

GLI 201 ITALIAN FOOD AND CULTURE SP 23

Instructor: Prof. Elizabeth Simari (simari.elizabeth@gmail.com) with Katherine Garone (kgarone@gmail.com) and Laura Offeddu (laura.offeddu@gustolab.com or projects@gustolab.com)

Learning facilitator: Erica Cacopardo, courses@gustolab.com

Credits: 3

Contact hours: 45

Offered: Spring

Language of instruction: English

Prerequisites: none

UIUC Articulation: To be discussed with your University of Illinois Academic Advisor

Dates: 16 Jan-5 May 2023

Open to all majors and minors for general elective credit. Recommended for students in Food Studies, Italian Studies, Sustainable Food Systems.

“In Italy, even something as simple as bread can change from one small town to the next. The widespread notion that Italian food is regional is only a very lazy shorthand for patterns of variation that can be found at a much more local level within regions like Sicily or Piedmont, to say nothing of Emilia-Romagna. Generalizing about how Italians eat is hazardous. Yet saying that Italian food does not exist is also a hazardous generalization. The country is not a collection of ancient and unconnected micro-cuisines. Many foods are shared by several regions of Italy, like polenta in much of the north. Other habits apply to the whole country, such as conjugating the courses of a meal”

— John Dickie in *Delizia*

Short Description

This course will examine food (as a complex system) from historical, political, economic, (inter)cultural, and culinary perspectives. Students will start with a general introduction to Italy and Italian food and wine with an emphasis on regional traditions and more specifically the interconnected micro-cuisines that exist throughout Italy, examining even further the local food culture of the city of Rome and its historical and cultural significance. They will also examine contemporary issues, such as the Mediterranean diet success, and food production, distribution, and consumption. Wine and specific food products, both artisanal and mass-produced, will be tasted and discussed, and their cultural significance evaluated. Students will explore the ways in which local food cultures and traditions can contribute to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Together we will study how Italian food today is also a product of historical foreign influences, globalization, as well as modernization. Field studies, food visits and cooking practicums are included.

Keywords: localized food networks, changing faces of the eternal city, food culture, food history, food-scapes, food and spaces, foodways, regional identities, sustainability models, micro-cuisines

Learning Outcomes

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

- show a deeper understanding of the cultural and historical roots of today's food industry, foodways and food culture in Italy.
- understand a variety of food cultures from different periods and regions that they would not normally be able to recognize.
- design solutions and develop ideas related to food issues.
- find the extraordinary in the ordinary, to exalt everyday food, life and activities and to focus on the journey—not just the destination, to draw our attention to the whole process—not just the final food product.
- Identify how food and drink has shaped Italy today

Expectations

You will be expected to discuss course readings in class and prepare short written assignments including reactions to the readings. Proofread your work before you submit it.

Take notes (and make sketches if you like) from the lectures and the sites that we visit to draw from for your assignments.

All work in the class will be based on **lectures**, videos, **readings** and **on-site presentations**. Stay close and stay alert. Ask questions.

All work must be completed on time. Permission for any late submissions must be requested to the instructor at least 24 hours before the deadline.

Attendance and Participation

Being a student in Rome is a wonderful experience but prioritizing all courses is a must.

Attendance is required and will be taken at the beginning of lectures and site visits. This includes program excursions which are all mandatory.

Assigned readings must be completed prior to the weekly seminar and students must arrive prepared to discuss and/or write about them.

Much of the course will take place on site with thematic visits to parts of the city where the themes discussed in the lectures and readings can be observed.

Students are allowed no more than 2 unexcused absences; after the 3rd absence the grade will decrease by 1/2 letter grade or 5% per absence.

Unexcused absences include injury and illnesses that do not require medical attention; therefore, while it is your choice to skip class to travel or spend time with a guest who is visiting, you may regret that choice if you later become ill and have already used up your allowed absences. If you experience prolonged illness that will adversely affect your attendance, you will be asked to provide documentation of the illness and a plan approved by the instructor for making up for the missed work.

As soon as you know you will not be attending a class for whatever reason you are responsible for informing both your instructor and Gustolab International's Learning Facilitator.

Assignments

The course is structured in several **phases**, accompanied by **on-site visits**, **lessons** and **activities**.

15% Visual Photographic Journal on Food and Culture

Students will be required to create 10 photographic journal entries relating to food and culture. Each entry requires a quality photograph, with an adequate description, connecting to food and culture. The text should include a description of what is happening in the photo and spelling of all Italian words needs to be correct. In addition to the description, each

journal entry should include relevant information that connects it to in-class activities, observations, lectures, discussions or readings and should also include at least one insight, opinion or reflection.

30% Roman Neighborhood Essay and Presentation

Students are assigned to write an essay on one of the neighborhoods throughout the Eternal City (the Jewish Ghetto, Esquilino and Trastevere). These presentations correspond to class outings to these neighborhoods where students will also make brief presentations. The essays will count for 30% of the final grade. Due on Monday, 13 February.

20% Regional Identities in Italian Cuisine Presentation

Each region in Italy has its own specific identity and is also a conglomeration of many more specific identities. Students will be assigned a region of Italy and asked to give a brief presentation, especially with regards to its products and goods as part of the region's cultural identity. Presentations should last from 8-10 minutes. More details below. Presentations will be held on February 27 and March 2.

20% Final: Regional Identities in Italian Wine

In lieu of a traditional written exam, students will give a presentation on Italian wine for their final project of the course. This presentation will be the capstone of several class days dedicated to wine and will bring together many of the concepts previously discussed throughout the semester. To be held on April

15% Class Participation

Students are required to attend all scheduled classes (as well as the design, filming, editing, studio project sessions). Informed and active participation in-class discussion is essential, and will be taken into account in the final course grade.

Grading Criteria

The following general criteria will be used when grading all assignments:

1. **Research:** the degree to which the student demonstrates that the subject matter has been adequately investigated. Grades will be determined by the ability to demonstrate in the assignments that material supports knowledge building by using empirical research –such as field observations–, theory, and practice wisdom.
2. **Conceptual Ability:** the ability to abstract concepts, think logically and organize ideas into a conceptual whole. Grades will be determined on the basis of the student's ability to move along a continuum from abstraction to concreteness, to deal systematically with material presented in class, in readings and in field observations.
3. **Communication:** the ability to organize and transmit ideas in written, graphic, and, when appropriate, oral form. Students should strive to use proper syntax; express ideas clearly, punctuate, spell and, where appropriate, employ symbolic and visual modes of communication.
4. **Analytical Thinking:** the ability to analyze, present and evaluate concepts.
5. **Timeliness and Completeness**

Final grades are reported at the end of each term in the following way:

100%	A+	Exceptional; significantly exceeds the highest expectations for undergraduate work
95%	A	Outstanding; meets the highest standards for the assignment or course
90%	A-	Excellent; meets very high standards for the assignment or course
85%	B+	Very good; meets high standards for the assignment or course

80%	B	Good; meets most of the standards for the assignment or course
75%	B-	More than adequate; shows some reasonable command of the material
70%	C+	Acceptable; meets basic standards for the assignment or course
65%	C	Acceptable; meets some of the basic standards for the assignment or course
60%	C-	Acceptable, while falling short of meeting basic standards in several ways
55%	D	Minimally acceptable; lowest passing grade
50%	F	Failing; very poor performance

Further information on Assignments

Visual Journal on Food and Culture (15%)

Students are required to create 6 journal entries relating to food and culture over the course of the semester. Each entry requires a quality photograph, with a corresponding title and detailed description, connecting to food and culture. The text should include an explanation of what is happening in the photo and spelling of all Italian words needs to be correct. In addition to the description, each journal entry should include relevant information that connects it to in-class activities, personal observations, lectures, discussions or readings and should also include at least one insight, opinion or reflection.

- The total number of journal entries is 6. They will be submitted on 3 different due dates (2 photo essays per submission, due dates below)
- 200- 400 words per essay
- Each journal entry will be graded on a scale of 1-10 for the following:
 - 2 points = timeliness
 - 2 points = quality of photograph + engaging title
 - 2 points = detailed description
 - 2 points = writing/spelling
 - 2 points = creativity

Students will be assessed on the final number of timely submissions and the quality of reflection on the topic. Thoughtful, quality photos and observations are important. This assignment is not meant to assess your ability to rate restaurants or dishes you eat at restaurants, but rather your ability to critically think about and reflect on topics discussed in class and share observations regarding food and culture. Creativity is encouraged! There are many possibilities with this photographic journal.

The most exemplary entries (most relevant, creative, unique) will receive one extra bonus point and will be reposted to the main @glinstitute account.

Lastly, send entries to Katherine (kgarone@gmail.com) in a singular email thread titled "Photo journal: LAST NAME). We will use this same email thread throughout the semester to keep things organized. There are three separate submission dates, that will require 2 visual journal entries each time, which by the end of the semester, totals 6 entries. Submissions can also be sent earlier. Deadlines are Friday by midnight on the following dates.

Entries 1, 2: FEBRUARY 3

Entries 3, 4: MARCH 17

Entries 5, 6: APRIL 8

Roman Neighborhood Essay (20%)

Students are assigned to write an essay on one of the neighborhoods throughout the Eternal City (the Jewish Ghetto, Esquilino and Trastevere). Students interested in writing in another neighborhood can discuss their proposal with the professor.

Regional Identities in Italian Cuisine Presentation (20%)

Each region in Italy has its own specific identity and is also a conglomeration of many more specific identities. Students will be assigned a region of Italy and asked to give a brief presentation in the classroom especially with regards to its products and goods as part of the region's cultural identity.

Presentations should last from 8-10 minutes. A timer will ring at the 10 minute mark and students will be asked to conclude immediately at that point.

Students will also be required to hand-in a bibliography of at least 4 sources (at least two scholarly) they used to research their presentation.

Grades will be based on preparedness, organization of presentation, did the group demonstrate an understanding of the material, critical thinking skills, did they present coherent/cohesive presentation, taking information from different sources to make something new and did they deliver a clear and concise 8-10 min. presentation.

Class Organization

Notes on on-site lessons

The course will use *experience-centered* approaches to the subject matter, and active participation by the students will be an essential element of the course.

Much of the course takes place outside the classroom. Visits to markets, tastings of specific food products, both artisanal and mass-produced, will fuel discussions of food's social and cultural significance in Italy.

These notes are to help students get the most out of the unique field learning experience:

- Arrive at the assigned meeting place early; we cannot wait for late-comers.
- Stay close and stay alert. Ask questions.
- Take notes and maintain sketches from the lectures and the sites that we visit to draw from for your assignments.
- Students will be required to have all the needed material with them, including the right clothes for outdoor visits.

During the visits the students will need the following material/items:

- Map, meeting address and suggested bus route. Don't forget your monthly bus card
- Comfortable walking clothes and shoes
- Bottle of water
- Depending on the weather, umbrella and rain boots /sunscreen, hat, sunglasses
- When visiting church: no shorts or short skirts, no tank top
- Notebook with rigid cover, pen

During the onsite classes students will be provided with audio headsets. All students are responsible for the integrity and safety of their own headset and headphones. The audio-guides must be returned to the professor at the end of the class.

Class Organization

A note on "Critical Field Studies"

At the Borromini Institute we use 'critical field studies' to refer to courses where considerable time is spent observing and participating in activities in the 'field.' We recognize this as a distinct method of learning and one quite distinct from normal classroom activities. It requires students to be active learners, and to seek out learning opportunities often while working with or observing local people or specialists. Such opportunities are often explored with other members of the student group in research or ethnographic projects. Projects give students the opportunity to grasp the significance of behavior occurring in a second culture and to situate it using the best available ideas in today's academy.

In the same way, we encourage our students to always carry a notebook and to use it to take notes or draw sketches whenever confronted by unusual behavior. Increasingly students are taking advantage of digital

ways to record and edit local culture. Indeed, it is not unusual for students to present digital portfolios at the end of courses as part of their assignments.

Our courses are 'critical' in the sense that we ask students to study the way the world "is" but also to think about or design how it "might be" or "should" be. This argument goes beyond a "value neutral" position and suggests that we have created ourselves – and our world -- in the Anthropocene era and bear responsibility for our collective future. It is, indeed, 'our world' and its future is in our hands.

Communication

The professor is always available during and after class to answer questions and can be contacted by email for additional feedback or clarification. Emails will be answered within 24 hours, and usually more quickly, unless otherwise indicated. To request an appointment to speak in person or video-conference send an email indicating the issue and possible times.

First-name basis is welcome but there is an expectation of professional tone in verbal and written communication. Salutation and sign-off are required in emails (essential to determine the intended recipient and sender) and avoid emojis and slang.

Check your spelling and grammar before submitting any written work, including an email to your professor. (It's a good habit to get into now).

Learning Facilitator

Students may also reach out to the Learning Facilitator to discuss general matters related to the course. The GLI Learning Facilitator is available to provide practical support as well as assist students should any misunderstandings emerge in relation to their academic courses. For instance, any needs related to learning accommodations, drop/add period, or attendance policy should be taken up directly with the GLI Learning Facilitator.

The GLI Learning Facilitator is not a Teaching Assistant and as such cannot provide personal assistance related to course content.

First Amendment Protection

Gustolab International/Borromini Institute supports and upholds the First Amendment protection of freedom of speech and the principle of academic freedom in order to foster a learning environment where open inquiry and the vigorous debate of a diversity of ideas are encouraged. Students will not be penalized for the content or viewpoints of their speech as long as student expression in a class context is germane to the subject matter of the class and conveyed in an appropriate manner.

Non-Discrimination, and Anti-Harassment Policy

Gustolab International/Borromini Institute is committed to a work environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity; discrimination and harassment of any form are strictly prohibited, as better explained in the Student Handbook.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious academic violation and should be taken seriously. One is responsible for plagiarism when: the exact words of another writer are used without using quotation marks and indicating the source of the words; the words of another are summarized or paraphrased without giving the credit that is due; the ideas from another writer are borrowed without properly documenting their source.

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

Per Gustolab International/Borromini Institute policy and in compliance with the home university's policies, students with a documented disability are required to communicate their academic accommodations and subsequently provide **official written documentation**. They are entitled to, and will receive, reasonable academic accommodations to ensure their ability to successfully participate in and complete this course. Such students must make an appointment during office hours to discuss any such disability with the

instructor, and are responsible for bringing to the instructor's attention any accommodation needs prior to or early in the term.

COVID-19 Health and Safety Requirements

Students are responsible for abiding by their university's and Gustolab International/Borromini Institute's safety and health expectations including for COVID-19. All students attending this course are required to follow Gustolab International/Borromini Institute policies regarding health, safety, and face coverings. Please see <https://www.gustolab.com/covid-19/>

Pass/Fail (UIUC)

Students can request their grades to be pass/fail after they come back from their semester. This process differs from college to college, but it is always something that the student is responsible for. Gustolab International/Borromini Institute will report grades as normal and the student needs to work with their academic advisor in their home college for the pass/fail to appear on their record.

Drop/Add (UIUC)

Students should be enrolled in a full-time course load abroad. All students are enrolled in a full-time placeholder while they are abroad, but some colleges/departments will have their own requirements as to if they actually need to complete 12 credits abroad. Many majors do not require this in LAS, but it is part of advice by LAS that a student should always take a full-time course load abroad. Enrollment in specific courses cannot be guaranteed but depends on a minimum enrollment. Students may request to switch courses within the first week of the program and Gustolab International/Borromini Institute will attempt to grant such requests.

Course Calendar

This outline is intended merely to present the course and its principle themes. It is subject to variation before and during the semester. Refer to the academic calendar for further details.

WEEK 1

Monday, 16 January

Introduction to the Study of Food and Culture

Thursday, 19 January

Introduction to the Study of Food and Culture and Visit to Campo de' Fiori Market

Required Reading: Reading: Dickie 1-10, 13-16

WEEK 2

Monday, 23 January

Contemporary Italian Cuisine

Required Reading: Parasecoli 257-276

Thursday, 26 January

Contemporary Italian Cuisine and Identity, Instagram Assignment & Trionfale Market with Katherine

Required Reading: Carolyn Steel Ted Talk on YouTube

WEEK 3

Monday, 30 January

No Class

Thursday, 2 February - 9:30am two classrooms (usually A and B) at the same time for two groups of students

Sustainability Symposium: Rome Sustainable Food Project with Katherine Garone, Laura Offeddu, Elizabeth Simari

WEEK 4

Monday, 6 February

Slow Food discussion and Alice Waters video with Katherine Garone

Required Reading: Kostitovich

Wed, 8 February

Orto Botanico/American Academy visit with Sustainable Rome course

Thursday, 9 February

Guest speaker on Diversity and Inclusion in Italian Cuisine, Lea Ramaswamy

WEEK 5

Monday, 13 February

Testaccio Market Presentations

Required Reading: Mueller 42-48

Thursday, 16 February

Esquilino Presentations

Required reading: Parasecoli 246-250

WEEK 6

Monday, 20 February

Cooking class

Jewish Ghetto Presentations (Roman Neighborhood Essays due at midnight)

Required Reading: Zannini de Vita 101-108

Thursday, 23 February

9:00-12:00 Eataly

Required reading: Parasecoli 198-222

WEEK 7

Monday, 27 February

Regional Identities in Italian Cuisine Presentations

Thursday, 2 March

Regional Identities in Italian Cuisine Presentations

WEEK 8

SPRING BREAK: NO CLASS

WEEK 9

Monday, 13 March

Cooking class

Thursday, 16 March

No class

WEEK 10

Monday, 20 March

Film: Down to Earth with Zac Efron: Sardinia

Thursday, 23 March

Mediterranean Diet and visit to to Rome Botanical Garden with Laura Offeddu

Required reading: Article by Dan Buettner, New York Times, Article By Rachel Donadio, New York Times, Dickie 211-232

WEEK 11

Monday, 27 March

Cooking class

Thursday, 30 March

No Class

WEEK 12

Monday, 3 April

Introduction to Italian Wine: Classification System and Winemaking

Required readings: Johnson 26-29, Parasecoli 258-59

Thursday, 6 April

Visit to Enoteca Costantini

WEEK 13

Monday, 10 April

Easter Break

Thursday, 13 April

NO CLASS

WEEK 14

Monday, 17 April

Cooking class

Thursday, 20 April

Film: Somm: Into the Bottle (Jason Wise)

WEEK 15

Monday, 24 April

Wine Practicum

Thursday, 27 April

Final: Wine presentations

WEEK 16

Thursday, 4 May

Final discussion: Elizabeth & Katherine

Course Related Field Trips

During the program there will be a number of program excursions with components related to each course. Each semester these change depending on the season and general teaching opportunities. Occasionally, short assignments from these field trips will be included in the class participation component of the course grade.

Bibliography

The principal readings this semester are listed below and noted in the course calendar. A digital copy of all required readings will be provided in pdf format. An additional bibliography of suggested and recommended readings is provided below to assist students in their research. Some of these readings will be provided as digital downloads.

Required

- Dickie, J. *Delizia: The epic history of the Italians and their food*. London: Sceptre, 2007.
- Firebaugh, S. "Cheese", in: *Encyclopedia of Food and Culture*, ed. S.H. Katz, Vol. 1, 359-364. New York: Thomas Gale 2003.
- Franklin, P, "Bread", in: *Encyclopedia of Food and Culture*, ed. S.H. Katz, Vol. 1, 235-241. New York: Thomas Gale 2003.
- Johnson, H. *The World Atlas of Wine: A Complete Guide to The Wines and Spirits of the World*. London: Mitchell Beazley Limited, 1971.
- Kostioukovitch, E., *Why Italians Love to Talk About Food*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006.
- Laudan, R. "Slow Food: The French Terroir Strategy, and Culinary Modernism. An Essay Review of Carlo Petrini, trans. William McCuaig. *Slow Food: The Case for Taste* (New York: Columbia University Press). *Food, Culture, and Society: An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 7. 2. (2004), 133-144.
- Parasecoli, F. *Al Dente: The History of Food in Italy*, London: Reaktion Books, 2014.
- Pollan, M. *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*: Penguin, 2006.
- Pollan, M. *Cooked: A Natural History of Transformation*. New York: Penguin, 2013. Riley, G. *The Oxford Companion to Italian Food*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Commission of the European Community: *White Paper on Food Safety*, 2000
- Buettner, D., "The Island where people forget to die", in: *New York Times*, October 24th, 2012
- Donadio, R., "Celebrating the elderly with a nervous eye on the future", in: *New York Times*, July 18th, 2013
- Zanini de Vita, R. *Popes, peasants, and shepherds: recipes and lore from Rome and Lazio*: University of California Press, 2013
- Pollan, M. *Food Rules. An eater's manual*: Penguin Putnam Inc., 2014

Recommended Bibliography

- Emerson, Robert M., Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda Shaw. 1995. *Writing Ethnographic Field Notes*. The University of Chicago Press. Chapter 2: In the Field: Participating, Observing, and Jotting Notes
- [Feldman, Zeena and Michael K. Goodman. "Digital food culture, power and everyday life." *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 24 \(2021\): 1227 - 1242.](#)