

**Litr 268R: Italian Cultural History: Food & Wine**

**John Felice Rome Center**

Spring 2023

Sala Felice

Mondays & Wednesdays | 10:30-11:45pm

Instructor: Elizabeth Simari

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Site visits and tastings fee: \$100

**All dates are subject to change based on availability at off-site locations**

**Course Description**

One of the best ways to learn about the Italian people is to examine the history of the country's gastronomy and its gastronomic traditions. By looking at its individual products and different time periods throughout history together we will gain a greater understanding of Italian history and culture. During our semester together, we will use the food and wine of Italy as a way to discover the history of the country and the dramatic changes from Ancient Rome to modern times.

We will gain a greater understanding of how Italian food has been shaped by the history of the country and food is a key for understanding the past and Italy is especially interesting in this respect since modern Italian identity is based, in large part, on food. Many Italian products have been used by chefs and *nonnas* alike to compose dishes which are now famous world-wide. By learning about these individual products and how they are made we can gain insight into Italian culture and history. In a number of tasting experiences, power-point based lectures, discussions, films and one field study we will look at Italian food in antiquity, the Renaissance, and more recent times: while also giving a strong grounding in contemporary Italian food culture.

Together we will also study the regional cuisines of the country and more specifically the micro cuisines that exist throughout Italy and the connections they share, examining even further the local food culture of the city of Rome and its historical and cultural significance. The semester will also be punctuated by our study of several raw agricultural products - grapes, wheat, olives, milk - and how and why they are transformed into essential components in the Italian diet: wine, bread, olive oil and cheese. Students will have the opportunity to participate directly in the transformation of these products.

By the end of the course the students will have acquired a more sophisticated understanding of food history as an interdisciplinary approach to studying Italian culture and society and as a frame for analyzing important aspects of Italian history.

**Learning Outcomes**

On completion of the course students should be able to:

- Analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments and points of view regarding culinary history
- Gather and interpret information from first-hand sources and scholarly material
- Work with non-traditional historical texts
- Develop a more sophisticated understanding of Italian history through the country's gastronomy
- Identify how food and drink has shaped Italy today

**Required Text / Materials**

There are no required texts for this course; all required readings will be on Sakai.

### **Attendance Policy**

In accordance with the JFRC mission to promote a higher level of academic rigor, all courses adhere to the following absence policy. Prompt attendance, preparation and active participation in course discussions are expected from every student.

- For all classes meeting once a week, students cannot incur more than one unexcused absence.
- For all classes meeting twice a week, students cannot incur more than two unexcused absences.
- For all classes meeting three times a week, students cannot incur more than two unexcused absences.

*This course meets twice a week, thus a total of two unexcused absences will be permitted. Unexcused absences beyond these will result in 1% lowering of the final course grade, for every absence after the “approved limit”.*

*The collective health of the JFRC is everyone’s responsibility. Do not attend class if you are ill.*

### **Friday Field Study: Wine and Winemaking L’Orto di Alberico**

This year on **Friday, March 24**, students will travel to L’Orto di Alberico, an organic farm and winery, located on the edge of Rome to learn about winemaking. We will spend the day learning the steps from grape to bottle from the winemaker himself and tasting the wines they produce at the winery, run by Alessia Antinori, whose family has been making wine for more than 500 years. Students will participate in a short cooking class and a light lunch will be served (Via del Fioranello, 34).

\*Failure to attend this activity will count as an absence.

### **Cheese Making Demonstration with La Porta dei Parchi**

In this class students will learn first hand how to make cheese. A staff member from La Porta dei Parchi, a dairy farm in Abruzzo which makes mostly sheep’s milk cheese, will show students the surprisingly simple process of turning milk into curds and whey. Students will take part directly in the process and be able to taste the fresh cheese they have made. \*Failure to attend this will count as an absence.

### **Assessment Components**

- |                            |     |
|----------------------------|-----|
| • Participation            | 15% |
| • Regional Presentation    | 20% |
| • Roman Neighborhood Essay | 20% |
| • Field Study Essay        | 20% |
| • Final Exam               | 25% |

### *Class Participation (15%)*

For spirited discussion, we will need your active attention and participation. Class participation grades are not automatic. They are based on oral contributions to the collective learning experience of the class. Participation means active engagement in the course: being consistently prepared for class (having carefully read that day’s assignments), asking questions, responding to questions, offering your own insights and opinions, and attentive listening to others. **Laptops and phones are not allowed in class.** Students who are by nature more reluctant to offer their input will not be penalized; however they are encouraged to participate fully in other aspects of the class.

### *Regional Identities in Italian Cuisine Presentation (20%)*

Students will be divided into groups of one or two and will be assigned one of two presentation days (**February 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>**). Students will be assigned a region of Italy and are asked to present a quick snapshot of your region in terms of its terroir, land, food and wine. Please examine the region's terroir by discussing how the region's geography, natural resources and climate have influenced its traditions. Be sure to include at least three of the region's specialties and their origins.

- a. 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.
- b. Students will also be required to hand-in a bibliography of at least 5 sources (at least two scholarly) they used to research their presentation.
- c. Grades will be given for the entire group and 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.

### *Roman Neighborhood Essay (20%)*

Students are assigned to write an essay on one of the neighborhoods throughout the Eternal City (the Jewish Ghetto, Testaccio, or Esquilino). These essays will account for 20% of the final grade. More details to follow. Essays are due **Monday, February 27 at 9 am**.

Students are expected to use correct grammar and spelling in their writing. Failure to do so will result in a max 10% grade reduction.

### *Field Study Essay (20%)*

Drawing on their experience at the winery, students are asked to write and research an essay on a topic of their choosing related to their experience at Fattoria del Fiorano. Potential topics may include: wine making, the process of fermentation in wine, organic/sustainable farming, family businesses in Italy, the importance of knowing where our food comes from, etc. These essays will account for 20% of the final grade. More details to follow. Essays are due **Wednesday, April 5th at 9 am**.

### *Final Exam (25%)*

The final exam is the final step in the sequential learning process the course involves. In this exam you will bring together the various concepts/topics we have studied. The exam will take approximately 120 minutes to complete and is closed book/closed note. It will constitute 25% of the final grade. This is the only time the exam will be given. No alternative exam dates will be offered.

### **Grading**

94-100: A  
90-93: A-  
87-89: B+  
84-86: B  
80-83: B-  
77-79: C+  
74-76: C  
70-73: C-



67-69: D+  
60-66: D  
59 or lower: F

### **Academic Honesty**

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are unacceptable at the JFRC and will be dealt with in accordance with Loyola University Chicago's guidelines. Please familiarize yourself with Loyola's standards here: [http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg\\_academicintegrity.shtml](http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml). You are responsible to comply with the LUC Student Handbook.

### **Late or Missed Assignments**

Late or missed assignments will not be accepted for grading without the authorization of the instructor. After authorization, late work will incur a 3% percent deduction for every day work is late.

### **Accessibility Accommodations**

Students registered with the Student Accessibility Center requiring academic accommodations should contact the Office of the Dean at the John Felice Rome Center, the first week of classes.

**Review Session:** We will review for the final exam. Students will be divided into groups and give a short five minute review of one of the topics to be covered in the exam. Your performance in these reviews will count in your participation grade. Students are expected to provide a summary/synopsis of what we discussed in class and not read their notes verbatim.

**Office Hours:** I will be available both before and after class. Alternative times can be arranged but it is always best to make an appointment. We can also be in touch via email if you have difficulties or queries.

### **Course Schedule**

#### **Friday Class Days:**

Friday, February 24 – Wednesday schedule  
Friday, March 24 - Field Study Day

## **WEEK 1**

**Monday, January 16: Introduction to the Study of Food**

**Wednesday, January 18: Modern Italian Food Culture**

*Required Readings:* Dickie: 1-10, Parasecoli 257-276

## **WEEK 2**

**Monday, January 23: The Food in Ancient Rome**

*Required readings:* Corbier 128-140; Steel 16-17



**Wednesday, January 25: Bread**

*Required Readings:* Franklin 235-241

## **WEEK 3**

**Monday, January 30: From the Middle Ages to the Columbian Exchange**

*Required short film:* "1492- Globalization and Fusion Cuisines" located on *Kanopy* from LUC Library site

**Wednesday, February 2: The Hot Beverage Revolution: Chocolate, Coffee, Tea**

*Required readings:* Montanari (2009) 90-92, Standage

## **WEEK 4**

**Monday, February 6: Regional Identities in Italian Cuisine Presentations**

**Wednesday, February 8: Regional Identities in Italian Cuisine Presentations**

## **WEEK 5**

**Monday, February 13: Field Day on campus: Olive oil and citrus**

**Wednesday, February 15: Beekeeping workshop on campus**

## **WEEK 6**

**Monday, February 20: The Food of Rome and Lazio & Essay idea discussion**

*Required Reading:* Zanini De Vita 5-18, 57-59

**Wednesday, February 22: The Renaissance**

*Required Readings:* Dickie 65-76; Grieco 307-313

**Friday, February 24: Visit to Trionfale Market**

## **WEEK 7**

**Monday, February 27: Slow Food film**  
**Roman Neighborhood Essays due at 9 am**

**Wednesday, March 1: Slow Food Discussion**

*Required Readings:* Laudan 134-144

## **WEEK 8: SPRING BREAK (MARCH 3-12)**

## **WEEK 9**

**Monday, March 13: The Historical and Cultural Context of Wine: Whites**

*Required Reading:* D'Agata 279-282

**Monday, March 15: Historical and Cultural Context of Wine: Reds**

*Required Reading:* D'Agata 353-358, Parasecoli 258-259

## **WEEK 10**

**Wednesday, March 20: No Class**

**Wednesday, March 22: Field Study Prep Day**

*Required readings:* Johnson 26-29

**Friday, March 24: FIELD STUDY- Visit to L'Orto di Alberico (Via del Fioranello, 34 Rome)**

## **WEEK 11**

**Monday, March 27: Cheese-making Demonstration**

*Required readings:* Firebaugh 359-364

**Wednesday, March 29: The Historical and Cultural Context of Wine - Pairing & Cheese**

*Required Reading:* D'Agata 111-113

## **WEEK 12**

**Monday, April 3: The Risorgimento and Food: Unity Through a Cookbook**

*Required Readings:* Dickie 211-232

**Wednesday, April 5: Mussolini and Futurist Cuisine**

*Required Readings:* Dickie 270-276; Helstosky 63-81

**Field study essay due at 9 am**

## **WEEK 13**

**Monday, April 10: Easter Monday - NO CLASS**

**Wednesday, April 12: The Invention of Italian-American Cuisine**

*Required Readings:* Levenstein 75-90

## **WEEK 14**

**Monday, April 17: Italian-American food in Big Night (FILM)**

**Wednesday, April 19: Final Review + bring your laptops to class to fill out course evaluation**

## **FINAL EXAM: WEEK 15**

### **Course Bibliography**

Capatti, A., and Massimo Montanari, transl. by Aine O’Healy, *Italian Cuisine: A Cultural History*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.

Corbier, M. “The Broad Bean and the Moray: Social Hierarchies and Food in Rome”, in: *Food - A Culinary History*, ed. J.F. Flandrin and M. Montanari (English edition by Albert Sonnenfeld), 128-140. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.

D’Agata, I. “Native Wine Grapes of Italy”, University of California Press, 2014

- 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.
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- Franklin, P., "Bread", in: *Encyclopedia of Food and Culture*, ed. S.H. Katz, Vol. 1, 235-241. New York: Thomas Gale 2003.
- Grieco, A.J. "Food and Social Classes in Late Medieval and Renaissance Italy", in: *Food—A Culinary History*, ed. J.F. Flandrin and M. Montanari (English edition by Albert Sonnenfeld), 302-313. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.
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- — "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.
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- — "Romans, Barbarians, Christians: The Dawn of European Food Culture" and "Production Structures and Food Systems in the Early Middle Ages" in: *Food—A Culinary History*, ed. J.F. Flandrin and M. Montanari (English edition by Albert Sonnenfeld), 165-177. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.
- — *Let the Meatballs Rest*. (English edition by Beth Archer Brombert) Columbia University Press, New York: 2009.
- Mueller, T. *Extravirginity: The Sublime and Scandalous World of Olive Oil*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc, 2012.
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- Riley, G. *The Oxford Companion to Italian Food*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Zanini De Vita, Oretta. *The Food of Rome and Lazio: History Folklore and Recipes* (English edition by Maureen Fant). Rome: Alphabyte Books, 1994.