



ANTH/SOC/FSST 375 - Anthropology of Food and Eating: Understanding Self and Others

**Course Syllabus
Summer Session I – 2025**

Instructor: Clelia Viecelli, PhD

Credits: 3

Contact Hours: 45

Prerequisites: none

Class Meeting Days & Time: Mondays and Wednesdays, 2:15pm-5:45pm

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

Course Type: Standard Course

Course Fee: USD\$125

Course Description

This course will address food-related issues from an anthropological perspective. It will examine the role that food plays in shaping: group and personal identities; ethnic affiliations in a global world; religious boundaries through rituals, taboos, and avoidances; and revitalization of local and global communities. Through reading assignments, and ethnographic research in the city of Perugia, students will explore how food traditions and local food are maintained and transformed over time and space, and how culinary knowledge is used to mark cultural belonging and differences. The course will focus on food as cultural heritage through an analysis of culinary tourism, the culture of restaurants, and processes of patrimonialization. Furthermore, it will apply gendered perspectives on the body and analyze power dynamics in Italian families through food consumption and preparation. Students will study food as a site of cultural transmission but also of dissent and resistance. The course incorporates a short ethnographic project on restaurants and cultural heritage. Through these exercises in qualitative research, students will become engaged in original research in and out the classroom.

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* the connections between contemporary Umbrian, Italian, and global food cultures through the examination of the food practices of individuals and communities;
- *recognize* the environmental, sociocultural, and economic factors that affect food supplies, food security, and health;
- *design* an appropriate, ethical ethnographic project and—working directly with local partners who are actively involved in various aspects of the food system (production, distribution, consumption)—collect data on how individual food behaviors are shaped by their society's foodways;
- *carry out* that project while approaching cultural differences with an unbiased framework.

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	10%
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Biweekly Moodle Quizzes	20%
Field Note Journal	25%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	25%

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 (10%)

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.

Quizzes (20%)

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 research methods used. The technical questions will help students learn the class's policies and administrative procedures.

Course Journal (25%)

Field notes journal entries refer to the written account derived from data collected during ethnographic observations and interviews at four different food venues in Perugia. Each entry should be typed with full sentences and uploaded on Moodle by the deadline. Students will find on Moodle a full prompt.

Midterm Exam (20%)

The midterm exam will cover all topics presented in the first half of the course and will consist of short-answer questions. The exam will take approximately 60 minutes to complete and is closed book/closed

notes.

Final Exam (25%)

The final exam will be based upon the original data collected during the fieldwork activities and the notions covered during the course. The exam will consist of a short essay where students should integrate ethnographic data and theoretical concepts into an argument.

Extension & Submitting Late Work

Work submitted after the deadline will receive a grade of zero, not partial credit. 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 half 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. Sleeping during class will be treated as not being there: any time asleep is lateness, more than 15 minutes is simply 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 (e.g., 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

Food: An Anthropological Perspective

Meeting 1: *Introduction to Anthropology of Food & Bio-Cultural Perspectives on Nutrition*

Readings for this meeting:

Fischler, C. (1988) 'Food, Self and identity', *Social Science Information*, n. 27, pp. 275-292.

Co-curricular activity:

In-class tasting of typical food products from Umbria

Meeting 2: *Social and Religious Functions of Food*

Readings for this meeting:

Harris, M. (1974) 'Mother Cow', in Harris, M. *Cows, Pigs, Wars, and Witches: The Riddles of Culture*. New York: Random House, pp. 11-32.

Co-curricular activity:

Streaming of a documentary on sacred foods from Italy and gelato tasting at a local *gelateria*.

WEEK 2

The Critique on Tradition & Ethnographic Research Methods

Meeting 1: *Food between Tradition and Innovation*

Readings for this meeting:

West, H. G. (2020) 'Crafting innovation: Continuity and change in the "living traditions" of contemporary artisan cheesemakers', *Food and Foodways*, 28(2), pp. 91-116.

Co-curricular activity:

Tasting of "traditional" Perugia's *torta al testo* from Testone

Meeting 2: *Qualitative and Ethnographic Research Methods*

Readings for this meeting:

Paxson, H. (2019) 'Participant-observation and Interviewing Techniques', in Chrzan, J and Brett J. (eds.) *Food Culture: Anthropology, Linguistics, and Food Studies*, New York and Oxford: Berghahn, pp. 92-100.

Co-curricular activity:

Dinner at Dal Mi Cocco on Tuesday, May 27

WEEK 3

Italian Street Food and the Role of Gender in Food

Meeting 1: *Italian Street Food*

Readings for this meeting:

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)..

Co-curricular activity:

Ethnographic visit to the porchetta stand Antica Salumeria Granieri

Assignments:

Hand in Field Notes Journal 1 on Dal Mi Cocco restaurant.

Meeting 2: Food and Gender

Readings for this meeting:

Cairns, K., Johnston, J. and Baumann, S. (2010) 'Caring About Food: Doing Gender in the Foodie Kitchen', *Gender & Society*, 24(5), pp. 591–615

Assignments:

In-class midterm exam (Wednesday, June 4)

Hand in Field Notes Journal 2.

WEEK 4

Heritage-Making and Culinary Tourism

Meeting 1: Food as Cultural Heritage

Readings for this meeting:

Ascione, E. (2017) "Food and Cultural Heritage: Preserving, Re-inventing and Exposing Food Cultures", pp 301-313 in *The Handbook of Food and Popular Culture*, edited by Peter Naccarato and Kathleen LeBesco. London, U.K.: Bloomsbury Publishers

Co-curricular activity:

Visit of different Perugian food venues in the city centre

Meeting 2: Culinary Tourism

Readings for this meeting:

Ascione, E. & Fink, C. (2021) 'Italian *Sagre*: Preserving and Re-inventing Cultural Heritage and Community through Food Festivals in Umbria, Italy', *Food, Culture & Society*, DOI: [10.1080/15528014.2021.1873037](https://doi.org/10.1080/15528014.2021.1873037)

Co-curricular activity:

Ethnographic dinner at the local Medieval fair (this activity will be held on **Thursday, June 12**)

WEEK 5

Globalization and Food Activism: The Case-Study of Slow Food

Meeting 1: The Globalization of Food

Readings for this meeting:

Crowther, G. 'Local Digestion: Making the Global at Home', in Crowther, G. *Eating Culture: An Anthropological Guide to Food*, Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, pp. 255-276.

Co-curricular activity:

Dinner at the Slow Food restaurant Moderno on Tuesday, June 17

Assignments:

Hand in Field Notes Journal 3.

Meeting 2: The Slow Food Movement

Readings for this meeting:

Laudan, R. (2004) "Slow Food, The French Terroir Strategy, and Culinary Modernism", *Food, Culture & Society*, 7(2), pp. 133-144.

Assignments:

Hand in Field Notes Journal 4.

Final exam: Friday, June 20

List of suggested readings

Week 1

Crowther, G. (2018) 'Setting the Anthropological Table', in Crowther, G. *Eating Culture: An Anthropological Guide to Food*. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, pp. XIX-XXXI.

Scrivens, G. (2008) 'On the Ideology of Nutritionism', *Gastronomica*, n. 8(1), pp. 39-48.

Meigs, A. (1997) 'Food as a Cultural Construction', in Counihan, C. and Van Esterik, P. eds. *Food and Culture. A Reader*. New York: Routledge, pp. 95-106.

Vallianatos, H. and Raine, K. (2008) 'Consuming Food and Constructing Identities among Arabic and South Asian Immigrant Women', *Food, Culture and Society*, 11(3), pp. 355-373.

Week 2

Ariel, A. (2012) 'The Hummus Wars', *Gastronomica*, 12(1), pp. 34-42.

Crowther, G. 'Local Digestion: Making the Global at Home', in Crowther, G. *Eating Culture: An Anthropological Guide to Food*, Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, pp. 255-276.

Week 3

Matta, R. (2013) 'Valuing Native Eating: The Modern Roots of Peruvian Food Heritage', *Anthropology of Food* [online] S8 | 2013 URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/aof/7361>.

Bestor, T. C. (2000) 'How Sushi Went Global', in Watson, J. L. and Caldwell, M L. Caldwell (eds.) *The Cultural Politics of Food and Eating: A Reader*, Malden, Oxford, Carlton: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 13-20.

Fetterman, David M. (2010) *Ethnography: Step-by-Step*. 3rd ed. Applied Social Research Methods Series 17. Los Angeles: SAGE pp. 20-26; 33-53.

Counihan, C. (2014) 'Women, Gender, and Agency in Italian Food Activism', in Siniscalchi, V. and Counihan, C. (eds.) *Food Activism: Agency, Democracy and Economy*, London and New York: Bloomsbury, pp. 61-76

Week 4

Mars, G. (2007) 'Food, Family and Tradition in Northern Italy: The Rise and Fall of a Michelin-starred Family Restaurants', in Beriss, D. and Sutton, D. (eds.) *The Restaurant Book: Ethnographies of Where We Eat*, Oxford and New York: Berg, pp. 167-190.

Stronza, A. (2001) 'Anthropology of Tourism: Forging New Grounds for Ecotourism and other Alternatives', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 30, pp. 261-283.

Long, L. M. (2004) 'Foreword' and 'Introduction', in Long, L. M. (ed.) *Culinary Tourism*, Lexington: Kentucky University Press, pp. xii-xiv/1-19.

Week 5

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

Siniscalchi, V. (2018) 'Political Taste: Inclusion and Exclusion in the Slow Food Movement', in Counihan, C. and Højlund S. (eds.) *Making Taste Public: Ethnographies of Food and the Senses*, London: Bloomsbury, pp. 185-198.

Leitch, A.M. (2003) 'Slow Food and the Politics of Pork Fat: Italian Food and European Identity', *Ethnos*, 68 (4), pp. 437-462.