



CU270 CULTURE AND CUISINE: FOOD AND SOCIETY IN ITALY

IES Abroad Milan

DESCRIPTION:

This course gives students the opportunity to approach one of the most important and world-renowned aspects of Italian culture: *la cucina italiana*. Our classroom sessions will be punctuated with hands-on cooking classes at *E-cooking*, which will offer a practical understanding of local cuisine and food culture. Students will be asked to discuss Italian recipes, cultural differences in cooking, and in the approach to food. We will also discuss historical and cultural reasons behind the development of different cuisines, ingredients, and cooking practices throughout the country.

CREDITS: 3

CONTACT HOURS: 45

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

PREREQUISITES: None

ADDITIONAL COST: 150€

METHOD OF PRESENTATION:

The course offers insights into Italian culture related to food and cooking habits. Italy has great food, and a greater (perhaps too great) storytelling about it. We will cover ingredients, food-related topics, and interesting stories about Italian cuisine. There will be in-class discussions, students' presentations, hands-on lessons, and a full understanding of how cuisine intertwined with Italy's history and culture.

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

Regular attendance and active participation in class will be fundamental for grade assessment. Students will be asked to complete exercises, read and comment on texts, and do research work for in-class presentations on the topics covered in class.

- **Class Engagement - 25%**
- **Oral Exam - 25%**
- **Midterm Exam - 25%**
- **Final Exam – 25%**

Class Engagement: Active and thoughtful participation in class that demonstrates the student's preparedness for class and engagement with the culture. It will be evaluated according to a rubric available on the course Moodle page.

The oral exam is a group presentation about a food-related topic assigned by the instructor. It will be evaluated according to a rubric available on the course Moodle page.

The midterm exam is a written exam consisting of both closed- and open answers questions. It covers the contents of the first half of the course.



The final exam is an analytical paper asking students to discuss one of the topics introduced in class. It will be evaluated according to a rubric available on the course Moodle page.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

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

- Describe Italian cooking traditions and Italian habits related to food, eating, and food preparation;
- Outline key issues and values affecting food traditions and the food economy in Italy
- Discuss food culture in Italy supported by historical and social-economic context.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

As a member of our class community, you are expected to **be present** and **on time** every day. Attending class has an impact on your learning and **academic success**. For this reason, the IES Abroad Milan attendance policy allows for the following number of absences, which are intended to be used for physical and mental health reasons:

- THREE (3) absences in each Italian language course,
- **TWO (2) absences in each Area Studies course,**
- ONE (1) absence in each seminar course or course meeting 1 day a week,
- ZERO (0) absences in each course of individual music instruction.

Every absence beyond this allowance will automatically result in a penalty of **2 percentage points off the final grade**. SEVEN (7) absences will result in a failing grade in Italian language and Area Studies courses. FOUR (4) absences will result in a failing grade in seminar or 1-day-a-week courses. **Failure to attend a scheduled exam, test, quiz, or presentation will automatically result in an F grade on that assessment.**

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Students are expected to abide by the IES Abroad Code of Academic Integrity. All work submitted by a student for academic credit should constitute the student's own original work. Any work submitted for academic credit may be subject to review by a textual similarity detection service for the detection of plagiarism and AI usage.

CONTENT: This breakdown may be subject to changes.

Week	Content	Assignments
Week 1 Session 1	What is Italian cuisine? - Welcome and introduction to the course - Italian cuisine in US people's minds - Italian cuisine for Italian authorities	
Session 2	The wonderful adventure of pasta - From the Etruscans to modern time - Fresh pasta vs dry pasta - Richness and poverty, home-production and industry: pasta's infinite faces	The Twisted History of Pasta, "National Geographic" article (reading) - Kantha Shelke, <i>Pasta and Noodles, a Global history</i> - Chapter I (reading)
Week 2 Session 1	Grocery shopping in Italy Grocery shopping in the US vs in Italy: supermarkets, delis, local markets	- Giuseppe Caprotti, <i>Le ossa dei Caprotti (The Caprotti's Bones)</i>, extracts (reading) - Compare Italian and U.S. supermarkets (activity)
Session 2	Italy, land of good wine? - When did Italian wine become renowned? - Italian and Food-Wine pairing - The economy of wine	- Giovanni Ceccarelli, Alberto Grandi, <i>A "made in Italy" made by English : How Marsala Wine Became an Italian Typical Product</i> (reading) - Stefano Ponte, <i>Bursting the bubble? The hidden costs and visible conflicts behind the Prosecco wine 'miracle'</i>

Week 3 Session 1	Food certifications: can typicality be stated? - Is “Made in Italy” actually made in Italy? - Who needs “Made in Italy”?	“Report”, May 10 2015 episode (video) - Focaccia di Recco IGP: product guidelines Raw Materials for Valtellina Bresaola, Valtellina Bresaola Consortium website (reading)
Session 2	COOKING CLASS Experiential learning: Engage with ingredients and cooking methods mindfully and with curiosity Cultural Competency: Question the cooking class environment, projecting recipes in their historical context Active Learning: Notice links between ingredients, culinary practices and cooking methods used and notions learned in class	
Week 4 Session 1	ORAL EXAM	
Session 2	Environment, Agro-System and Quality of Food Production in Italy - Italian food production: a nation of regional diversity - GMO and gene-edited foods - The black side of Italy: the gangmaster phenomenon The threats of climate change	Climate change impact on yield and income of Italian agriculture system: a scoping review . Selected chapters (reading)

Week 5 Session 1	Pizza and street food - Pizza Margherita between history and legend - Why and how did pizza become so famous? - Street food: a fast food but slow?	- Zachary Nowak, <i>Folklore, Fakelore, History: Invented Tradition and the Origins of the Pizza Margherita</i>, pp. 103-107, 109-117 (reading) - Marina Calloni, <i>Street Food on the Move: A Socio-philosophical approach</i> (reading) - Rank the top 5 best street foods you had in Italy (activity)
Session 2	COOKING CLASS Experiential learning: Engage with ingredients and cooking methods mindfully and with curiosity Cultural Competency: Question the cooking class environment, projecting recipes in their historical context Active Learning: Notice links between ingredients, culinary practices and cooking methods used and notions learned in class	
Week 6 Session 1	MIDTERM EXAM	
Session 2	Italian-American dishes How migration has influenced Italian Cuisine Alfredo, Marinara, Spaghetti & the Italian American cuisine	- Active Learning: quiz "Is it truly Italian?" - Luca Cesari, <i>A brief history of pasta - chapter I: Fettuccine Alfredo</i> (reading) Luca Cesari, "Carbonara: history, origins and anecdotes of a legendary recipe" (reading)
Week 7 Session 1	La cucina povera: an italian uniqueness - Can "cucina povera" be translated as "poor cuisine"? - Did Italian peasants eat better than modern-day Italians? - Is "cucina povera" actually a thing? - Oil, lard and butter: differences and use	- Chef's Table episode: Bo Songvisava (video) "La cucina povera: the poor cuisine of Tuscany", "Italy Segreta" article (critical reading) Italy minister Lollobrigida claims 'the poor eat better than the rich', "Wanted in Rome" article, August 25 2023 (reading)

Session 2	COOKING CLASS • Experiential learning: Engage with ingredients and cooking methods mindfully and with curiosity • Cultural Competency: Question the cooking class environment, projecting recipes in their historical context • Active Learning: Notice links between ingredients, culinary practices and cooking methods used and notions learned in class	
Week 8 Session 1	American Food In Europe • The impact of the Columbian Exchange on Italian cuisine • How many things in Italian cuisine are actually Italian?	• David Gentilcore, <i>The Impact Of New World Plants, 1500–1800: The Americas In Italy</i> (reading)
Session 2	Our daily bread • Sacrality of bread • Why so many shapes? • The color of bread as a social symbol Differences between wheats from North to South	• <u>“Pane e Nutella”</u>, Nutella marketing campaign (browsing) • Vito Teti, <i>Il colore del cibo (The color of food)</i>, selected pages (reading) • Susan R. Friedland, <i>Food and Morality</i>, pp.57-67 (reading)
Week 9 Session 1	Italian cuisine and the Mediterranean Diet • What is the Mediterranean Diet and why is it so healthy? • Is Italian cuisine compliant with the Mediterranean Diet?	• Elisabetta Moro, <i>The Mediterranean Diet from Ancel Keys to the UNESCO Cultural Heritage. A Pattern of Sustainable Development between Myth and Reality</i> (reading)

Session 2	COOKING CLASS • Experiential learning: Engage with ingredients and cooking methods mindfully and with curiosity • Cultural Competency: Question the cooking class environment, projecting recipes in their historical context • Active Learning: Notice links between ingredients, culinary practices and cooking methods used and notions learned in class	
Week 10 Session 1	“Espresso: what else?” • Espresso: the only way? • History of coffee in Italy: from Pope Clemente 7th to Luigi Lavazza and Alfonso Bialetti • The Italian Breakfast: is Cappuccino after midday (so) wrong?	• “Alfonso Bialetti” and “Luigi Lavazza”, podcast episodes by Luca Cottini on Italian Innovators (listening)
Session 2	A country of 1000 cheeses • Italian cheeses: regional types and characteristics • Parmigiano Reggiano and Grana Padano VS Parmesan Italian Sounding	• Alberto Grandi, “<i>Denominazione di Origine Inventata</i>” (Invented Designation of Origin), chapter 5 (reading) • Italy's toxic waste crisis, the Mafia - and the scandal of Europe's mozzarella, “The Independent” article, March 22nd 2008 (reading)
Week 11 Session 1	Final Review	

Session 2	COOKING CLASS • Experiential learning: Engage with ingredients and cooking methods mindfully and with curiosity • Cultural Competency: Question the cooking class environment, projecting recipes in their historical context Active Learning: Notice links between ingredients, culinary practices and cooking methods used and notions learned in class	
-----------	--	--

FULL LIST OF ASSIGNMENTS:

Readings:

- [The Twisted History of Pasta](#), “National Geographic” article
- Kantha Shelke, *Pasta and Noodles, a Global history* - Chapter I
- Giuseppe Caprotti, *Le ossa dei Caprotti (The Caprotti’s Bones)*, extracts
- Focaccia di Recco IGP: product guidelines
- [Raw Materials for Valtellina Bresaola](#), Valtellina Bresaola Consortium web
- Giovanni Ceccarelli, Alberto Grandi, *A “made in Italy” made by English : How Marsala Wine Became an Italian Typical Product*
- Stefano Ponte, *Bursting the bubble? The hidden costs and visible conflicts behind the Prosecco wine ‘miracle’*
- Zachary Nowak, *Folklore, Fakelore, History: Invented Tradition and the Origins of the Pizza Margherita*, pp. 103-107, 109-117
- Marina Calloni, *Street Food on the Move: A Socio-philosophical approach*
- VV. AA., *Climate change impact on yield and income of Italian agriculture system: a scoping review*
- Luca Cesari, *A brief history of pasta* - chapter I (Fettuccine Alfredo)
- Luca Cesari, [“Carbonara: history, origins and anecdotes of a legendary recipe”](#)
- David Gentilcore, *The Impact Of New World Plants, 1500–1800: The Americas In Italy*
- Alberto Grandi, *“Denominazione di Origine Inventata”* (Invented Designation of Origin), chapter 5
- Vito Teti, *Il colore del cibo* (The color of food), selected pages
- Susan R. Friedland, *Food and Morality*, (pp.57-67)
- *Italy's toxic waste crisis, the Mafia - and the scandal of Europe's mozzarella*, “The Independent” article
- [“La cucina povera: the poor cuisine of Tuscany”](#), “Italy Segreta” article (critical reading)



- [Italy minister Lollobrigida claims 'the poor eat better than the rich'](#), "Wanted in Rome" article, August 25 2023
- Elisabetta Moro, *The Mediterranean Diet from Ancel Keys to the UNESCO Cultural Heritage. A Pattern of Sustainable Development between Myth and Reality*

Audiovisual material:

- "Report", May 10 2015 episode (video)
- Chef's Table episode: Bo Songvisava (video)
- "Alfonso Bialetti" and "Luigi Lavazza", episodes from Luca Cottini's podcast "Italian Innovators" (listening)

Experiential learning activities:

- Compare Italian and U.S. supermarkets
- Rank the top 5 best street foods you had in Italy
- Cooking classes