



HIST/FSST/SOC 350 The History and Culture of Food in Italy

Course Syllabus

Spring Semester 2022

Instructor: Clelia Viecelli, PhD

Credits: 3

Contact Hours: 45

Prerequisites: None

Class Hours:

Office Hours:

Course Type: Standard Course

Lab 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.

his 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 analysis, 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, the foodways of recent immigrants to Italy, 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

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

Learning Outcomes	Assessment Measures Course requirements that will be used to assess students' achievement for each learning outcome
<i>identify</i> some changes in how Italians have eaten over the last three millennia	Weekly Quiz Course Journal Final Essay
<i>summarize</i> 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	Participation Course Journal
<i>distinguish</i> between primary and secondary sources	Weekly Quiz Course Journal
<i>analyze</i> different kinds of primary sources—texts, objects, and images—for their meaning	Participation Menu Presentation
<i>integrate</i> primary and secondary sources on the environmental, sociocultural, and economic factors in Italian food history into an argument	Final Essay

Course Materials

Readings

All reading materials will be made available in digital format on Moodle.

Please see “Umbra Institute Course Materials - Textbooks and Readers” handout provided in the orientation folder for more information.

Assessment

Participation	10%
Weekly quizzes	25%
Course journal	20%
Menu Presentation	15%
Final Essay	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
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%	Low Pass
D	63% - 66%	
D-	60% - 62%	
F	59% or less	Fail (no credit)

Course Requirements

Grades are based on participation, a weekly quiz, a course journal, a menu presentation, and a final essay.

Participation (10%)

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

1. Being on time in class and respectful behavior
2. Working in pairs/in group, and showing helpfulness towards classmates
3. Interest in the course and its topics
4. Readings should be done for the class the day they are assigned. In order to show that they have done the readings, students must raise their hand in class offering their perspective on the reading, and/or asking questions about parts that they didn't fully understand.
5. Students will be asked questions in discussion groups on the main ideas and concepts found in the readings. Ability to engage in such discussions is crucial for a participatory classroom environment.

Weekly Quiz (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 of all attempts. 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 technical questions will help students learn the class' policies and administrative procedures. The methodological questions will test on skills that will pop up every week, like finding an author's argument and assessing sources.

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 5) and at the end of the course (Week 10). Each of these checks is worth 10% of your grade, for a total of 20%.

Menu 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 location, 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 11, students will apply what they have learned throughout the semester. They will use course material and additional primary sources and secondary sources to build a historical argument, with citations and footnotes, supporting their answer to the following question: Building on past developments, what predictions would you make about the future of food culture in Italy? Students will find on Moodle a full prompt.

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 a 24-hour extension before the actual deadline. Each student is allowed one extension of 24 hours over the entire semester. Work submitted after the 24-hour extension will be marked zero.

Incomplete/Longer Assignments

If assignments are shorter or longer than the assigned number of pages, there will be a 5% grade deduction for each missing or extra page.

Attendance Policy

Absences for Covid-related circumstances: in order to keep the entire Umbra community healthy and to comply with local laws, you may not enter the Umbra premises if you have a temperature of 37.5 °C (99.5 °F) or higher. For all students who display any relevant symptoms, the procedure will be the following:

1. avoid going to class;
2. immediately notify the Student Services staff;
3. be prepared to get tested for COVID at a local pharmacy within the day.

The following additional conditions apply:

- Students may attend classes remotely and without academic penalty via Zoom or Skype *but only* if they are waiting for the test to be scheduled or performed.
- Students with a positive test result (or who have been in close contact with someone who tested positive) must follow all applicable quarantine or isolation requirements and may attend classes remotely, *without academic penalty*.
- Students with a negative test result are allowed to attend class in person.

It is Institute policy that students with symptoms be tested. Any student refusing testing will not be admitted to the Institute under any circumstances and any absences will not be considered eligible for an extra absence for any classes missed. In other words, refusing a test and staying in one's apartment is considered an unexcused absence.

Class attendance (in person or through live connection) is mandatory. Students are allowed two "free" absences, 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).

Additional absences relating to illness may be approved by the Academic Director but only if a medical certification is provided.

Each additional absence, unless for a very serious reason, will lower the students' grade by one grade level (i.e., a final grade of a B+ would be lowered to a B). If students miss class, they are responsible for obtaining class notes from other students and/or for meeting the professor during office hours. It is also the policy of the Institute that any student who has eight or more absences automatically fails the class.

Except in the case of medical emergencies, 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.

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.

Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

WEEK 1

COURSE INTRODUCTION & ROMAN FOOD (753 BCE – 476 CE)

Day 1 *Course overview, discussion of food and identity and menu analysis*

Day 2 *Roman Food*

Readings for the week:

Day 1: Zhen, W. (2019) *Food Studies: A Hands-On Guide*. London ; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 46–47.

Jurafsky, D. (2015) *The Language of Food: A Linguist Reads the Menu*. W. W. Norton & Company, pp. 7–20.

Day 2: Kaufman, C., K. (2006) ‘Ancient Rome’, in *Cooking in Ancient Civilizations*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, pp. 121–131.

Corbier, M. (1999) ‘The Broad Bean and the Moray: Social Hierarchies and Food in Rome’, in Montanari, M. and Flandrin, J.-L. (eds) *Food: A Culinary History from Antiquity to the Present*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, pp. 128–140.

Hands-On Workshop:

Making Apicius’s aromatic salts with fresh herbs from the Orto Sole didactic garden.

WEEK 2

MEDIEVAL FOOD (476-1300)

Day 1 *New influences on Medieval food culture*

Day 2 *Medieval cooking and recipes*

Readings for the week:

Day 1: Montanari, M. (2012) ‘Introduction: When European (Food) Culture Was Born’, in Montanari, M. (ed.) *A Cultural History of Food in the Medieval Age* London ; New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 1–8.

Montanari, M. (1999) ‘Romans, Barbarians, Christians & Production Structures and Food Systems in the Early Middle Ages’, in Montanari, M. and Flandrin, J.-L. (eds), Sonnenfeld, A. (tran.) *Food: A Culinary History from Antiquity to the Present*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, pp. 165–177.

Day 2: Dickie, J. (2008) ‘Venice, 1300s: Chinese Whispers’, in *Delizia! The Epic Story of the Italians and Their Food*. New York, NY: Free Press, pp. 45–58.

Redon, O., Sabban, F. and Serventi, S. (eds) (1998) ‘The Practice of Cooking & The Aesthetics of Cooking’, in Redon, O., Sabban, F., and Serventi, S., *The Medieval Kitchen: Recipes from France and Italy*. Translated by E. Schneider. Chicago: Chicago University Press, pp. 16–30.

WEEK 3

RENAISSANCE FOOD (1300-1600)

Day 1 *Diets and food hierarchies: The humors and the Great Chain of Being*

Day 2 *Renaissance banquets and feasting*

Readings for the week:

- Day 1: Grieco, A., J. (1999) 'Food and Social Classes in Late Medieval and Renaissance Italy', in Montanari, M. and Flandrin, J.-L. (eds), Sonnenfeld, A. (tran.) *Food: A Culinary History from Antiquity to the Present*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, pp. 302–312.
Grieco, A. J. (2019) 'Dietary and Medical Treatises', in *Food, Social Politics and the Order of Nature in Renaissance Italy*. Milan: Officina Libraria, pp. 120-124.
- Day 2: Dickie, J. (2008) 'Rome, 1549-50: Bread and Water for Their Eminences', in *Delizia!: The Epic History of the Italians and Their Food* New York, NY: Free Press, pp. 100-113.
Taylor, V. (2005) 'Banquet plate and Renaissance culture: a day in the life', *Renaissance Studies*, 19(5), pp. 621–633.

WEEK 4

THE COLUMBIAN “EXCHANGE” AND EARLY MODERN FOOD (1492-1800)

Day 1 *Guest Lecture - Dr Zachary Nowak*

Day 2 *The spread of the tomato and the transformation of tastes in Italy*

Readings for the week:

- Day 1: Brosnan, K.A. (2011) 'Columbian Exchange', in *Encyclopedia of American Environmental History* New York: Facts On File, pp. 301-303.
- Day 2: Gentilcore, D. (2009) 'Taste and the tomato in Italy: a transatlantic history', *Food and History*, 7(1), pp. 125–139.
Montanari, M. (2013) 'Preservation and Renewal of Alimentary Identities', in *Italian Identity in the Kitchen, or Food and the Nation*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 33-40.

WEEK 5

LA MEZZADRIA (SHARECROPPING) AND “TRADITIONAL” FOOD (1800s-2020)

Day 1 *Agricultural systems and peasant food culture*

Day 2 *How poor is Cucina povera (Poor Cuisine)?*

Readings for the week:

- Day 1: Diner, H.R. (2001) 'Black Bread, Hard Bread', in *Hungering for America: Italian, Irish, and Jewish foodways in the age of migration* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
Nowak, Z. (2013) 'Italian Stuffed vs. Maghreb Wrapped: Perugia's Torta al Testa Against the Kebab', in McWilliams, M. (ed.) *Wrapped and Stuffed Foods: Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery 2012*. Totnes: Prospect Books (Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery), pp. 101–107.
- Day 2: Montanari, M. (2017) 'And at Last, the Farmers Win', in Naccarato, P., Nowak, Z., and Eckert, E.K. (eds) *Representing Italy Through Food*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 17–32.
Nowak, Z. (2011) 'Looking Back to the Future: Historical Polycultures in Central Italy', *Agroforestry News*, 19(4), pp. 20–26.

Co-Curricular Field Trip: Food Provisioning and Preparation in Assisi

Hands-On Workshop:

Preparing and sharing a traditional Umbrian meal at Malvarina agriturismo (Assisi).

WEEK 6

POLITICAL UNIFICATION AND THE INDUSTRIALIZATION OF FOOD (1815-1915)

Day 1 *The birth of the Italian nation-state and the Industrial (Food) Revolution*

Day 2 *The role played by Pellegrino Artusi in the culinary unification of Italy*

Readings for the week:

Day 1: Capatti, A. and Montanari, M. (2003) 'Appert in Italy', in *Italian cuisine: a cultural history*. Translated by A. O'Healy. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 252-258.

Helstosky, C. (2004) 'Unification through Monotony, Italy 1861–1914', in *Garlic and Oil: Politics and Food in Italy*. 1st edn. Oxford: Berg, pp. 11–38.

Day 2: Montanari, M. (2013) 'The Artusian Synthesis' and 'The Numbers of Italians Increases', in *Italian Identity in the Kitchen, or Food and the Nation*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 47-57.

Dickie, J. (2008) 'Florence, 1891. Pellegrino Artusi', in *Delizial!: The Epic History of the Italians and Their Food*. New York, NY: Free Press, pp.196-215.

Semester Break

WEEK 7

FOOD, THE NATION AND WOMEN UNDER FASCISM (1915-45)

Day 1 *Fascist food policies and the experiences of women*

Day 2 *Uniting and modernizing the nation*

Readings for the week:

Day 1: Garvin, D. (2015) 'Taylorist Breastfeeding in Rationalist Clinics: Constructing Industrial Motherhood in Fascist Italy', *Critical Inquiry*, 41(3), pp. 655–674.

Day 2: Dickie, J. (2008) 'Milan, 1936', in *Delizial!: The Epic History of the Italians and Their Food* New York, NY: Free Press, pp. 256-268.

Helstosky, C. (2003) 'Recipe for the Nation: Reading Italian History Through La Scienza in Cucina and La Cucina Futurista', *Food and Foodways*, 11(2–3), pp. 113–140.

WEEK 8

DIASPORIC ITALIAN CUISINES AND POST-WAR ECONOMIC BOOM (1870s-2021)

Day 1 *Italian migration and food*

Day 2 *Post-war economic boom*

Readings for the week:

Day 1: Levenstein, H. (2002) 'The American Response to Italian Food, 1880-1930', in Counihan, C. (ed.) *Food in the USA: A Reader*. New York: Routledge, pp. 75–90.

Albala, K. (2018) 'Italianità in America: The Cultural Politics of Representing "Authentic" Italian Cuisine in the US', in Naccarato, P., Nowak, Z., and Eckert, E.K. (eds) *Representing Italy Through Food*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 205–218.

Day 2: Montanari, M. (2013) 'The 'Italian Miracle': Between Modernity and Tradition', in *Italian Identity in the*

Kitchen, or Food and the Nation. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 59-64.

Garvin, D. (2017) 'Producing consumers: Gendering Italy through food advertisements', in Naccarato, P., Nowak, Z., and Eckert, E.K. (eds) *Representing Italy Through Food*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 141–164.

WEEK 9

CURRENT TRENDS AND ALTERNATIVE FOOD SYSTEMS (1980-2021)

Day 1 *Changing food habits and alternative food systems*

Day 2 *Authenticity of Italian cuisine and street food*

Readings for the week:

Day 1: Parasecoli, F. (2014) 'Now and the Future', in *Al Dente: A History of Food in Italy* London: Reaktion Books, pp. 198-222.

Siniscalchi, V. (2014) 'Slow Food Activism between Politics and Economy', in Siniscalchi, V. and Counihan, C. (eds) *Food Activism: Agency, Democracy and Economy*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, pp. 225–242.

Day 2: Wong, E. K. (2017) 'Authenticity all'Italiana: Food discourses, diasporas, and the limits of cuisine in contemporary Italy', in Naccarato, P., Nowak, Z., and Eckert, E.K. (eds) *Representing Italy Through Food*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 33–53.

Parasecoli, F. (2021) 'Eating on the go in Italy: between cibo di strada and street food', *Food, Culture & Society*, 24(1), pp. 112–126. doi:[10.1080/15528014.2020.1859901](https://doi.org/10.1080/15528014.2020.1859901).

WEEK 10

CONTEMPORARY ITALIAN CUISINE (2000s-2020)

Day 1 *Writing Workshop*

Day 2: *The domestic character of Italian cuisine and the future of food culture in Italy*

Readings for the week:

Day 1: Writing Workshop

Day 2: Montanari, M. (2013) 'Epilogue: In Search of Home Cooking', in *Italian Identity in the Kitchen, or Food and the Nation*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 73-84.

Portincasa, A. 'Cookbooks and the Representation of Italian Ways of Food', in Sassatelli, R. (ed.) *Italians and Food*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 203-235.

WEEK 11

Special Academic Events Week

TBA