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FSST/HIST/SOC 349: History and Culture of Food in Italy

Course Syllabus

Summer Session 2019

Instructor: Olivier de Maret, Ph.D.

Credits: 3

Contact Hours: 45

Prerequisite: None

Class Hours: TBA

Office Hours: TBA

Course Type: Standard Course

Lab fee: TBA

Course Description

What can we learn about Italian culture through an exploration of the history of food in Italy? By examining the radical changes that have occurred in Italian food-ways, the pronounced differences in eating habits of different socio-economic classes, and the important role played by food in shaping Italian national and regional identities, we will uncover various trends in Italian history and society. These trends include the gradual process of political unification, the effects of industrialization, as well as the contemporary rediscovery of “typical” foods as a response to globalizing processes and a way to construct new social identities.

The purpose of this course is to use food as a means of exploring the political, social, cultural, and economic changes that have taken place in Italy through history. By the end of the course, students will have acquired a more sophisticated understanding of food history, an interdisciplinary approach to studying Italian culture and society, and a framework for analyzing important aspects of Italian history.

The course will include a mandatory co-curricular field trip to an Umbrian *agriturismo* to learn from local food producers.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- learn about the Italian history and culture of food through the ages;
- work with non-traditional historical texts;
- examine unfamiliar food cultures with unbiased frameworks, applying an anthropological concept of culture to understand diversity; and
- develop a more sophisticated understanding of how historical events are shaped by a combination of economic, political, social, and cultural factors.

Course Materials

Readings

Course reader available at local copy shop. See “Umbra Institute Course Materials - Textbooks and Readers” handout provided in the orientation folder for more information.

Assessment

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Class Participation	20%
Field trip Reflection Paper	20%
Mid-Term Exam	30%
Final Exam	30%

Grading

Letter grades for student work are based on the following percentage scale:

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

Course Requirements

Grades are based on the following:

Participation (20%)

Class participation grades are based on oral contributions to the collective learning experience of the class. Participation means active engagement in the course: being consistently prepared for class (having carefully read that day's assignments), asking questions, responding to questions, offering one's insights and opinions, and attentive listening to others. Reading assignments must be done for the class day they are assigned.

Field trip Reflection Paper (20%)

Students are expected to compose a three-page reflection paper (Garamond; 11 font; 1.5 interline) after the field trip to show what they have learned from the main activities. Student must include an introductory section with independent research on 1) a definition of *agriturismi* 2) the meaning of "multi-functionality" in agriculture with specific reference to *agriturismi* 3) a definition of Slow Tourism. Students must relate their findings with their own fieldtrip.

Mid-Term Exam (30%)

This exam covers all topics presented in the first half of the course. The exam will take approximately 90 minutes to complete, is closed book/closed note, and will consist of short answers.

Final Exam (30%)

This exam covers all topics presented in the first half of the course. The exam will take approximately 90 minutes to complete, is closed book/closed note, and will consist of short answers.

Attendance Policy:

Class attendance is mandatory. Students are allowed one "free" absence during the summer 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 be lowered to a B). It also the policy of the Institute that any student who has three or more absences automatically fails the class.

If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed or what work you must catch up from the teacher or from colleagues.

Absences are not accepted when tests are scheduled; tests cannot be made up. Furthermore, times and dates

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indicated for exams, quizzes, presentations, and any other graded assignments cannot be changed for any reason.

Presence during mandatory field trips is especially important for student performance in class. Missing a mandatory field trip, unless for a very serious reason that is communicated to the professor and Umbra Academic Director 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).

Academic Integrity

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 the ideas or words of another person for academic evaluation without acknowledging the source) will be handled according to the Institute Academic Policy, which can be found in the Umbra Institute Academic Policies and Conduct Guidelines.

Classroom Policy

Students are expected to follow the policy of the Institute and demonstrate the appropriate **respect** for the historical premises that the school occupies. Please note that **cell phones** must be turned off before the beginning of each class. **Computers and other electronic devices** cannot be used during class lectures and discussions.

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Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

NOTE: This is a preliminary schedule that is subject to change.

WEEK 1

Introduction to the Study of Food.

Why study food? Why study Italian food? This lecture presents food as cultural and social history following an interdisciplinary format, as well as explaining the structure of the course.

Roman Food.

We imagine the Romans eating what we eat, simply lying down. This first lesson will discuss the Mediterranean triad and the differences in the classical food system.

Readings

“Trimalchio’s Feast”, from Petronius, *Satyricon*, pp. 1-11

The History of Olive Oil

A cultural history of olive cultivation and olive oil production, from antiquity to the present: its symbolic and culinary value in Italy and the Mediterranean.

Readings

Class hands-out

The Middle Ages.

Medieval Europe is usually thought of as a challenging time to be alive. We will examine how the “fall” of the Roman Empire improved the common man’s diet.

Readings

Montanari, “Food — A Culinary History”, 1999, pp. 165-177

Field trip

Cucina Povera in Assisi, visit to organic and Slow Food agriturismo.

WEEK 2

The Invention of Pasta.

Pasta is a universal food present in many different regional diets around the world. The class will test some hypotheses about its origins and diffusion.

Readings

Dickie, “Delizia”, 2007, pp. 13-30

Assignment:

Field trip Reflection Paper due in print at the beginning of class.

No class after the first one. Class moved to tomorrow

The Culture of Pasta: 1

(GROUP 1: Last Names A-L): **7:00 p.m.** in the didactic kitchen.

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The lecture will explore cultural constructions around this staple Italian food, focusing on the history of traditions of Italian *Pastaciutta*.

Local Markets as a Social and Cultural Field.

Farmers' markets in Italy have a historical continuity with the past, and they are places where producers and consumers meet and share knowledge, constructing an idea together of "local" infused with different cultural meanings. Today, we will visit a market as we explore this urban space.

Readings

Black, "Porta Palazzo: the anthropology of an Italian market", 2012, pp. 141-168

Food Goes International: The Columbian Exchange.

The discovery of the New World brought tomatoes, potatoes, and *mais* (sweet corn) to Italy, foods we can hardly imagine Italian cuisine without. This lecture traces the reasons for the surprisingly slow acceptance of these new foodstuffs and their economic impact on the Italian peninsula.

Readings

Montanari, "The Culture of Food", 1996, pp. 98-107, 133-140

WEEK 3

The Risorgimento and Food: Unity Through a Cookbook.

This lecture focuses on the period from 1846 to 1890, outlining the slow processes of political, linguistic, and culinary unification of the modern Italian state. Emphasis will be given to Pellegrino Artusi and his famous cookbook, as well as a discussion on regional particularities of Italian food.

Readings

Pellegrino Artusi, "La Scienza in Cucina e l'arte di mangiare bene", 1891, pp. 1-5

The History and Culture of Italian Cheese.

Cheese is the ultimate "cultural" (as opposed to "natural") food product, one that humans can enjoy only by intervening in a natural process (milk going bad). In this class, we will discuss cheese's cultural context in contemporary Italy, the laws and regulations that protect them, and their relationship to place and local histories.

Readings

Firebaugh, "Cheese", 2003, pp. 359-364

The Culture of Pasta: 2

(GROUP 1: Last Names M-Z): **7:00 p.m.** in the didactic kitchen.

The lecture will explore cultural constructions around this staple Italian food, focusing on the history of traditions of Italian *Pastaciutta*.

MIDTERM EXAM

Students are free after the exam.

WEEK 4

The Invention of Italian-American Food.

Is Italian-American food just an inheritance of the food of Italian immigrants of the 1800s, or is it something completely new? Or somewhere in between? We will discuss spaghetti with meatballs and other immigrant food.

Readings

Levenstein, "American response to Italian food. 180-1930", 2002, pp. 75-90

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The History and Culture of Coffee.

Although coffee is not native of Italy, coffee has become an integral part of Italian culture. Today, we will explore the cultural history of this national beverage.

Readings

Morris, "Making Italian espresso, making espresso Italian", 2010, pp. 155-183

A Cultural History of Wine.

Although Italians now only drink half as much wine as they did a century ago, some wines have recently gained international recognition and wine continues to be a national beverage. We will trace the history of wine in Italy and its changing cultural significance.

Readings

Class hands-out

Bread: History and Anthropology.

Bread is one of the three components of the so-called Mediterranean triad. In this lecture, we will talk about its significance in the Mediterranean basin and its cultural context in Italy.

Readings

Franklin, "Bread", 2003, pp. 235-241

WEEK 5

"Good, Clean, and Fair": The Case of Slow Food.

From the beginning, Slow Food was a "political" food movement. We will discuss Carlo Petrini's turning away from the mainstream left and creating the group that would become Slow Food. We will also look at Slow Food's current stance and decide whether it is the blueprint for global sustainability.

Readings

Andrews, "The Slow Food Story: Politics and Pleasure", pp. vi-ix, 3-11

Laudan, "A Plea for Culinary Modernism: Why We Should Love New, Fast, Processed Food", 2001, pp. 36-44.

"Of Sugar and Snow": gelato in historical perspectives

Italy is one of the biggest ice-cream markets worldwide. Today, we will discover the origins of gelato as well as its current social and cultural meanings in Italian contemporary culture.

Readings

Weiss, "Ice Cream: A Global History", 2010, 12-20, 119-123

"Big Night" Movie Screening and Class Discussion.

Exam Review.

FINAL EXAM. Time and place TBA.

Course Bibliography

- Andrews, G., *The Slow Food Story: Politics and Pleasure*. Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008.
Artusi, *La Scienza in Cucina e l'Arte di Mangiare Bene*. Salvatore Landi: Firenze, 1891
Black, R. *Porta Palazzo. The Anthropology of an Italian Market*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012

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- Capatti, A., and Massimo Montanari, transl. by Aine O’Healy, *Italian Cuisine: A Cultural History*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.
- Corbier, M. “The Broad Bean and the Moray: Social Hierarchies and Food in Rome”, in: *Food - A Culinary History*, ed. J.F. Flandrin and M. Montanari (English edition by Albert Sonnenfeld), 128-140. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.
- Diamond, J., “The Worst Mistake in the History of the Human Race”, in *Discover*, May 1987, pp.64-66
- Dickie, J., *Delizia: The epic history of the Italians and their food*. London: Sceptre, 2007.
- Firebaugh, S., “Cheese”, in: *Encyclopedia of Food and Culture*, ed. S.H. Katz, Vol. 1, 359-364. New York: Thomas Gale 2003.
- Flandrin, J.F. “Introduction: The Early Modern Period”, in: *Food—A Culinary History*, ed. J.F. Flandrin and M. Montanari (English edition by Albert Sonnenfeld), 349-373. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.
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- Laudan, R. “A Plea for Culinary Modernism: Why We Should Love New, Fast, Processed Food,” in *Gastronomica* 1.1. (2001), pp. 36-44.
- Montanari, M., *The Culture of Food* (The Making of Europe). Oxford: Blackwell, 1996.
- “Romans, Barbarians, Christians: The Dawn of European Food Culture” and “Production Structures and Food Systems in the Early Middle Ages” in: *Food—A Culinary History*, ed. J.F. Flandrin and M. Montanari (English edition by Albert Sonnenfeld), 165-177. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.
- Morris, J. “Making Italian espresso, making espresso Italian”, in *Food and History*, Vol. 8, Issue 2, 2010
- Petronio, *Satyricon*, Giunti: Firenze
- Weiss, L.B., *Ice Cream: A Global History*, London: Reaction Books

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