



**SYLLABUS**  
**SUMMER 2020**  
**FOOD AND CULTURE IN ITALY AND THE WORLD**  
**Instructor: Sara Silvestri**  
**Contact Hours: 45**  
**Language of Instruction: English**  
**ONLINE/FLORENCE, ITALY**

**Course Description:**

"Tell me what you eat and I will tell you what you are."

Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin

Why does it matter what people eat, and how does our relationship to food reflect who we are? How can comprehension of the relationship between food and culture enrich an experience abroad? This course is an interdisciplinary analysis of foodways in Italy, with a special focus on Tuscany, using the tools of anthropology, history, geography, sociology, journalism, and marketing. We will examine the issues affecting the world's food today, how food production and consumption are changing, and Italy's strategies for protecting its diverse food traditions. This course will help you use food as a lens through which to deepen your understanding of Tuscany, Italy, and the world.

**Instructional Goals and Student Outcomes:**

1. Broaden a thorough cultural knowledge and familiarity of Italy through food.
2. Analyze modern day issues, controversies, and strategies in the food world by looking to the past, present, and future.
3. Use food-related topics to broaden students' critical thinking and communication skills.

**Instructional Methodology and Readings:**

Through reading and analyzing articles and academic texts, discussion, virtual field trips, and guest lectures we will apply critical thinking to food and its relation to culture. Lessons will be discussion based and an active and dynamic class environment will depend on the participation of all students. Students are expected to demonstrate understanding and synthesis of the themes introduced by contributing to discussions, completing writing exercises/quizzes, and giving presentations.

Readings will be from Carole Counihan's *Around the Tuscan Table* and selected relevant articles and chapters from experts such as Massimo Montanari, Carlo Petrini, and Michael Pollan.

**Method of Evaluation/Grading:**

Students will be evaluated according to class participation - live and/or via online discussion boards and smaller reflection assignments - (20% of final grade), reading quizzes (10% of final grade), two papers (4-5 pages each) and corresponding class presentations (30% of final grade), a midterm exam (20% of final grade) and a final exam (20% of final grade).

Readings assigned for each date are to be completed before the beginning of that class.

**Class Outline:**

*Daily topics/assignment dates subject to change over the course of the class. See Canvas and in-class announcements for any updates.*

**Monday, 22 June:**

- Student and professor introductions
- Technology/access survey and expectations
- Course introduction - syllabus, Canvas/Zoom meetings, planned assignments, learning goals and subjects

**Wednesday, 24 June:**

READING: Belasco, pages 1-34

- Why do we study food as an insight into overall culture?
- Differences in American and Italian foodways, American perceptions of Italian food/culture
- Food rules, taboos, particular diets
- Personal food meaning for students (discuss personal reflection assignment)

**Friday, 26 June:**

READING: Parasecoli timeline, Hooper map, Counihan 57-77

*Focus on Italy*

- Major points of Italian history and geography, effect on regional foodways
- Major themes of cuisines from region to region.

**Monday, 29 June:**

READING: Hooper, pages 90-103

*Focus on Italy continued*

- stasis vs. change (post-WWII though present day)
- differences and similarities between regions, migration within Italy

**Wednesday, 1 July:**

- Presentation of personal food reflection pieces
- Discussion in context of previous topics covered

**Friday, 3 July: (US HOLIDAY)**

- Video: Food on the Go (Netflix)

**Monday, 6 July:**

READING: Gentilcore pages 71-78, Montanari pages 61-66, and Dickie pages 1-9

- Seasonal eating and food preservation methods embedded in Italian foodways.
- Ingredients, preparation methods, and dishes that change according to the time of year.
- Virtual visit/presentation: Spannocchia organic farm and heritage pig breed/salumi production

**Wednesday, 8 July:**

- Guest lecture: Traditional foodways in the South Pacific with Hannah Cutting-Jones

**Friday, 10 July:**

READING: Counihan, 35-56

*Focus on Tuscany*

- Tuscan foodways in geographical, historical and socio-economic context: the mezzadria and cucina povera. Traditional gender roles and family.

**Monday, 13 July:**

- Producer focus/interview: wine production in Tuscany, from mezzadria to modern management

**Wednesday, 15 July:**

- Mid-term Exam

**Friday, 17 July:**

READING: Petrini, pages 5-28

- Slow Food movement (history and objectives)
- Good, clean, and fair food - what does it mean?
- Current trends/hot topics in food: "organic," "natural," "GMO free" and "local"
- Small vs. large scale food production and distribution.

**Monday, 20 July:**

- Virtual cooking class
- Additional material: virtual bakery visit/demonstration

**Wednesday, 22 July:**

READING: Pollan (article), Weinzwieg pages xv-xviii and Counihan, 117-138

- Home-made vs. convenience foods.
- Analyzing the image and myths of Italian food in Italy and abroad by the media and marketing.

- Supermarkets vs. small stores. Market culture and product sourcing. Urban vs. rural
- Changes in production, buying, and eating habits. What is quality? How important is tradition in determining quality?

**Friday, 24 July:**

- Guest lecture: Colonialism and changes in agriculture in the South Pacific with Hannah Cutting-Jones

**Monday, 27 July:**

READING: Dickie, pages 48-61, 211-232, 293-310

- Strategies for protecting "quality" and food diversity.
- Regional products - DOP, IGP, DOC, DOCG, Slow Food Presidia
- Regional products and localism as marketing strategy
- Italy's answer to contemporary food issues: Slow Food in Italy and around the world - education and product protection.

**Wednesday, 29 July:**

- Producer focus/interview: Ancient grains and olive oil in Tuscany
- Product spotlight assignment discussion

**Friday, 31 July:**

READING: Diner, pages 21-47, 48-83

*Italian Food Abroad and Immigrants*

- Italian emigration and assimilation of Italian foods and firm establishment in other food cultures abroad.
- Immigrants in Italy and their contributions to current food culture
- What about food in Italy makes it "resistant" or not to outside cultures and cuisines?

**Monday, 3 August:**

- Guest lecture: Tourism, globalization, and "authenticity" in the South Pacific with Hannah Cutting-Jones

**Wednesday, 5 August:**

- Product spotlight presentations
- A Dinner Party in Tuscany assignment discussion

**Friday, 7 August:**

READING: Counihan, 157-191

- Cooking and restaurant culture in Italy - how have eating rituals, gender roles, recipes, and expectations evolved along with overall Italian culture and current events?

**Monday, 10 August:**

- Course wrap up, summary and revisitation of core ideas

**Wednesday, 12 August:**

- Final Exam

**Friday, 14 August:**

- Student presentations: A Dinner Party in Tuscany
- End of course survey