



ENG/FSST 358: Writing Italian Food

Course Syllabus

Summer Session I – 2026

Instructor: Prof. Teresa Cutler-Broyles

Credits: 3

Contact Hours: 45

Prerequisites: none

Class Meeting Days & Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2.15 pm - 5.45pm

Office Hours: by appointment after a class or via Zoom (see Moodle site)

Course Fee: USD \$160

Course Description

This exciting, 3-credit UNM class with professor Teresa Cutler-Broyles combines the history and customs of food, olive oil, and wine in Perugia and the surrounding region, with food writing and travel. We'll start by exploring a small portion of the history of Italian food and wine, with a specific focus on Perugia and the wider Umbrian area. Through readings, discussions, participant observation, conversations and interviews with local food producers, tour operators and writers, we will learn how the world is interconnected via our traditions and culture around food. Additionally, we will discuss the effects of globalization, and how that all is reflected back into daily life, food (and other consumable) choices, as we examine subjects as diverse as the origin of pasta and how it carries with it cultural identity, the tradition of the aperitivo, the arrival of coffee in Italy along with its subsequent growth in popularity and its effect on religion and education, the slow food and natural food movements, and more.

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.
- *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).
- *Develop* and *hone* writing, editing and critiquing skills.
- *Analyze* written work and *synthesize* ideas.

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

Attendance	15%
Food blog	25%
Interview	25%
Final Paper	35%

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:

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)

Please note: decimal numerals between 1-4 are rounded down while 5-9 are rounded up: e.g., expect 89.4 to be 89.0 while 89.5 to round up to 90.

Course Requirements

Grades are based on the following criteria.

Attendance (15%)

Attendance is an important part of this course. You have one "sick day," per Institute policy. As long as you are at all the other meetings, you will receive the full 10% for this part of your grade. There are no make-ups offered for attendance.

Food Blog (25%)

This blog will be a running commentary on students' food adventures in Italy. Writing skills will improve as we go through the class. Guidelines will be provided on Moodle.

Interview (25%)

Students will interview a local food-related person—shop owner, restaurant worker, historian, gardener, etc. Guidelines will be provided on Moodle.

Final Paper (35%)

Students will choose a type of Italian food and will write a historically-oriented research paper. Guidelines will be provided on Moodle.

Extension & Submitting Late Work

Each student is allowed one extension of 24 hours over the entire semester. This can be used for any assignment but the final project. Students need to email the instructor before the deadline and inform the instructor of their use of the extension. Any work submitted after the 24-hour extension will be marked zero.

As for all policies, exceptions can be made by the Director for students with special accommodations or in case of medical emergencies, etc.

Attendance Policy

Attendance is expected and mandatory for classroom times and co-curricular activities. The first absence per course due to illness will be considered an excused "sick day" and does not require medical documentation. To receive additional excused absences due to illness, students are required to see a local physician or request a letter from an Institute-approved doctor documenting they should be excused from class for illness.

Unexcused absences will adversely affect a student's academic performance and will result in a reduction of the student's final course grade by 2% per absence up to a maximum of 10%. Excessive unexcused absences may result in a failing grade or disciplinary action. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of the number of absences or late arrivals for each course, and to ask the instructor when in doubt.

If students miss class, they are responsible for obtaining class notes from other students and/or for meeting the professor during office hours. 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.

Presence during mandatory field trips is especially important. Missing a mandatory field trip for a course, unless for a very serious reason that is communicated to Umbra staff in a timely manner, will lower the students' grade by $\frac{3}{4}$ of a letter grade (i.e., a final grade of a B+ would be lowered to a B-).

Legitimate reasons for an excused absence or tardiness includes: death in immediate family, religious observances, illness or injury, local inclement weather, medical appointments that cannot be rescheduled.

Students who request an approved absence to observe a religious holiday must submit a formal request to the Institute's Director within one week after the add/drop period when course schedules, including any field trips, are finalized. No exceptions will be made after this deadline.

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.

Tardiness Policy

Students are expected to attend all classes punctually. Any student arriving up to 15 minutes late or leaving up to 15 minutes earlier than the scheduled class end time will be marked as tardy. Each incident of tardiness (late arrivals to or early departures from class) is 0.5% off the final grade. However, should a student arrive more than 15 minutes late or depart more than 15 minutes before the conclusion of the class, it will be recorded as an absence.

Students are also expected to remain in class during the time of instruction except for a reasonable amount of time to use the restroom. Students who leave class and do not return during the class session will receive an unexcused absence or late penalty.

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.

Utilizing ChatGPT or other artificial intelligence (AI) tools for the generation of content submitted by a student as their own as part of any assignment for academic credit at the Institute constitutes a form of plagiarism.

Should the Institute become aware of a student's use of such platforms and services, the student will be subject to the same consequences and judicial proceedings as are in place for plagiarism (defined above).

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. Students are not allowed to use their cell phones or laptops while in class or during co-curricular events and activities, unless otherwise specified in the course syllabus or expressly permitted by the instructor for special learning. This policy also applies to earbuds, smart watches, and headsets. Students who do not respect these rules will be subject to disciplinary warnings and probation, be given an unexcused absence from class, and other disciplinary action including dismissal from the course.

Moodle

Please note that Moodle, not this syllabus, is the ultimate reference for due dates, assignment prompts, and course announcements. It is *the student's responsibility* to check the site regularly to be aware of announcements as well as to see and record all due dates for assignments.

Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

WEEK 1

Writing Italian Food

May 19: *What is Food Writing and Why is it Important?*

Lecture / Discussion

In-class food tasting.

In-class writing exercise.

Readings:

Sebellin-Ross, S.J. *How to Write about Food:* (2012). Parts 1 and 2.

Jacob, Dianne. *Will Write for Food: The Complete Guide to Writing Cookbooks, Blogs, Reviews, Memoir, and More.* Da Capo Lifelong Books; Second Edition (July 2010), pp. 1-5.

Gutkind, Lee, *You Can't Make This Stuff Up:* Da Capo Lifelong Books (August 2012). pgs 44-55.

We will go over these concepts, and you will do these readings before Thursday (this will be your heaviest reading week).

May 21: *Why We Write What We Eat*

Readings to be done before class (in addition to the above readings). Write short synopses of these selections, taking note of the history component.

A - Jacob, Dianne. *Will Write for Food* (July 2010). pp. 8-19, pp. 75-81

B - Dickie, John. *Deliziosa! The Epic History of the Italians and Their Food.* Atria Books (October 2010). pp. 1-10.

C - Gutkind, Lee, *You Can't Make This Stuff Up*, Da Capo Lifelong Books (August 2012), pp. 3-13.

Lecture / Discussion

Share your insights about the readings

Discuss possibilities for people to interview—not necessarily a specific person at this point.

Part 2 of class: Restaurant visit, note-taking and food descriptions using Sebillin-Ross and Gutkind as guides.

Weekend: All weekend work must be done by the following Tuesday's class.

Start your food blog. This must be started with at least one post by May 26, and a link sent to me.

Readings:

Best American Food & Travel Writing 2024

o **Choose and read one essay.** Be ready to discuss with the class on Tuesday next week. You will tell us why you chose it (title, subject, etc.), what it was about – not what happened in it – what you liked, what worked, the style of writing, what you would like to emulate, how author was able to hook your interest, what didn't work, etc.

WEEK 2

Food, History & Community

May 26 *Food Myths/Food Traditions/Invented History*

Readings: Write short synopses to share with class.

A - Jacob, Dianne. *Will Write for Food*: (July 2010). pp. 145-165

B - Parasecoli, Fabio. *Al Dente: A History of Food in Italy*. Reaktion Books (May 2014), pp. 7-27

C - Parasecoli, Fabio. *Al Dente*: (May 2014), pp. 251-276

Share your insights about the readings.

We will discuss the story you read in *Best American Food & Travel Writing*. Tell us which story you read, why you chose that one (title, subject, random), what was it about, what you liked about it, what worked, style of writing, what you would like to emulate, how author was able to hook your interest, etc.

May 28: *Food as Community/Distinguishing Flavors/Your Sweet is my Sour*

Readings: Write short synopses to share with class

A - Montanari, Massimo. *Let the Meatballs Rest: And Other Stories About Food and Culture*. Columbia University Press (December 2012). Ch 1, Ch 5.

B - Dickie, John. *Delizija!* (October 2010). pp. 13-28.

C - Nowak, Zachary, "Italian Stuffed vs. Maghreb Wrapped: Perugia's Torta al Testa Against the Kebab." Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery (2012).

Discuss the concepts and ideas from the readings.

Part 2 of class:

Film: *Big Night*, Campbell Scott, 1996

Weekend: All weekend work must be done by the following Tuesday's class

Readings

Best American Food & Travel Writing 2024

o **Choose and read one essay.** Be ready to discuss with the class on Tuesday next week. See last weekend's assignment for things to have in mind.

WEEK 3

Food & Meaning

June 2: *Food as Health/Food as Pleasure/Food and Vice*

Readings: (Write short synopses to share with class.)

A - Montanari, Massimo. *Let the Meatballs Rest* (December 2012), Chapter 6.

B - Montanari, Massimo. *Let the Meatballs Rest* (December 2012), Chapter 7.

C - Parasecoli, Fabio. *Al Dente* (May 2014), pp. 53-62.

Discuss the concepts and ideas from the readings.

Discuss the story you read in *Best American Food & Travel Writing 2024*.

Discuss who you will interview, and what you will ask them. Work in groups to decide questions.

In-class writing assignment.

June 4: *Food and Authenticity*

Readings: (Write short synopses to share with class.)

A - Parasecoli, Fabio. *Al Dente* (May 2014), pp. 103-124

B - Di Maio, Dina. "Is Cucina Moderna the True Food of Italy?" *Authentic Italian* (2018)

C - Ascione & Fink. "Italian sagre: preserving and re-inventing cultural heritage and community through food festivals in Umbria, Italy"

Discuss the concepts and ideas from the readings.

Part two of class: Gelato Workshop (or June 11)

Part 2 of class: Visit to a local garden with food/writing exercise (San Pietro & Medieval garden or Tempio)

Weekend:

Readings

Best American Food & Travel Writing 2024

o **Choose and read one essay.** Be ready to discuss with the class on Tuesday next week. See last weekend's assignment for things to have in mind.

WEEK 4

Food as Identity

June 9: *Experiencing Italy's wine and food culture*

Mandatory Field Trip to DiFilippo winery. Details will be provided.

June 11: *Methods of Eating/We Are What We Eat?*

Readings: Write short synopses to share with class

A - Dickie, John. *Delizia!* Atria Books (October 2010). pp. 183-195.

B - Montanari, Massimo. *Let the Meatballs Rest* (December 2012), Chapter 10.

C - Montanari, Massimo. *Let the Meatballs Rest* (December 2012), Chapter 9.

Discuss the concepts and ideas from the readings.

Share your final project topic.

Part 2 of class:

Gelato Workshop (if we did not do this on June 4)

or

Restaurant visit where we will discuss our favorite essays from the book *Best American Food & Travel Writing 2024*. Writing assignment at restaurant.

WEEK 5

Pulling it all together

June 16:

Readings for the week:

All groups – Parasecoli, Fabio. *Al Dente* (May 2014), pp. 203-222

Discuss the concepts and ideas from the reading.

Discuss food blogs; what did you learn, what did you love about it; what did you find hard about it.

Part 2 of class:

Bring a draft of your final paper to class

Discussion will focus on your concerns with your project, with peer review.

Discussion of which essays in *Best American Food & Travel Writing 2024* have been most helpful, which have taught you about writing about food, and how you will be incorporating those new techniques.

June 18:

Meet at restaurant. Present final papers.

Discuss the food and wine we are served using all the new tools of analyses, observation, and knowledge of history.

Final papers to me by Friday June 19.