



Food in Italy: Culture, Politics and Identity

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Course Description

Welcome to Food in Italy! In this course we will draw on anthropological and sociological approaches to understand how cultural, political and economic factors influence the world of food in Tuscany and Italy. Everybody has heard about “Italian food”, and “Tuscan food” in particular, but few people are actually aware of the complex history and present reality that such sweeping terms hide. By studying and applying critical social science analysis, we will go beyond the stereotypes and acquire knowledge that is far closer to the natives’ experience than what is usually conveyed through mass-media portrayals.

We will study a variety of examples drawn from the production, exchange and consumption of food (including organic agriculture, Slow Food, farmers’ markets, cooperatives, solidarity purchase groups, etc.). Some of the questions we will be exploring include: What do meals tell us about identities, gender assumptions, family roles and political allegiances? How do we create moral relations with other people, animals, bodies, heritage and nature through food? We will begin with empirical and historical issues concerning Tuscany, and then augment this geographical focus with case studies from other Italian regions. To better comprehend today’s agri-food world, we must consider the similarities and differences between locales, regions, and beyond.

We plan this to be an introductory course to food studies, meaning that I accept you might be unfamiliar with much of the literature. However, I also assume that you work hard and learn fast. The aim of this course is to encourage students to formulate a critical understanding of Italian food culture by closely integrating study, discussion and experience of the local context.

Course Hours

12 weeks

Total course hours: 28

Course Requirements

Participation (including one presentation):	25%
Mid-term essay:	35%
Final essay:	40%

Participation

Each week there will be assigned reading: students are expected to read it in order to participate actively in the discussion.

First class of the week is focused on the reading and the other is intended to provide ample time for discussion of the issues raised in our previous class or to screen some food-related documentaries. To obtain a good grade for participation, you will need to carefully read the assigned readings each week and be thoroughly prepared to discuss them.

Please note: You are required to make a 15-minute presentation. You are free to choose your own topic from those found in the weekly readings. You *must prepare a written text* and read from it; after the presentation, you *must send your text to the instructor*. A 15-minute presentation requires a text of approximately 1950 words (the average person reads at a speed of 130 words per minute).

Essays

All students will be required to write two essays for the course. Essays should be thoughtful critical analyses of a concept or idea that has been raised within the assigned readings. Your essay should convey a clear understanding of the concept or idea being discussed. It should have an introduction, which should include a research question, and a conclusion. It should comprise carefully selected citations from the reading/s in question to both support your position and to demonstrate that the author actually espouses the position you have attributed to him/her. It should also give two or three examples that illustrate your argument (these can be drawn from your own experience, from studies and research papers, from the internet when relevant, but not from Wikipedia). You may include other resources in your paper, where appropriate. Independent research will be rewarded accordingly, but please keep in mind that this should be relevant and that your first port of call should always be the materials provided in the reader pack and the bibliography found therein.

Please note: Your essays *cannot* be on the same topic of your presentation; you *cannot* use the same material for the presentation in the essay. Self-plagiarism is not allowed. Each essay should be 2500 words in length. Students are encouraged to consult with the instructor at any time during the semester regarding ideas for their essays.

Grading Scale

98-100 A+	88-89.99 B+	78-79.99 C+	68-69.99 D+
93-97.99 A	83-87.99 B	73-77.99 C	63-67.99 D

90-92.99 A-	80-82.99 B-	70-72.99 C-	60-62.99 D-
<59.99 F			

Course Policy

Academic Integrity:

Effective learning, teaching and research all depend upon the ability of members of the academic community to trust one another and to trust the integrity of work that is submitted for academic credit or conducted in the wider arena of scholarly research. Such an atmosphere of mutual trust fosters the free exchange of ideas and enables all members of the community to achieve their highest potential.

In all academic work, the ideas and contributions of others must be appropriately acknowledged, and work that is presented as original must be, in fact, original. Faculty, students, and administrative staff all share the responsibility of ensuring the honesty and fairness of the intellectual environment at the Siena Art Institute and Siena School for Liberal Arts.

Students with documented disabilities:

Any student who has a documented disability that may prevent him or her from fully demonstrating his or her abilities should contact the instructor as soon as possible to discuss accommodations necessary to ensure full participation and to facilitate the educational opportunity.

Participation and Attendance:

We consider attending class a crucial part of gaining the most from your study abroad experience. For this reason, we allow only **one unexcused absence** per course during the 15 weeks of the program. This means that you are only allowed to miss **one** lesson of each course for unexcused reasons. Reasons for an absence to be considered unexcused include absences related to personal travel (including delays, strikes, missed connections, etc.) or visits from family and friends.

In addition, being late to class on **4** occasions constitutes an unexcused absence. Please also consider that leaving before the end of the lesson or coming back late from a break is the equivalent of an unexcused absence.

Participation and attendance is worth 30% of the overall grade for every class.

Absences due to health-related issues are considered excused if the student informs the professor and office by email or phone before class begins.

No make-up exams or critiques will be considered unless warranted by extreme circumstances [for example, health, family tragedy] supported with proper documentation.

Regular attendance, punctuality at and participation in all class meetings and field-trips are required and mandatory. Students are expected to attend all classes; absences will affect your course grade. Each lecture will cover a wide range of material and missed information will be difficult to obtain. If you do miss a class for whatever reason, you are responsible for photocopying a fellow classmate's lecture notes.

Late submissions

All writing assignments are to be completed strictly on time. Research papers will incur a 5% penalty for every day over the submission date. Papers will not be accepted for consideration and grading after 1 week.

Electronic devices

Students are kindly requested not to use cell phones in class.

Course Outline

WEEK 1

FOOD STUDIES: AN INTRODUCTION

- No reading (but come prepared to explain your reasons for taking this course)

WEEK 2

LOOKING BACK: THE MEZZADRIA SYSTEM

- Chapter 3 in Carole Counihan 2004. *Around the Tuscan table: Food, family and gender in twentieth-century Florence*. London: Routledge.

FIELD TRIP

BEYOND STEREOTYPES: HOW TUSCANS EAT TODAY

- Chapter 10 in Carole Counihan 2004. *Around the Tuscan table: Food, family and gender in twentieth-century Florence*. London: Routledge.

WEEK 3

THE SLOW FOOD MOVEMENT

- Leitch, Alison 2009. Slow Food and the politics of “virtuous globalization”, in Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik 2013. *Food and Culture: A Reader*. London: Routledge.
- Documentary Screening: A Slow Food Story, 74 minutes, Stefano Sardo, 2013

FIELD TRIP

WEEK 4

- FOOD AND ECONOMIC VALUES

Chapter 1 in Jeff Pratt and Pete Luetchford (eds.) 2014. *Food for change: The politics and values of social movements*. New York: Pluto Press.

- THE NEW PEASANTS: A CASE STUDY FROM TUSCANY

Chapter 4 in Jeff Pratt and Pete Luetchford (eds.) 2014. *Food for change: The politics and values of social movements*. New York: Pluto Press.

WEEK 5

FOOD VALUES: AUTHENTICITY

- Article, Food Values: The Local and the authentic, Jeff Pratt, Critique of Anthropology

*****MID-TERM BREAK – NO CLASS*****

WEEK 6

RECONNECTING FOOD: A CASE STUDY FROM LOMBARDY

Chapter 2 in Cristina Grasseni 2013. *Beyond Alternative Food Networks. Italy's solidarity purchase groups*. London: Bloomsbury.

FIELD TRIP

- Panforte factory (Sovicille)
- Spannocchia organic farm (Chiusdino)

WEEK 7

UNDERSTANDING ALTERNATIVE FOOD NETWORKS

- Chapter 1 in Cristina Grasseni 2013. *Beyond Alternative Food Networks. Italy's solidarity purchase groups*. London: Bloomsbury.

WEEK 8

FARMERS' MARKETS: A CASE STUDY FROM PIEDMONT

- Chapter 7 in Rachel Black 2012. *Porta Palazzo. The anthropology of an Italian Market*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Documentary Screening: The strawberry place, Maite Vitoria Daneris, 90', 2013

FIELD TRIP

- Val d'Orcia

WEEK 9

GENDER AND POLITICAL CONSUMERISM

- Dietlind Stolle and Michele Micheletti 2005. *The gender gap reversed: political consumerism as a women-friendly form of civic and political*

engagement. In Brenda O'Neill and Elisabeth Gidengil 2005. *Gender and Social Capital*. London: Routledge.

FOOD, POLITICS AND ETHICS: A CASE STUDY FROM SICILY

- Theodoros Rakopoulos 2014. *Food Activism and Antimafia Cooperatives in Contemporary Sicily*. In Carole Counihan and Valeria Siniscalchi 2014. *Food Activism: Agency, Democracy and Economy*. London: Bloomsbury.

WEEK 10

*****FINAL ESSAY DUE*****