Litr 268R: Italian Cultural History: Food & Wine
John Felice Rome Center
Spring 2023
Tuesdays & Thursdays | 5.15-6.30pm
Office hours: Thursdays 4.00-5.00pm
Instructor: Elisa Ascione, PhD
Email: eascione@luc.edu

Tastings fee: $100
All dates are subject to change based on availability at off-site locations

Course Description
In this course, we will explore the history of food and wine in Italy as a gateway to understanding Italian culture. By examining the factors that have shaped Italian food and taste, the variations in eating habits of different socio-economic classes, and the essential role played by food in constructing Italian identities, we will shed light on fundamental patterns in Italian history and society. Through a mix of discussions, readings, primary source analyses, workshops, and excursions, we will investigate Italian food and culture from antiquity to the present. We will explore how food traditions and local foods are maintained and transformed over time and space, how culinary knowledge is used to mark cultural belonging and differences, studying food as a site of cultural transmission but also of dissent and resistance. Topics include nation and gender, alternative food systems, and food justice in Italy. After the completion of this course, students will have developed a critical understanding of food history, an interdisciplinary approach to the study of Italian culture and society, and a framework for analyzing Italian cultural 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
All required readings are listed on the schedule and will be available 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.

**Assessment Components**
- Participation (20%)
  - Oral group presentation: edible histories (20%)
  - Midterm Exam (20%)
  - Food Waste Project (10%)
  - Final Exam (30%)

**Class Participation (20%)**
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.

**Oral Group Presentation: Edible Histories (20%)**
Students will be divided into groups and will be assigned one of two presentation days. Groups must choose a topic/book from the Edible series available at LUC library (the list will be provided by the instructor).

I expect: a 20-minute presentation which includes 1) a brief activity/a few questions to involve the class 2) a theoretical introduction in which you explain the relevance of your topic 3) an historical outline of your case-study 4) an evaluation of its current social and cultural impacts 5) counter arguments (if applicable) 6) a clear conclusion 7) two questions to elicit class discussion 8) a bibliography with three scholarly references (peer-reviewed books and articles) 9) slides with no more than five words. You should not read your presentation from a written text but rehearse it in advance.

Grades will be given for the entire group and will be based on preparedness, organization of presentation, understanding of the material, critical thinking skills, coherent/cohesive presentation, information from diverse sources to create an original argument.

**Food Waste Project (10%)**
Students will be divided in groups and gather data on food waste among the JFRC student population. They will write a short report at the end of the semester about the activity.

**Mid Term (20%) and Final Exam (30%)**
These exams consist of multiple choice and short answers, bringing together the various concepts/topics you have studied. 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.

*As per the JFRC academic policies, students who miss any scheduled exam or quiz, including a final exam at the assigned hours will not be permitted to sit for a make-up examination without approval of the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs. Permission is given rarely and only for grave reasons; travel is not considered a grave reason. Make-up exams will only be given for documented absences.*

**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.

**Course Schedule**

**Friday Class Days. October 17**

**Friday Field Class:** Grape Harvest and Visit to “L’orto di Alberico” Winery:
Departure in the morning by private bus, students will participate in grape harvesting and learn about the wine-making process in an organic winery. It includes a light lunch. [https://ortodialberico.it/](https://ortodialberico.it/)

**WEEK 1**

**Tuesday, September 5:** Introduction to the Study of Italian Cultural History: Food and Wine

**Thursday, September 7:** Bio-Cultural Perspectives on Food and Nutrition

**WEEK 2**

**Tuesday, September 12:** The Food in Ancient Rome

**Thursday, September 14: Medieval Food**


*Group-work preparation for presentations*

**WEEK 3**

**Tuesday, September 19: The Invention of Pasta**


**Thursday, September 21: Renaissance Food: The Humoral Theory and the Great Chain of Being**


**WEEK 4**

**Tuesday, September 26: The Columbian Exchange**


**Thursday, September 28: No Class (class moved to tomorrow, Friday)**

**Friday, September 29: Grape Harvest and Winery Visit** (9.00am-4.00pm approx. Departure by private bus)
WEEK 5
Tuesday, October 3: Presentations

Thursday, October 5: Presentations

WEEK 6
Tuesday, October 10: Midterm Review

Thursday, October 12: Midterm Exam

Fall Break: October 13-22

WEEK 7
Tuesday, October 24: The History of Coffee

Thursday, October 26: Cultures of Drinking
[https://www.sapiens.org/archaeology/evolution-wine/](https://www.sapiens.org/archaeology/evolution-wine/)


Friday, October 27: Wine and Sustainability in Italy

WEEK 8
Monday, October 30: Optional activity, Olive Harvest at the JFRC Olive Grove (morning activity)

Tuesday, October 31: Food Waste Project

Thursday, November 2: Food as Cultural Heritage

WEEK 9
Tuesday, November 7: The Risorgimento and Food: Unity Through a Cookbook


Thursday, November 9: Food and the Nation under Fascism
Free Press, pp. 256-268.


**WEEK 10**

**Tuesday, November 14:** Migrations, diasporic cuisines, and “gastro-nationalism”:


**Thursday, November 16:** Documentary Screening on Diasporic Italian Cuisines

**WEEK 11**

**Tuesday, November 21:** Food, Religion and Rites of Passage: Rituals of Charity and Abundance


**Thanksgiving Break: 23-26 November**

**WEEK 12**

**Tuesday, November 28:** Food and Gender Relations in Italy


“Labor”, pp. 125-147


**Thursday, November 30:** Italy and The Global Food System: Opportunities and Challenges


**WEEK 13**

**Tuesday, December 5:** Italian Food Activism and Political Food.

Browse [https://www.slowfood.com/](https://www.slowfood.com/)


**Thursday, December 7: Final Exam Review + Hand-in Food Waste Project**, email it before **5.00pm** to eascione@luc.edu

**WEEK 14: FINAL EXAM**

December 11-14