEEK 9

7 Nov (Tue): **Waste, Food, and the Environment**
Lecture Themes: During this lecture, the class will analyze the social and environmental costs of food waste at a global level.
Required Readings: Stuart xv-xxii, Segrè 212-247

9 Nov (Thu): **GMO (I)**
Lecture Themes: The lecture will explore what exactly is "genetic modification". Is GMO the benevolent technology Monsanto would have us believe it is, or is there something wrong about genetic modification and patenting life?
Required Readings: Pollan (2001) 186-238 (excerpts: 186 "The garden is…"-198 "…us in them.", 206 "St Louis"-221 "…this very morning."', 231 "In March 1998…"-end)

WEEK 10

14 Nov (Tue): **GMO (II)**
Lecture Themes: Genetically modified foods make everyone think of fish with three heads and Monarch butterflies dying in cornfields, but is this a rational view? James McWilliams will make the argument that GMO is safe and can help reduce pesticide use and keep more forest unplowed.
Required Readings: McWilliams 80-116

16 Nov (Thu): **"A Farm for the Future"** BBC Documentary - Screening and Discussion

WEEK 11

21 Nov (Tue): **Final Orto Party**

23 Nov (Thu): **Student Presentations**

WEEK 12

28 Nov (Tue): **Student Presentations**

30 Nov (Thu): **Student Presentations**

WEEK 13

5 Dec (Tue): **Student Presentations**
Final service learning project report due in print at the beginning of class. Come to class with the PowerPoint and all activities ready for presentation rehearsal.

7 Dec (Thur): **Final Exam Review**

11-15 Dec (Mon-Fri): **Final Exams and Special Academic Events Week. Appointments will be announced later in the term.**

Course Bibliography

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