



**FSST/NUTR 351: Italy and the Mediterranean Diet: Myths and Realities**  
**Course Syllabus**  
**Summer Session 2020**

**Instructor:** Christopher Fink, Ph.D.

**Credits:** 3

**Contact Hours:** 45

**Prerequisites:** None

**Class Hours:** Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

**Course Type:** Standard Course

**Lab Fee:** TBD

**Course Description**

The Mediterranean Diet has often been promoted as one of the most healthful in the world. It has found broad appeal in part because of its rich, fresh flavors, and focus on ‘traditional,’ often romanticized foods. In this course, the class will examine the general role of food choices in promoting health, the history of the Mediterranean Diet, and how it rose to prominence as an example of a healthy dietary pattern even in non-Mediterranean cultures. The class will examine the science behind these health-promoting beliefs and the current realities of the diet as it plays out in Italy, particularly in Perugia and more broadly in Umbria. Aside from course content, students will have the opportunity to visit farmers markets, food growers, and food producers to more effectively understand the consumption patterns and importance of these foods in present-day central Italy.

There will be a strong emphasis on the reflection of out-of-class and hands-on experiences. The course will include opportunities to interact with producers and market vendors, participate in tastings of typical Mediterranean-diet products like olive oil, ancient grains, wine, and other foods. These experiences are aimed at better understanding the role that food plays in contemporary Italian society, and how this role meshes with the key aspects of the Mediterranean Diet.

**Course Objectives**

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

- describe the key dietary and behavioral features of the Mediterranean Diet, as described in the literature;
- describe the key features of a healthful diet, per USDA guidelines;
- identify the primary health-supporting nutrients (and their roles);
- discuss the relationship between food synergy, the Mediterranean Diet, and standard dietary recommendations;
- understand and apply the current research regarding the healthfulness of the Mediterranean Diet;
- conduct a structured, detailed observations of key contextual features that influence diet in a Mediterranean setting, and describe these findings in a pithy manner;
- demonstrate, through in-class tasks and field experiences, their critical perspective on how food production and consumption in Italy matches with the key tenets of the Mediterranean Diet;
- critique the application of the Mediterranean Diet in a contemporary, American context; and

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- reflect, in an informed manner, on their experiences living in a Mediterranean Culture, and the impact on their food behaviors and values.

## Course Materials

### Readings

Required readings are an essential part of the class. Reading assignments **MUST** be completed by the start of class, and will periodically be followed up by short written assignments (see next section).

All readings available on Google Drive and on the Umbra App.

## Assessment

Class Engagement and Participation	20%
Reflective Visitor Project	10%
Reading Questions and Assignments (Pre-Course Assignments, Grocery Task, Reflections, etc.)	25%
Observation Tasks	10%
Mid-Term Exam	15%
Final Project	20%

## 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 the following:

### *Class Engagement and Participation (20%)*

Class participation points are not automatic. They are based on actual participation in the class discussions, both in classroom and field experiences. The learning experience in a study abroad setting like this really relies heavily on the engagement and participation of all participants. Participation also means being prepared for class - completing the assigned readings, written tasks, etc. Students should also keep all written and in-class tasks, as these will be referred to throughout the semester, and will aid in their participation in the class.

### *Reflective Visitor Project (10%)*

This project will be ongoing through the term, and is meant to highlight student conceptions (and changes in those conceptions) about the social, structural, cultural, and of course food-related experiences in Italy. Students

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will be required to use digital photographs and brief descriptions to document these issues. The end goal is to have students maintain their engagement and reflection on the experience.

#### *Reading Questions and Assignments (25%)*

These assignments will vary through the semester. There may be several types of assignments:

1. In-class: these will be short tasks that take place in class, and allow us to start the discussion about experiences, readings, etc.;
2. Reading questions: due on the day when material is to be discussed;
3. Experiential reflections: due on the day following the experience; and
4. Other tasks, such as quick observations, analysis, etc.

*All work must be completed and turned in on time. Written assignments will vary in length.*

#### *Observation Tasks (10%)*

Students will conduct four 60-minute structured observations during their time in Perugia, focused on supermarkets, public/farmers markets, restaurants, and cafés. The goal is to understand more about the food culture in a Mediterranean Diet setting, and relate that to the literature and course content about this dietary pattern. Data from these observations will be used to inform the final project.

#### *Mid-Term Exam (15%)*

An exam covering all topics from the first half of the course will be given at the mid-way point of the semester.

#### *Final Project (20%)*

The final project will have a written and presentation component, and will be cumulative, covering material from the entire semester. This project will serve to bring together all of the material that was studied through the semester. *The project must be passed to receive a passing grade in the course.*

#### Additional Course Information

There are numerous problems lurking out there waiting to sabotage the timely presentation of students' work, be it reading for class or a written assignment. These can be "external" (late trains, power outages, computer crashes) or "internal" (too much time away on the weekend, lack of adequate research, not enough time devoted to revision). Note that the former tends to be a problem only when there is a problem with the latter, i.e., late trains only cause late assignments when those assignments were not begun early enough in the first place. These potential problems can be avoided by not leaving assignments for the last minute, and by allowing extra time to complete them. Travel should also be planned around lectures and coursework, not the reverse. Unless otherwise stated, assignments are due at the beginning of the class period. Assignments handed in later (during or after class) will be considered one day late. It is in students' best interest not only to begin assignments early, but also to submit work on time so that it will receive full credit and the professor will have time to review it before the next assignment.

*All work must be completed to pass this course.* Back up your work or students can send it to themselves via email occasionally while writing.

#### Attendance Policy

Class attendance is mandatory. Students are allowed one "free" absence during the summer semester, which they do not need to justify. Each additional absence, unless it is for a very serious reason, will lower their final grade by one grade level (e.g., a final grade of a B+ would be lowered to a B). It also the policy of the Institute that any student who has three or more absences automatically fails the class.

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If students miss a class, it is their responsibility to find out what was missed or what work they must catch up on from the professor or from colleagues.

Absences are not accepted when tests are scheduled; tests cannot be made up. Furthermore, times and dates indicated for exams, quizzes, presentations, and any other graded assignments cannot be changed for any reason.

Presence during mandatory field trips is especially important for student performance in class. Missing a mandatory field trip, unless for a very serious reason that is communicated to the professor and Umbra Academic Director in a timely manner, will lower students' final grade by one grade level (i.e., a final grade of a B+ would be lowered to a B).

### 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.

Class #	Topic	Reading	Due
1	<p><b>Know your nutrition biases</b>  <i>Themes:</i> Why are we here? What is our background? How does this influence our food choices and our attitudes about food? What do we already know about nutrition? Discussion of pre-course assignment.</p>	None	<p><a href="#">Pre-Course Assignment</a></p> <p>Enter data into Supertracker (In-class)</p>
2	<p><b>Intro to the supermarket (Coop/Metà)</b>  <i>Themes:</i> What immediate differences do you note? How does buying food work in Italy (focus on produce, other items).</p> <p><a href="#">Assign Reflective Visitor Project</a></p>	None	<p><a href="#">Grocery Task (Completed in-class)</a></p>
3	<p><b>Nutrition basics</b>  <i>Themes:</i> Theoretical framework for examining influences on nutrition. Basic nutritional background, nutrition and chronic disease.</p>	<p><a href="#">Nutrition: Everyday Choices</a></p>	<p><a href="#">Reading Questions 1 - Nutrition</a></p> <p>Enter Pre-Course dietary tracking data into Supertracker - <a href="#">HERE</a>.</p> <p>In-class supertracker task</p>
4	<p><b>Nutritional influences</b>  <i>Themes: What influences our nutrition? How can we understand the range of factors?</i></p> <p>Practice observation - Piazze di Perugia</p> <p><a href="#">Assign Observations - Supermarket</a></p>		None
5	<p><b>Reductionism, Nutritionism, and Food Synergy: Perils, Challenges, and Considerations</b>  <i>Themes: How a reductionist approach to diet and nutrition can minimize the enjoyment and health benefits of food.</i></p>	<p><a href="#">Scrinis - On the Ideology of Nutritionism</a></p>	<p><a href="#">Reading Questions 2 - Reductionism and Nutritionism</a></p> <p><a href="#">Reflective Visitor 1</a></p> <p><a href="#">Observation 1 - Supermarket</a></p>
6	<p><b>Food Synergy</b>  <i>Themes: How the foods themselves, more than the components of the foods, may be predictive of health benefits.</i></p>		
7	<p><b>Mediterranean Diet: History</b></p>	<p><a href="#">Nestle - Mediterranean diets: Historical and research overview</a></p>	<p><a href="#">Reading Questions 3 - Mediterranean Diet History</a></p>

	<p><i>Themes:</i> History of the health conception of the Mediterranean diet, role in chronic disease.</p>	<p><a href="#">Keys - Mediterranean Diet and public health: Personal reflections</a></p>	
8	<p><b>Mediterranean Diet &amp; Health: Current Understanding</b>  <i>Themes:</i> Role of the Mediterranean diet in chronic disease, mechanisms and evidence for prevention.</p> <p>Preview Tuesday Assignment, including instructions on using website</p> <p>Complete Med Diet assessment?</p> <p><a href="#">Assign Final project</a></p>	<p><a href="#">The Mediterranean Diet and Your Health</a></p> <p><a href="#">Mediterranean diet pyramid today. Science and cultural updates</a></p>	<p><a href="#">Reading Questions 4 - Mediterranean Diet &amp; Health</a></p>
9	<p><b>Food, Foodways, and Ecosystems</b>  <i>Themes:</i> How the physical environment impacts the presence of the Mediterranean Diet in the region.</p>		<p><a href="#">Centers of Diversity and Foodways Homework</a></p> <p><a href="#">Reflective Visitor 2</a></p> <p><a href="#">Observation 2 - Restaurant</a></p>
10	<p><b>Assign Final Project</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <a href="#">Final Project Guidelines</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">Final Project Resources</a></li> </ul> <p><b>In-Class Work on Your Assigned Food Area</b></p> <p><b>Review for Exam:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <a href="#">Exam Review Guide</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Slides from class:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <a href="#">Intro &amp; Nutrition Basics</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">Reductionism, Nutritionism, and Food Synergy</a></li> <li>● <a href="#">Medical Mediterranean Diet - Development and Evidence</a></li> </ul>		<p>Use Food Timeline and Other Resources</p>
Meet at 8:45 AM at Fountain	<p><b>Visit to Campagna Amica Market, Mercato Scoperto</b></p>		
11	<p><b>Exam</b></p>		
12	<p><b>Olive Oil Workshop</b>  <i>Themes:</i> Learning more about production, consumption, heritage, tradition, and importance of regional Mediterranean Diet products.</p>		

Meet at Fountain at 9:45am	<b>Field Trip to Terre Margaritelli</b> <i>Themes: Learning more about production, consumption, heritage, tradition, and importance of regional Mediterranean Diet products.</i>	<a href="https://www.terremargaritelli.com">https://www.terremargaritelli.com</a>	<a href="#">Preview Questions for Field Trip</a>
13	<b>History of Mediterranean/Italian Food Culture</b> <i>Themes: History Food Culture in the Mediterranean, Italy.</i>	<a href="#">Parasecoli - Food Culture in Italy - Ch. 1 - Historical Overview pp. 24-40.</a>  <a href="#">Eating is a Cultural Affair</a>	<a href="#">Reading Questions 5 - Food Culture</a>  <a href="#">Field Trip Reflection</a>  <a href="#">Reflective Visitor 3</a>  <a href="#">Observation 3 - Bar/Cafe</a>
14	<b>Building a Model: Our Food Culture</b> <i>Themes: Food Culture, What is Food Culture? What is Our Food Culture?</i>		
15	<b>Food Culture in Italy</b> <i>Themes: How regionality influences food culture in Italy</i>	<a href="#">Parasecoli - Campanilismo</a>	<a href="#">Reading Questions 6 - Local Food and Campanilismo</a>
16	<b>Regional Food Tastings</b>		Project Draft Outline <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bulleted topic sentences for each paragraph of your project</li> <li>- list of sources that you will use</li> <li>- print a copy to bring to class</li> <li>- <a href="#">Final Project Guidelines</a></li> <li>- <a href="#">Final Project Resources</a></li> </ul>
17	<b>Slow Food and Italian Foodways</b>		Project Draft <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Full draft of project</li> <li>- <a href="#">Final Project Guidelines</a></li> <li>- <a href="#">Final Project Resources</a></li> </ul>
18	<b>Cooking and Slow Food</b>		Project Draft Review
19	<b>Final Project - Work</b>		Final Project
20	<b>Final Project Presentations</b>		Final Project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <a href="#">Final Project Guidelines</a></li> </ul>

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Final Project Resources</a></li></ul>
Final	<b>Final Exam Time - Recipe Demos</b>		Final Project <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <a href="#">Final Project Guidelines</a></li><li>• <a href="#">Final Project Resources</a></li></ul>



## Bibliography

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