



**JOHN FELICE
ROME CENTER**

Litr 268R: Italian Cultural History: Food & Wine

John Felice Rome Center

Fall 2026

Tuesdays & Thursdays | 5.15-6.30pm

Office hours: Thursdays 3.30-4.30pm

Instructor: Elisa Ascione, PhD

Email: eascione@luc.edu

Tasting fee: \$100

All dates and activities 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, and how food is a site of cultural transmission but also of dissent and resistance. Topics include food as cultural heritage, food and migration, the Mediterranean diet, and sustainable diets. 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.

Please note: Food and wine tastings are served in very small quantities during class for didactic purposes only. Although students are expected to learn about the history and culture of wine and foods, they are not expected to participate in any of the tastings for successful completion of the course. Please let the instructor know in advance if you have any dietary needs or food allergies.

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 have shaped Italy today.

Sakai:

All course materials will be located on Sakai, which can be accessed at <https://sakai.luc.edu>
 Sakai is a web-based learning management system. You will be able to access it from any computer connected to the internet. Instructional guides and video tutorials for using Sakai are available at: <http://www.luc.edu/itrs/sakai/sakai-student-tutorials.shtml>

Course content, including syllabi, reading material, etc. will be available online.

Students should check Sakai often for announcements, assignments, and other course content.

Student Support Resources:

- ITS Service Desk: helpdesk@luc.edu
- Library Subject Specialists: <http://libraries.luc.edu/specialists>
- Student Accessibility Center: sac@luc.edu
- Writing Center: <http://www.luc.edu/writing/>

Attendance Policy

In accordance with the Rome Center mission to promote a higher level of academic rigor, and in compliance with full-time student visa status, all courses adhere to the following attendance policy. Prompt attendance, preparation and active participation in course discussions are expected from every student and synonymous with academic success. Attendance is mandatory at every class meeting for each course. Lateness or leaving class early will impact the course grade at the professor's discretion. All absences, including medical absences, will be treated the same, unless they are documented long-term conditions or emergencies. Such situations will be evaluated case-by-case by the Academic Affairs office.

Twice-a-week classes:

- After 2 absences, a 2% final grade reduction will be applied for each missed class.
- Missing 6 classes or more will result in an automatic failure (F).

Academic Integrity:

Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest, and responsible manner. Academic integrity is a guiding principle for all academic activity at Loyola University Chicago, and all members of the University community are expected to act in accordance with this principle.

Failing to meet the following academic integrity standards is a serious violation of personal honesty and the academic ideals that bind the University into a learning community. These standards apply to both individual and group assignments. Individuals working in a group may be held responsible if one of the group members has violated one or more of these standards.

1. Students may not plagiarize; the use of AI is considered plagiarism too and treated as such. Any Turnitin submission flagged over 30% will be investigated as potential plagiarism. Please keep draft versions of your saved work to show your progress in case you are called for a discussion about academic integrity.
2. Students may not submit the same work for credit for more than one assignment (known as self-plagiarism).
3. Students may not fabricate data.
4. Students may not collude.
5. Students may not cheat.

6. Students may not facilitate academic misconduct.

Follow this link for more details about these standards, sanctions, and academic misconduct procedures: (https://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml)

Title IX:

It is unacceptable and a violation of university policy to harass, discriminate against or abuse any person because of his or her race, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, age or any other characteristic protected by applicable law.

The Rome Center follows Loyola's [Comprehensive Policy and Procedures for Addressing Discrimination, Sexual Misconduct, Retaliation](#) and will comply with those as indicated and instructed.

Assessment Components

- Class Participation (10%)
- Course Journal (10%)
- Midterm Exam (25%)
- Trionfale Market Fieldnotes (15%)
- Trionfale Stall Profile (10%)
- Trionfale Visual Media Post (5%)
- Final Exam (25%)

Class Participation (10%)

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 responding to others. The use of computers and smartphones is not allowed unless authorized by the instructor for assigned readings.

Full Rubric Available in SAKAI under "Resources"

Course Journal (10%)

Students will be required to keep a course journal. There will be regularly scheduled assignments to write a journal entry (e.g. analyses of primary sources, short summary of the reading due for the day, reflections, etc). Journals will also be used to reflect on what you learned during the experiential components of the course.

Journal entries must be handwritten, can remain relatively informal. They will be graded twice throughout the semester, i.e., before the mid-semester break and at the end of the course (Week 13). Each of these checks is worth 7.5% of your grade, for a total of 15%.

Full Prompt and Rubric Available in SAKAI under "Resources"

Trionfale Market Fieldnotes (15%) + Trionfale Market Stall Profile (10%) + Trionfale Market Media Post (5%)

Markets are places of community building, quality food education, and civic engagement. To increase food awareness and support the local economy, markets need to develop tools to tell their stories. The aim of this project is to create a digital guide promoting the Trionfale Market to English-speaking travelers. By the end of the semester, you will be responsible for doing original research and creating a

Market Stall Profile for your assigned section.

You will need to visit the Trionfale Market twice independently in the morning in small groups as assigned by the instructor. The market is open Mon-Sat from 8.00AM to 12.30PM. It can be reached by bus 913 with a 15-minute ride. Have a tour and stay at the market for at least one hour and a half on both occasions. Participate in shopping and eating, ask questions to one vendor, take notes, and write up your observations and insights as soon as possible after the visit¹. Jot down observations about the entire market and focus on one stall. Create a final media post for an Instagram page to promote the stall you visited.

Full Prompt and Rubric Available in SAKAI under “Resources”

Mid Term (25%) and Final Exam (25%)

These exams consist of multiple choices 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

Please note: Final grades are not rounded up to the next letter grade. Students are asked not to request grade adjustments. For example, a 93.7% is an A- and will not be rounded up to 94% (A).

Late or Missed Assignments

Late or missed assignments will not be accepted for grading without the authorization of the instructor at least 24 hours before the deadline. After authorization, late work may incur a 3% 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 the 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 (SAC) (<http://www.luc.edu/sac>) requiring academic accommodations should contact the Office of the Dean at the John Felice Rome Center, the first week of classes.

¹ (Adapted from Counihan, Carole. “Ethnography of Farmers’ Markets: Studying Culture, Place, and Food Democracy” (2015) in *Teaching Food and Culture*, edited by Candice Lowe Swift and Richard Wilk, Left Coast Press, pp. 113–128.)

Please note: activities

WEEK 1

Tuesday, September 1: Introduction to the Study of Italian Cultural History: Food and Wine

Thursday, September 3: Bio-Cultural Perspectives on Food and Nutrition

- Fischler, C. (1988) 'Food, Self and identity', *Social Science Information*, n. 27, pp. 275-292.

WEEK 2

Tuesday, September 8: The Food in Ancient Rome I

- Corbier, M. (1999) 'The Broad Bean and the Moray: Social Hierarchies and Food in Rome', in Montanari, M. and Flandrin, J.-L. (eds) *Food: A Culinary History from Antiquity to the Present*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, pp. 128–140.
- Kaufman, C., K. (2006) 'Ancient Rome', in *Cooking in Ancient Civilizations*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, pp. 121–131.

Thursday, September 10: The Food in Ancient Rome II

- Apicius, *De Re Coquinaria*, selected recipes, choose your favourite recipe and summarize it
- Petronius Arbiter, "The Dinner of Trimalchio", *The Satyricon*

WEEK 3

Tuesday, September 15: Five Turning Points in the Evolution of Wine

<https://www.sapiens.org/archaeology/evolution-wine/> Be ready to discuss the five points

- Wine basics: Fermentation, Grapes, Viticulture (pp.1-12)

Thursday, September 17: The Ethnographic Study of Markets

- Black, R. (2012) *Porta Palazzo: The Anthropology of an Italian Market*. 1st ed. Contemporary Ethnography. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, pp. ix-24

WEEK 4

Tuesday, September 22: Medieval Food

- Montanari, M. (1999) 'Romans, Barbarians, Christians & Production Structures and Food Systems in the Early Middle Ages', in Montanari, M. and Flandrin, J.-L. (eds), Sonnenfeld, A. (tran.) *Food: A Culinary History from Antiquity to the Present*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, pp. 165–177.

Thursday, September 24: The Invention of Pasta

- Dickie, J. (2008) 'Palermo, 1154: Pasta and the Planisphere', in *Delizia! The Epic History of the Italians and Their Food*. New York, NY: Free Press, pp. 13-30

Friday, September 25: Field class to winery: harvesting grapes and wine tasting (9.00AM-4.00PM). Missing this field class will be considered one absence

WEEK 5

Tuesday, September 29: Renaissance Food Restrictions: The Humoral Theory and the Great Chain of Being

- Grieco, A., J. (1999) 'Food and Social Classes in Late Medieval and Renaissance Italy', in Montanari, M. and Flandrin, J.-L. (eds), Sonnenfeld, A. (tran.) *Food: A Culinary History from Antiquity to the Present*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, pp. 302–312. + Grieco, A. J. "Dietary and Medical Treaties" pp. 121-124

Thursday, October 1: The Wines of Italy

- Wine laws, wine labels, growing conditions, top grapes and wines, and the most important wine regions in Italy (pp 169-198)
- **Deadline for First Trionfale Market Site Visit: Week 5**

WEEK 6

Tuesday, October 6: Midterm Review. **Bring your journal for corrections.**

- **Deadline for Field Notes (upload it on Sakai by 11.30pm)**

Thursday, October 8: Midterm Exam

Fall Break: October 9-18

WEEK 7

Tuesday, October 20: Alcohol as Embodied Material Culture

- Dietler, M. (2019) "Alcohol as Embodied Material Culture: Anthropological Reflections on the Deep Entanglement of Humans and Alcohol". In *Alcohol and Humans*, di Michael Dietler, 115–29. Oxford University Press, 2019.

Thursday, October 22: Wine and Sustainability

- Ascione, E., Jared Belsky, Mackenzie Nelsen, and Manuel Barbato (2020). "Cultivating Activism through *Terroir*: An Anthropology of Sustainable Winemakers in Umbria, Italy." *Food, Culture & Society* 23, no. 3

Friday, October 23: Somm into the Bottle documentary and discussion

WEEK 8

Tuesday, October 27: The Columbian Exchange

- Archer, K.L. (2011) 'Columbian Exchange' in Brosnan, K.A., *Encyclopedia of American Environmental History*. New York: Facts On File, pp. 301-303.
- Montanari, M. (2013) 'Preservation and Renewal of Alimentary Identities', in *Italian Identity in the Kitchen, or Food and the Nation*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 33-40.

Thursday, October 29: The Risorgimento and Food: Unity Through a Cookbook

- Dickie, J. (2008) "Florence, 1891: Pellegrino Artusi" in *Delizia! The Epic History of the Italians and Their Food*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Primary Source: Artusi and the Science of Cooking, [Choose your favorite recipe](#)

WEEK 9

Tuesday, November 3: The “Natural Wine” Movement

- Buranyi, S. (2018) “Has Wine Gone Mad?”, The Guardian, 15 May 2018
- Research the products used in oenology listed in the attached graphic

Thursday, November 5: The Futurist Cookbook

- Helstosky, C. (2003). “Recipe For The Nation: Reading Italian History Through La Scienza In Cucina and La Cucina Futurista”. *Food and Foodways* 11, fasc. 2–3, 113–40.
- The Futurist Cookbook – excerpts, Choose and discuss your favorite recipe
- **Deadline for Second Trionfale Market Site Visit: Week 9**

WEEK 10

Tuesday, November 10: The history of olive oil

Lanza, Fabrizia. *Olive: A Global History*. Reaktion Books, 2011.

Thursday, November 12: Italian migrations, diasporic cuisines, “gastro-nationalism”:

Di Giovine, M. A. (2010). “La Vigilia Italo-Americana: Revitalizing the Italian American Family through the Christmas Eve ‘Feast of the Seven Fishes’.” *Food and Foodways* 18 (4): 181–208

WEEK 11

Tuesday, November 17: Guest lecture. Meet a biodynamic wine-maker

Thursday, November 19: Fighting Inequalities Through Food: *Agro-Mafia*

- Guidi, C. F., e Berti, F (2023). “Labor exploitation in the Italian agricultural sector: the case of vulnerable migrants in Tuscany”, *Frontiers in Sociology* 8 (4 ottobre 2023)
- “The Pizza-Connection: Fighting the Mafia Through Food”, pp.1-7
- **Deadline for Trionfale Market Stall Profile (upload it on Sakai by 11.30pm).**

WEEK 12

Tuesday, November 24: Good, Clean and Fair: The Slow Food Movement

- What are Slow Food’s actions, goals, main themes, and history, from their websites? Discuss in class
- <https://www.slowfood.com/>
- <https://www.fondazione Slow Food.com/en>: find 4 Slow Food Presidia, 4 Ark of Taste Products in different countries (including Italy)
- <https://www.slowfood.com/thematic-network/slow-wine-coalition/>: Summarize the Slow Wine Manifesto

Thanksgiving Break: November 26-29

WEEK 13

Tuesday, December 1: Food as cultural heritage: The Mediterranean Diet

- Moro, E. (2016) “The Mediterranean Diet from Ancel Keys to the UNESCO Cultural Heritage. A

Pattern of Sustainable Development between Myth and Reality". *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 223, pp. 655–61.

- <https://ich.unesco.org/en/lists>: Browse the UNESCO Intangible Heritage List and find two food items and one non-food item (from Italy and other countries) that you find interesting. Be ready to discuss your items in class

Thursday, December 3: Final Exam Review. Bring your journal for corrections.

- **Deadline for Trionfale Visual Media Post (upload it on Sakai by 11.30pm)**

7-10 December: FINAL EXAM WEEK