HIST/FSST/SOC 350 - The History and Culture of Food in Italy
Course Syllabus
Fall Semester 2022

Instructor: Clelia Viecelli, PhD
Credits: 3
Contact Hours: 45
Prerequisites: none
Class Meeting Days & Time:
Office Hours:
Email:
Course Type: Standard Course
Course Fee:

Course Description
What can food history teach us about contemporary culture? In this course, we will explore the history of food in Italy as a gateway to understanding present Italian culture. By examining the factors that have shaped Italian food, cuisine, and taste, the variations in eating habits of different socio-economic classes, and the essential role played by food in constructing Italian identities, we will shed light on fundamental patterns in Italian history and society.

This exploration will lead us to consider processes of social and cultural exchange, political and religious influence, and economic and scientific development. Through a mix of discussions, readings, primary source analyses, workshops, a guest lecture and a field trip, we will investigate Italian food and culture from Antiquity to the present. After the completion of this course, students will have acquired a specific set of historical skills as a result of having developed a critical understanding of food history, an interdisciplinary approach to the study of Italian culture and society, and a framework for analyzing Italian history.

This course very intentionally engages with Italian food in the present. Topics include nation and gender, alternative food systems and food justice in Italy, and climate change's effect on Italian cuisine. During the co-curriculum field trip activity, students will be actively engaged in the preparation and tasting of traditional Umbrian food recipes in the countryside around Assisi.

Learning Outcomes and Assessment Measures
Below are the course's learning outcomes, followed by the methods that will be used to assess students’ achievement for each learning outcome. By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- identify some changes in how Italians have eaten over the last three millennia (Weekly Quiz, Course Journal, Final Essay);
- summarize connections between Umbria’s culinary past and larger themes in Italian and world history, with particular attention to the implications of race, gender & sexuality, religious faith, and class (Course Journal, Final Essay);
- distinguish between primary and secondary sources (Weekly Quiz, Course Journal, Final Essay);
- analyze different kinds of primary sources—texts, objects, and images—for their meaning (Menu Analysis Presentation, Final Essay);
• *integrate* primary and secondary sources on the environmental, sociocultural, and economic factors in Italian food history into an argument (Final Essay).

**Course Materials**

**Readings**

A course reader, including all the indicated readings, will be available. The course’s Moodle site is the primary location for readings and assignments.

**Assessment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Hours</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biweekly Moodle Quizzes</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Journal</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Menu Analysis Presentation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Essay</td>
<td>30%</td>
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**Grading**

Students are reminded that it is their responsibility to note the dates of exams and other assignments. No alternative exam dates will be offered and professors are not required to give partial credit for any late work (they do so at their discretion: the Institute’s default policy is no extensions and a zero for any work turned in late). Students who book travel when they have an exam or other assessment will have to change their plans or accept a zero. Letter grades for student work are based on the following percentage scale:

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

Grades are based on the following criteria:

**Attendance (8%)**

Attendance is an important part of this course. You have two “sick days,” per Institute policy. As long as you are at all the other meetings, you will receive the full 100% for this part of your grade. There are no make-ups offered for attendance.

**Office Hours (2%)**
Getting to know your professor makes you more comfortable with that person and therefore more likely to ask for help. It also might help for you to ask questions about the various assignments or discuss a paper idea. In this course, you get 2% of your grade for coming at least one time to office hours by Week 11.

**Biweekly Moodle Quizzes (25%)**
Students will be assigned two short quizzes every week, each of which will be due before class time and will not be reopened. The quiz will be on Moodle and it is not timed. Students can take the quiz as many times as they like, with the recorded grade being the average grade they receive. There will be a combination of technical, methodological, and content questions. The content questions will help students zoom in on the most important ideas of the readings. The methodological questions will test on skills that will pop up every week, like finding an author's argument and assessing sources. The technical questions will help students learn the class’ policies and administrative procedures.

**Course Journal (20%)**
Students will be provided with a notebook at the start of the semester, which they will use as a personal space through which to reflect on course material and ideas. In-class assignments (e.g. summaries of assigned readings, analyses of primary sources, mental maps, reflections, predictive exercises) will be regularly scheduled and graded twice throughout the semester, i.e. before the mid-semester break (Week 6) and at the end of the course (Week 12). Each of these checks is worth 10% of your grade, for a total of 20%. Students will find the full prompt on Moodle for more information.

**Menu Analysis Presentation (15%)**
Students will present a source analysis of their menu. For this, they will need to collect a menu in Perugia or another Italian locality, analyze and contextualize it by relating it to course material. Students will find on Moodle a full prompt.

**Final Essay (30%)**
In the final essay due on Week 13, students will apply what they have learned throughout the semester. They will analyze a series of primary sources and integrate secondary sources to build an overall narrative on the historical development of Italian cuisine, with citations and footnotes. Students will find on Moodle a full prompt.

**Extension & Submitting Late Work**
If students submit work after the deadline, they will incur a 10% grade deduction for each day the assignment is late. Each student is allowed one extension of 24 hours over the entire semester. Students need to email the instructor before the deadline and inform the instructor of their use of the extension. Work submitted after the deadline will receive a grade of zero, not partial credit. As for all policies, exceptions can be made by the Director for students with special accommodations or in case of medical emergencies, etc.

**Attendance & Lateness Policy**
Class attendance (in person) is mandatory. Students are allowed two “sick days,” which do not need to be justified. However, it is considered common courtesy to inform the instructor of your absence when possible. It is the students’ responsibility to keep them in case of real necessity (sickness or any other unforeseen inconvenience that may prevent students from being in class). Each additional absence—even for another illness—will lower the students’ grade by half a letter grade (i.e., a final grade of a B+ would be lowered to a B). Missing a co-curricular field trip also lowers a student’s final grade by half a letter grade. It is the policy of the Institute that any student who has eight or more absences automatically fails the class.

If a student misses a class, it is ultimately their responsibility to find out what has been missed. Ideally, they should find out what they missed from a classmate. Any work missed in class because of an excused absence may be made up within one week of the return to the class. Any work missed that was a quiz or other test must be made up outside of class time and will, in the interest of intellectual honesty, be a slightly different test than the one given in class.
Except in the case of medical emergencies with a doctor’s certificate and approved by the Director, absences are not accepted when tests are scheduled; tests cannot be made up. Furthermore, scheduled times and dates indicated for exams, quizzes, oral presentations, and any other graded assignments cannot be changed for any reason. Even if more sections of the same class are activated, students may only take exams during the scheduled times and dates for the section they are enrolled in.

Consistent lateness (or leaving class early) is a sign of disorganization and lack of respect both for your instructor and for your fellow students. Umbra instructors are empowered to count three late arrivals as the equivalent of an absence.

**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 set on silent mode before the beginning of each class. Computers and other electronic devices cannot be used during class lectures and discussions for anything other than note-taking, unless there has been a specific academic accommodation.
Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

WEEK 1

Introduction to the course and Roman Food (753 BCE – 476 CE)

Meeting 1: Course introduction and analysis of historical sources
Meeting 2: Roman Food

Readings for the week:

Co-curricular activity:
Preparation of Apicius’s aromatic salt with fresh herbs from Umbra’s didactic garden Orto Sole.

WEEK 2

Medieval Food (476 – 1300)

Meeting 1: New influences on Medieval food culture
Meeting 2: Medieval cooking and recipes

Readings for the week:

WEEK 3

Renaissance Food (1300 – 1600)

Meeting 1: Diets and food hierarchies: The humoral theory and the Great Chain of Being
Meeting 2: Renaissance banquets and feasting
Readings for the week:

WEEK 4
The Columbian “Exchange” and Early Modern Food (1492 – 1800)
Meeting 1: The Columbian Exchange revisited
Meeting 2: The spread of the tomato and the transformation of tastes in Italy

Readings for the week:

WEEK 5
La Mezzadria (sharecropping) and “Traditional” Food (1800s – 2022)
Meeting 1: Agricultural systems and peasant food culture
Meeting 2: How poor is Cucina povera (Poor Cuisine)?

Readings for the week:

Co-curricular field trip:
Preparing and sharing a “traditional” Umbrian meal at Malvarina agriturismo around Assisi

WEEK 6
Political Unification and Industrialization of Food (1815–1915)
Meeting 1: The birth of the Italian nation-state and the Industrial (Food) Revolution
Meeting 2: The role played by Pellegrino Artusi in the culinary unification of Italy

Readings for the week:

Assignments:
Course Journal Entries - First Check (due on Thursday, October 6th)

Semester Break

WEEK 7

Food, the Nation and Women under Fascism (1915–1945)
Meeting 1: Fascist food policies and the experiences of women
Meeting 2: Uniting and modernizing the nation

Readings for the week:

WEEK 8

Diasporic Italian cuisines (1870s–2022)
Meeting 1: Italian migration and food
Meeting 2: Documentary screening on diasporic Italian cuisines and class discussion

Readings for the week:
WEEK 9

Post-war Economic Boom and The Quest for Food Quality (1950s–2022)

Meeting 1: Post-war economic boom
Meeting 2: Changing food habits and the quest for quality

Readings for the week:

WEEK 10

Italian Food Activism and the “Authentic” Italian Cuisine

Meeting 1: Slow Food and alternative food movements in Italy
Meeting 2: Debating the “Authenticity” of Italian Cuisine

Readings for the week:
Browse [https://www.slowfood.com/](https://www.slowfood.com/)

WEEK 11

Menu Analysis In-class Presentations

Meeting 1: Menu Analysis presentations (A-L)
Meeting 2: Menu Analysis presentations (M-Z)

WEEK 12

Contemporary Italian Cuisine

Meeting 1: Writing Workshop
Meeting 2: Street food and the domestic character of Italian cuisine

Readings for the week:
Assignments:
Course Journal Entries - Second Check (due on Thursday, December 8th)

WEEK 13
Final Exams and Special Academic Events Week
TBA