



FSST/ENV/SUST 300 Experiencing Sustainable Italian Foodways

Course Syllabus
Fall Semester 2026

Instructor: Clelia Viecegli, PhD

Credits: 1

Contact Hours: 15

Prerequisites: none

Class Meeting Days & Time: Refer to definitive schedule in Moodle

Office Hours: by appointment or via Zoom

Course Type: FSE program core-course

Course Fee: included in FSE program fee

Course Description

In this mandatory one-credit course, students in the Food, Sustainability & Environmental Studies (FSE) engage in a series of experiential learning activities designed to complement their coursework and in line with the UN Development Goals framework. Activities and related assignments are designed to give students hands-on experiences through which they can witness ideas being put into practice. The combination of on-the-ground activities combined with critical reflection on their experiences gives students opportunities to participate in co-curricular activities through which key topics and concepts are related to practical and applied situations; to engage in community-based learning and similar field experiences that connect classroom learning to real world problem-solving.

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:

- *summarize* how the series of co-curricular course activities supplemented and integrated with their classroom and community-engaged learning;
- *generate* a list of the various human and natural systems (at various scales) and the feedback loops between them, especially in Italy;
- *articulate* how the combination of co-curricular, community-engaged, and classroom experiences could be pursued in graduate work or be put into action in the service of real-world problem solving.
- *compare* the research questions and methodologies across the disciplines represented in their classroom work.
- *assess* how various community and institutional projects they have seen this semester can promote food sovereignty, social justice, and ecological awareness.

Course Materials

Readings

The course's Moodle site is the primary location for readings and assignments.

Assessment

Attendance at workshops, dinners and briefings 50%

Reflection Journal 50%

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
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)

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 (50%)

Attendance is mandatory. No make-ups are offered for missed meetings. We will meet for six workshops, two dinners, and two briefing sessions. To receive full credit for attendance, students must participate in **nine out of the ten meetings**. Attendance at the Truffle Hunting and Capstone field trips does not count toward this assessment.

Students are expected to arrive at meetings punctually and be prepared to actively contribute to the discussions.

Reflection Journal (50%)

Students keep a reflection journal throughout the semester. In some cases, they are given prompts that focus on specific topics and related activities. In other cases, they are asked to reflect on their own experiences and observations and to connect them to course topics. Journals are graded twice during the semester, before the semester break (Week 6) and at the end of the semester (Week 12). If a student misses a meeting, they are still supposed to submit the relevant journal for that meeting. A full list of entries and more information about submitting journals will be provided on Moodle.

Attendance & Lateness Policy

Attendance **in person is mandatory**. All students are allowed **one unexcused absence**, which does not need to be justified and may only be used for workshops, dinners, or briefing sessions. Because this is a one-credit course with a limited number of class meetings, each additional unexcused absence will result in a **5% deduction from the final grade**.

This policy does not apply to field trips. **Attendance during field trips is especially important**, and there are no allowed free unexcused absences for the Truffle Hunting Day Trip or the Capstone Trip.

Missing the **Truffle Hunting Day Trip**, unless for a very serious reason that is promptly communicated to Umbra staff, will lower the student's final grade by **half a letter grade** (i.e., a final grade of A would be lowered to A-).

Missing the **three-day Capstone Trip**, even partially, unless for a very serious reason that is promptly communicated to Umbra staff, will lower the student's final grade by **one full letter grade** (i.e., a final grade of A would be lowered to B+).

Each incident of tardiness, including late arrivals to or early departures from class, will result in a **1.5% deduction from the final grade**.

Excessive absences (**three or more**) may result in a failing grade or disciplinary action. It is the student's responsibility to keep track of the number of absences and late arrivals for each course and to ask the instructor when in doubt.

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

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

Absences due to illness may be excused by the Director **only if medical certification is provided**.

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.

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. 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.

U.N. Sustainable Development Goals

This course contributes to the achievement of one or more goals of U. N. Agenda for Sustainable Development:



Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

- Week 1** Welcome Dinner Wednesday, Sept. 9
Meet in Aula Magna at 5:45pm
- Benvenuto
 - Syllabus Review
- Riley, Gillian. "Umbria." In *The Oxford Companion to Italian Food*, 549-53. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Week 2** Aperitivo Lecture & Tasting Monday, Sept. 14
Meet in the Umbra courtyard at 5:35pm.
- Riley, Gillian. "Aperitivo." In *The Oxford Companion to Italian Food*, 17-18. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Black, Rachel. "Amaro: A Boozy, Bitter History of Digestivi from the Pharmacy to the Bar," 1-10, 2010.
- Week 3** Honey Lecture & Tasting Monday, Sept. 21
Meet in Aula Magna at 4:00pm.
- Riley, Gillian. "Honey" In *The Oxford Companion to Italian Food*, 250-252. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Week 4** Birà Food Coop onsite visit Monday, Sept. 28
Meet in Aula Magna at 4:00pm.
- Fonte, M., & Cucco, I. (2017). Cooperatives and alternative food networks in Italy. The long road towards a social economy in agriculture. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 53, 291-302.
- Week 5** Campus Garden onsite visit at San Pietro Wednesday, Oct. 7
Meet in the courtyard at 4:00pm.
- D'Andrea Brooks, O, R Thanganathan, and L Gittings (2025) "Growing third places: A qualitative study of experiences and perceived benefits of a campus community garden as a nature-based health intervention."

[Semester Break]

- Week 8** Alternative Food Systems Lecture and Fuori di Zucca onsite visit Wednesday, Nov. 4

Meet in Aula Magna at 5:45pm.

Ronald L. Sandler, *Food Ethics: The Basics* (2nd ed., Routledge, 2023), "Chapter 1: Food Systems" (pp. 1–25)

Week 8 Truffle Hunting Field Trip Friday, Nov. 6
Meet at the fountain at 8:30am.

Riley, "Truffle," In *The Oxford Companion to Italian Food*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, 533-34.

Nowak, Zachary. *Truffle: A Global History*. Reaktion Books, 2015. Read pages 132-136.

Week 9 Pizza Workshop Monday, Nov. 9
Meet at the Fountain at 4:00pm.

Cesari, Luca. *The History of Pizza*. Translated by Zachary Nowak. Polity Press, 2025. Read pages 3-6, "Prologue".

Optional:

Nowak, Zachary. "Folklore, Fakelore, History: Invented Tradition and the Origins of the Pizza Margherita." *Food, Culture and Society: An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research* 17, no. 1 (2014): 103–24.

Week 10 Capstone Field Trip to Emilia Romagna: Thursday-Saturday, Nov. 19-21

Important Note: You will receive the itinerary at the beginning of the week.

Pre-departure briefing Wednesday, Nov. 18
Meet in Aula Magna at 4:00pm.

Fieldtrip debriefing Monday, Nov. 23
Meet in Aula Magna at 4:00pm.

Riley, "Balsamic Vinegar," 35-37.

Riley, "Parma Ham," 361.

Riley, "Parmesan," 361-65.

Riley, "DOC, DOP, IGP, SGT," 160-161.

West, H.G. (2013) 'Appellations and indications of origin, terroir, and the social construction and contestation of place-named foods', in A. Murcott, W.J. Belasco, and P. Jackson (eds) *The handbook of food research*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, pp. 209–228.

Week 12 Final Dinner Wednesday, Dec. 2
Details TBA