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**ANFS 370: Anthropology of Food  
Course Syllabus  
Fall Semester 2017**

**Instructor:** Elisa Ascione, Ph.D.

**Credits:** 3

**Contact Hours:** 45

**Prerequisite:** None.

**Class Meets:** Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:30 - 5:00 p.m.

**Office Hours:** After class or by appointment.

**Lab/Site-visits fee:** 175 €

**Course Description**

This course will address food-related issues from an anthropological perspective. It will examine the role that food plays in shaping group and personal identities. Through readings assignments and ethnographic research in different settings, students will explore how local food traditions change over time and space, and how culinary knowledge is used by people in different ways. The course will focus on food as heritage through an analysis of culinary tourism, food museums, and eco-museums. Furthermore, it will explore the role of food in Italian families, applying a gendered perspective in order to understand the changing attitudes and roles of men and women towards food and cooking. Students will study food as a site of cultural transmission, but also of dissent and resistance. The course will incorporate a variety of learning experiences: mini-ethnographic projects on food producers and restaurants in Umbria and a field trip to an agriturismo and an artisan food producer, as well as heritage sites. Through these exercises, students will become active participants and engage in ethnographic research in the classroom and in the local community.

**Course Objectives**

In this course, students will:

- increase their understanding of how individual food behaviors are shaped by the foodways of their society;
- learn to approach cultural differences with an unbiased framework;
- increase their knowledge of Italian culture through the examination of the food practices of individuals and communities;
- be able to recognize the cultural, political, and economic value of food; and
- recognize the efforts behind organizations and museums that promote and develop food-related cultural events.

**Assessment**

20% Participation

15% Food and memory essay

10% In-class group presentation on the anthropology of food and tourism

10% Field notes journal

10% Fieldtrip reflection essay

15% Ethnographic interview essay

20% Final Ethnographic Essay.

## 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)

### Submitting Work Late

If students submit work after the deadline, they will incur a 5% grade deduction for each working day the assignment is late. Working days are Monday through Friday. To avoid penalty, students must get approval for an extension at least one day prior to the deadline. The instructor will not accept works that is later than seven working days (-35% of the final mark).

### Course Requirements

Course grades are based on participation, papers, and presentations.

### 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 your final grade by one grade level (e.g., a final grade of a B+ would result in a B). It is also the policy of the Institute that any student who has eight or more absences automatically fails the class.

Class Participation: For a spirited discussion, the students’ active attention and participation are required. Class participation grades are based on 4 points. 1. Being on time in class and respectful behavior 2. Working in pairs/in group, and show helpfulness towards classmates 3. Interest in the course and its topics 4. Positive attitude towards the instructor. Enthusiasm in class.

Required Readings: Readings should be done for the class the day they are assigned.

**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 (e.g., a final grade of a B+ would be lowered to a B).

**Food and memory essay (15%)** See reader for instructions.

**In-class group presentation on the anthropology of food and tourism (10%)** See reader for instructions.

**Field notes journal (10%)** See reader for instructions.

**Fieldtrip reflection essay (10%)** See reader for instructions.

**Ethnographic interview essay (15%)** See reader for instructions.

**Final ethnographic essay (20%)** See reader for instructions.

### **Academic Misconduct**

This includes all forms of cheating i.e., copying during exam either from a fellow student, or making unauthorized use of notes; plagiarism, i.e., presenting the ideas or words of another person as one's own for academic evaluation (e.g., papers, presentations, written tests, etc.) without proper acknowledgment.

Cell phones and computers are not allowed in class.

### **Office Hours**

Email the instructor for an appointment (eascione@umbra.org).

**All the activities, topics, and readings are subject to change, always with due warning.**

## **Schedule of Topics and Readings**

### **WEEK 1**

5 Sep (Tue) – **The Anthropology of Food, Introduction**

*Lecture Themes:* In this first class, the instructor will explain the structure of the course, with special reference to Italian food production and food culture.

7 Sep (Thu) – **Bio-cultural Perspective on Nutrition**

While it is easy to see that the direct consequences of food intake are biological, it is also apparent that the nature of that food intake is shaped by a wide variety of geographical, social, psychological, religious, economic, and political factors. Today's lecture will explore the concept of "culture" from an anthropological point of view and of food as a communication system for groups and individuals.

*Required Readings:* Fischler 275-292; Lavenda 25-32.

### **WEEK 2**

12 Sep (Tue)– **Social Functions of Food**

Food is a vehicle for expressing friendship, smoothing social intercourse, and showing concern. It is also ridden with status symbolism and is manipulated to demonstrate differences in social settings.

*Required Readings:* Fieldhouse excerpts from 1-13, 78-93.

14 Sep (Thu)– **Food as Heritage**

Heritage usually means an act of transmission from the past to the present. Today, the class will critically analyze the concept of heritage and think about the ways in which different social actors give value to food cultures in different settings.

*Required Readings:* Ascione 301-313, Methodology 9-16.

### **WEEK 3**

19 Sep (Tuesday) – **Food, Migration, and Ethnic Identity: The Case of Italian-Americans**

Migration is a global phenomenon caused not only by economic factors, but also by social, political, cultural, and environmental factors. Diasporic groups and individuals that migrate and settle out of their country of origins re-create, change, and adapt their food cultures in the new settings.

*Required Readings:* Di Giovine 181-208; Methodology 17-27.

21 Sep (Thu)– **Urban Ethnography**

In this lecture students will discuss the centrality of ethnographic work in anthropology, and will explore tools for doing research in urban settings.

*Required Readings:* Duneier et al. 9-14; Methodology 29-33; 39-47.

**WEEK 4**

26 Sept (Tue) – “**Ethnographies of Where We Eat**”: **The Anthropology of Restaurants**

Restaurants often represent the cultures of cities, regions, ethnic groups, and nations. From the sensual and local, to the symbolic and global, restaurants constitute a social phenomenon that can be studied through ethnographic practice.

*Required Readings:* Yan 449-471; Beriss and Sutton, 1-4 (optional 4-12).

28 Sept (Thu) – **Exploring Perugian Food Artisans**

The class will visit a local food artisan for participant observation, note taking, and formal/informal talks. **I expect students to return to the artisan on their own to continue their ethnographic fieldwork.**

*Required Readings:* Methodology 53-65.

**WEEK 5**

3 Oct (Tue)– **Student Presentations. Food and Memory**

Students will present their papers on food and personal memory (10 minutes per person).

**Paper due in print by everybody at the beginning of class** (13%), in-class presentation (2%).

5 Oct (Thu) – **Student Presentations. Food and Memory II**

Students will present their papers on food and personal memory.

**WEEK 6**

10 Oct (Tue) – **Student Presentations. Food and Memory III**

Students will present their papers on food and personal memory.

12 Oct (Thu) – **Field Lecture I**

Students will meet at 8:30 p.m. for dinner at “Dal Mi’Cocco”, in Corso Garibaldi, as an exercise in ethnographic research on food and heritage (notes collecting and theme coding).

**WEEK 7**

17 Oct (Tue)– **Food, Gender, and Family Life**

Food provision and preparation are gendered activities. In Italy, domestic space has traditionally been associated with femininity, but this has changed in recent years with more women into paid labor and with more men preparing food for their families. Today, the class will analyze how gender shapes food family roles.

*Required Readings:* Counihan: 79-95, Methodology 73-84.

19 Oct (Thu) – **Hand in your typed Field notes journal (10%)**. In-class discussion.

20 Oct (Sat) – **Field Lecture II (Fieldtrip to Valnerina)**

Students will explore the value of food and heritage sites in the Valnerina area after the 2016 earthquake. (Fieldtrip reflection essay due after the semester break).

23 – 29 OCT: SEMESTER BREAK – NO CLASSES

**WEEK 8**

31 Oct (Tue) – **Food, the Body, and the Self**

The relationship between people and their bodies is very complex. Women are often the main provider of nourishment for their families, but are expected to be in “control” of their own consumption. Men are also increasingly concerned about constructing corporeal perfection and regulating consumption.

*Required Readings:* Bordo 265-276; Parasecoli 284-298.

2 Nov (Thu) – **The Anthropology of Bread**

The class will study bread as a special food laden with meanings and symbols.

*Required Assignment:* hand in, in print, your reflection on the Valnerina fieldtrip at the beginning of class.

**WEEK 9**

7 Nov (Tue) – **Food and Cultural Differences in Health and Healing**

One very important area for the meaning and significance of food is its medical use, from folk and traditional practices to contemporary nutritional science.

*Required Readings:* Anderson 119-136.

9 Nov (Thu) – **Food, Religion and Rituals**

Every society on earth uses food to communicate messages and convey meaning.

Prominent among these are messages of group solidarity, and food sharing is sacred in almost all religions.

*Required Readings:* Anderson 188-198; Rites of Passage 1-5; optional Field 32-37.

**WEEK 10**

14 Nov (Tue) – **Food, Tourism and Cultural Change**

Food is a powerful tourist attraction and a way to incorporate cultural differences and otherness. Food can also be employed to develop tourism through promotion of “typicality” at food fairs and related events.

*Required Readings:* Stronza 261-283.

16 Nov (Thu) – **No class**

Individual ethnographic data collection in an Umbrian restaurant, to compare it to Dal’Mi Cocco (choose between Al Mangiar Bene, Osteria a Priori, La Bottega del Vino).

*Required Readings:* Methodology 94-97.

**WEEK 11**

21 Nov (Tue) – **Food and Tourism Presentations I**

Students will present, in groups of 3, an analysis of 1-2 websites and brochures linked to food and tourism, food fairs, and food events in Italy or around the world (10%). Students have to quote Lucy Long’s article in their analysis.

*Required Readings:* Long x-iv/1-19

23 Nov (Thu) ) – **Food and Tourism Presentations II**

**WEEK 12**

28 Nov (Tue) ) – **No class**

Individual ethnographic data collection in another “street food” Umbrian artisan (choose between La Bottega, Piazza Morlacchi or Borgo XX Giugno; Testone, Piazza Matteotti).

30 Nov (Thu) ) – **Group discussion**

Students will hand in ethnographic interview essay in print at the beginning of class (or send it via email if absent), and class discussion of the results.

**WEEK 13**

5 Dec (Tue) ) – **Movie screening and class discussion.**

7 Dec (Thu) ) – **Writing session for final essay and conclusions.**

*Required Readings:* Methodology 141-154.

**14 Dec) – Students will hand their final essay to Students’ Services (Marco or Laura) before 3pm.**

**11-15 Dec.) – Week of Special Academic Events.**

Appointments will be announced later in the term.

### **Course Bibliography**

Anderson, E. N. (2014) *Everyone Eats. Understanding Food and Culture*: NYU Press, New York

Ascione, E. (2017) “Food and Cultural Heritage: Preserving, Re-inventing and Exposing Food Cultures” slated for publication in the forthcoming book, *The Handbook of Food and Popular Culture*, edited by Peter Naccarato and Kathleen LeBesco. London, U.K.: Bloomsbury Publishers.

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