Food, Culture, and Nutrition in Italy
NUTR-GE 33.2208.099 (4 points): International Study in Food and Nutrition

Sunday, May 26 to June 15, 2013
Villa la Pietra, Florence

Director:
Lisa Sasson
Department of Nutrition, Food Studies & Public Health
Phone (212) 998-5585
lisa.sasson@nyu.edu

Teaching Assistant:
Sarah DeMott
International Education Program
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Phone (212) 992-9456
sarah.demott@nyu.edu

Course Description and Objectives:
During our three weeks in Italy we will examine food and nutrition from historical, political, economic, cultural, and culinary perspectives. We’ll start with a general introduction to Italy and Italian food and wine with an emphasis on regionality. We’ll proceed to contemporary issues, such as the Mediterranean diet, public health, migration, food production, distribution and sustainability, and Italy’s role in the global food economy. We will taste and talk about specific food products, both artisanal and mass-produced. Wine holds a privileged status in the Italian diet and culture that we will investigate while we drink and discuss. In addition to visiting farms, factories, wineries, food producers, and other places of interest for foodies and nutritionists, we will be going organic and foraging for live Italian specialties in the Tuscan hillsides, fisherman nets, and local markets. We’ll travel within Tuscany and to other regions, namely Latium (Rome) and Emilia Romagna (Bologna) to sample the regional diversity in the food culture firsthand. The goal is to use Italy as a case study, in order to both experience a separate and distinct food and nutrition culture, and to provide a window of understanding into our own.
Class participation, readings, and a final project will be required. Group field trips and some meals are included. For optional meals and other optional experiences in the syllabus you are on your own.

**REQUIRED Books** (bring them with you to Italy)

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**To read before you go:**


**Required for assignments due MAY 27.**

After reading the required readings, briefly answer both questions below and be prepared to discuss your response at our first class meeting on May 27. (Students responses should be approximately 1 page per questions and should be posted to our blackboard site under assignments.)

**Questions:**

**Garlic and Oil:** Italian cuisine has been highly romanticized. How does Carol Helstosky challenge the myths and assumptions about Italian food?

**Around the Tuscan Table:** Carole Counihan illustrates how the historical, cultural, social, and economic role of food has shape the modern portrait of the Italian people. Using three examples that draw from the reading, please explain how food and food production has influenced Italian identity?

**Required for class preparation in Italy:**

Most of the required readings are available on Blackboard. It is under the course documents folders. It is essential that you read and bring these readings (or review via internet in computer lab at La Pietra) to Italy. These readings were carefully selected to coordinate with the lectures and field trips. You will have a much better understanding and appreciation of the lectures if you do the readings beforehand. It will also help you with ideas for your research project in Italy.

**RECOMMENDED MOVIES**

*The Bicycle Thief*, directed by Vittorio de Sica (1948)
I Vitelloni, directed by Frederico Fellini (1953)

RECOMMENDED READINGS on Italy (not necessary to have them in Italy)


Jones, Tobias. The Dark Heart of Italy: Travels through Time and Space across Italy. London: Faber and Faber, 2003.


RECOMMENDED BOOKS on Italian Food and Wine (for personal reference)


**CLASS SCHEDULE**

**Sunday, May 26**

*Arrival Day*

*Check into Villa Natalia*
6:00 p.m. Gather on terrace of Villa Natalia to walk to dinner (about 30 min.)
Wear good walking shoes!

7:30 p.m. Welcome dinner of traditional Tuscan specialties at Osteria Pepo, Via Rosina 6r.

**Monday, May 27**

**Orientation**
[Villa Ulivi]
9:30 a.m.: Overview of Course Content, Outline, Grading, and Expectations
Discuss projects and conference. Divide students into two groups. Explain dinner series with guest lecturers.

11:00-12:30 a.m.: A Brief Introduction to Nutrition & Mediterranean Diet
Lecture by Lisa Sasson

12:30 p.m.: Break for lunch

2:00-3:15 p.m. Carbohydrates, Obesity, and Italian Food Culture
Lecture by Dr. Vincenzo Bacci, Endocrinologist

3:30 p.m. Student registration at Villa Natalia

5:30 p.m.: Orientation to dorms and student life at La Pietra.

7:30 p.m. Welcome Reception
Lisa’s apartment-appetizers and wine (allow 35-40 min to walk into town) or you can take a bus

**Tuesday, May 28**

9:00 a.m. An Introduction to Italian Wine
Lecture and Tasting by Ian d’Agata M.D., Director The International Wine Academy of Rome

12: break for lunch

1:30-2:30 PM- How to Conduct Observational Research/ Review of projects
Sarah Demott, Lisa Sasson
2:30- 3:00 p.m.: Introductory Conversational Italian Lessons and Pronunciation
Lesson by Sarah DeMott

3:00-4:00 p.m.
History of Italian Food and Food Culture
Fabio Parasecoli, Food Historian

Wednesday, May 29

Morning Free - Explore Florence

2- 3PM- Conversational Language Lessons Continued

3- 4 p.m. Food and the Brain: the regulatory mechanisms controlling appetite, hunger and satiety
Lecture by Domenico Pellegrini, MD/Pharmacologist, University of Florence

4:-5PM. The Mediterranean Diet Today; Nutrition Counseling from the Perspective of an Italian Nutritionist
Lecture by Lucia Bacciottini

Dinner at Farmer's Home - TBA

Thursday, May 30

10:30-11:30 a.m.: Around the Tuscan Table
Lecture by Nancy Harmon Jenkins, Food Writer, Food Historian, Cookbook Author, and Olive Oil Expert

11:30- 12:45 p.m.: Olive Oil History and Production
Guided Olive Oil Tasting
Lecture by Nancy Harmon Jenkins

12:45 Lunch

2:00-2:45 p.m. An Introduction to Contemporary Italy: Culture and Lifestyle - part 1
Lecture by David Travis, Italian Historian

3:00- 3:45 p.m.: Current Political Situation in Italy- part 2

**Friday, May 31**

Trip to Radicondoli- Tuscan Farm- Agriturismo
Artisanal Sardinian Cheese Making (Pecorino-Tuscano Formaggio) with Local Sheppard

8:30-9:30 a.m.: Bus Ride from Florence to Radicondoli

9:30-12:00 a.m.: Porcu Family's Sheep Ranch- tour working farm, cheese making demonstration, tastings and discussion of Italian Migration and Foodways

12:00-1:00 p.m.: Porcu Family's Sheep Ranch: Shepherd's Lunch

1:00-2:00 p.m.: Tour agriturismo and discussion of this form of tourism

2:30-4:00 p.m. Podere Il Bolli, Olive Oil Estate: Tour Olive Oil factory and walk along olive groves

4:00-5:00- Optional hike in center of town

5:00-6:00 p.m.: Il Granino Restaurante: Pizza Making demonstration and Tasting

6:00-7:30 p.m.: Visit Radicondoli- Tuscan Hilltop Town

7:30 p.m.: Return to Florence

**Saturday, June 1 National Italian Holiday**

Free Day to work on your project

Submission Deadline of project proposal-post on Blackboard:
Your project title
Project abstract (few sentences)
3 examples of your observational research
Sunday, June 2

2-2:45 p.m. Changes in the Mediterranean Diet: Diet and Lifestyle
Lecture by Inigo Sainz, MD

3- 4:00 p.m. A Holistic Approach to Medicine, Inigo Sainz

4- 5:00 p.m.: Small group discussion of projects- share ideas and give feedback

Guest dinner

Monday, June 3
Cooking Class at organic farm and Winery Visit-

8:00 a.m. bus
Cooking Class in Agriturismo Poggio Etrusco an organic farm near Montepulciano
Hands- on work to make tradition pici pasta, and some appetizers, sauce and dessert

Tour of Winery- in breath taking town- Montepulciano

Lunch and wine tasting at Agriturisimo - discussion with owner about their farm

Visit to historic towns in region

6 p.m. Return back to Florence

Tuesday, June 4
From Picnic to Pietra

9:00 a.m. Market Tour
Group I & II meet on Via dei Macci (outside Caffe Cibreo) - great place for coffee but if you sit in or outside café be prepared to pay more!

9:30-11:00 p.m.: Market Tour of San’t Ambrogio Market - purchase your surprise picnic ingredient

12:30- 1:45 p.m.: Market Picnic Lunch
Table outside Villa Ulivi - Discuss market experience
3:00 - 3:45 p.m.: Tour: Villa La Pietra: House and Garden
(Meet outside the main entrance to the house. Tours will be divided to group I & II)
Tour by Nick Daiken Elliot, La Pietra’s
head gardener and docent of the Acton art collection.

**Wednesday, June 5 - Bologna**
8:30 depart on bus to Field Trip to Alce Nero - Organic Food Producer
9:30 Tour facility – overview of Alce Nero and learn about the life of Bees - Honey Production
12-1PM.: Lunch at Alce Nero
Shop at the employee store in Alce Nero
2:00 - depart for Bologna
3-3:30 p.m. Guided Tour of Eataly in Bologna
4- 6p.m. free time to explore the city of Bologna - a GREAT food city!

**Thursday, June 6**
TBA

**Friday June 7**
Work on research project

2-3:00 p.m. - Discussion of project, readings and experiences
3-4PM Mediterranean Migration: Cultural Melting Pot
Lecture by Sarah DeMott
4:30- 5:30 p.m. The Business Aspect of Wine: Marketing Strategies and Importing and Exporting of Wine
By Diletta Frescobaldi

**Saturday, June 8**

**Rome**

7:45 a.m.: Meet at Florence Train Station (S. Maria Novella) to Rome
8:14am  Train # 9505 to Rome
10:00 a.m.: Arrive in Rome (Roma Termini Station)

10:30 a.m.: Check into Hotel Nardizzi
Hotel Nardizzi Americana
Via Firenze, 38
00184 ROMA

11:30-XX:  Afternoon and evening free

7:00 p.m.: TBA

**Sunday, June 9**

**Rome**

9:45 a.m.: Meet at Rome International Wine School
10.00 a.m.  Food in Ancient Rome: Archaeology and Gastronomy and Contemporary Roman Cuisine
Lecture by Maureen Fant, Roman Food Expert, Archaeologist, and Historian

11:15 a.m Maureen Rant and Oretta Zanini De Vita- Pasta expert- Maureen Fant and Oretta Zanini  discuss their book: *Popes, Peasants, and Shepherds: Recipes and Lore from Rome and Lazio*

12:15- 1:30 p.m.:  Lunch- on your own

1:30-2:30 p.m.:  Wines of Latium
Tasting by Ian D’Agata

Evening - TBA
Monday, June 10
Southern Italy and the Mediterranean Diet - Cilento is an Italian geographical region of Campania. It is in southern part of the Province of Salerno in southern Italy.

8:00 a.m.: Board private bus from Rome (near Piazza della Repubblica - 2 blocks from Hotel) to Campania
Drive through Naples

11:00 a.m.: Visit Pompei- Guided tour of site - focus will be on food culture
Lunch near Pompei

4:00 p.m.: Check into hotel Eboli (town in Campania commune)

7:00 p.m. Dinner at Traditional Pizza Restaurant from 1950's

Tuesday, June 11
Southern Italy and the Mediterranean Diet
8:30 a.m.- depart on bus

9:30 a.m: Visit Vannullo Farm: Producer of Fresh Mozzarella di Bufalo. The freshest, most delicious mozzarella cheese.

12:30 p.m.: Seafood lunch at Ascciaroli which is by the Mediterranean Sea in Cilento

2:30-4:30 p.m.: Free time at the Seaside

5:00-6:30 p.m.: Fisherman Meeting: Arrival of fishing boats and tasting of freshly caught shrimp & lavorazione di Alici visit

Visit White Figs a DOP product from Cilento production - Dinner at Fig Production Plant

Wednesday, June 12
Southern Italy and the Mediterranean Diet

Checkout from hotel

Coffee Roaster visit

11:00 a.m.: Guided tour of Regional Farm Imposta-
12:00 p.m.: Lunch at farm

1:00 p.m. Depart for Florence

8:00 p.m.: Estimated Arrival in Florence

**Thursday, June 13**
Free day to work on projects and prepare for conference

**Friday, June 14**
NYU Student Conference at La Pietra

9:30 a.m.- 2p.m. La Pietra Student Conference on the Mediterranean Diet
Presentations by NYU Student in Program- details below

12- 12:30 p.m.- bag lunch provided.

7:30 p.m. (optional): Farewell dinner

**Saturday, June 15 - Departure**
Mandatory check-out from La Pietra

THE OBSERVATION/RESEARCH PROJECT

Our goal, while you are in Italy, is to expose you to as many different aspects of Italian food and nutrition culture as three week’s time will allow. It is our hope that at the end, you will not only gain insight into Italian culture, but that your experiences will also give you new insights into your culture back home in the U.S. While the philosophy behind our syllabus is generalist in nature, we do want each of you to become a specialist in at least one aspect of food and/or nutrition culture.

There isn’t much point to being in Italy and being stuck in front of a computer or with your head buried in a book. You have to get out there and experience and observe a different culture in order to really understand anything about it. To this end we have created a project that includes an observation/research component in Italy, and a similar component and paper back in the U.S.
On the first day of classes (5/27) you will be asked to choose a food- or nutrition-related topic that will draw on your personal and scholarly interests. The options for topics are unlimited, but they should adhere to the following parameters:

1. The topic you choose must be a bona fide topic of cultural interest that pertains to food or nutrition and that has been studied or written about to some extent.
2. The topic should be approachable both from an Italian and an American perspective, i.e., you will have to find evidence/data and information in both countries.
3. The topic should contain a historical or at least a temporal element, i.e., there should be some way to trace changes over time.
4. There should also be an experiential component, which will not only help keep your interests focused, but will also make your writing more engaging.
5. The topic should allow for some creative conceptualization and interpretation to give your finished project some color and interest.

You should have a good idea about what you want to study before you get to Italy. And you should do some preliminary research before you get there so you don’t have to waste any time floundering about. Here are some suggestions for topics:

Coffeehouse culture
Emigrant Food Patterns
Food Biotechnology
Food Advertising to Children
Representation of women’s bodies in food advertisements
Tableware/table settings
What makes a meal in Italy?
Mealtimes/meal patterns/snacking
Restaurant decorum
Vegetarianism
Functional foods in the marketplace
Health claims and product labeling
Vegetables, Italian-style
Home meal replacement
Convenience foods
Roadside food
The culture of professional cooking
The larder
Service and servitude
"Family meal" in the restaurant setting
Fats
Cultural representations of food’s relationship to disease
Food as a metaphor for the Italian lifestyle
Slow Food Movement
Sustainable Eating, Food and the Environment
Food portrayal in film and other pop culture
Italian attitudes about food
Supplements
Sustainability in farming, food production, etc
Obesity: Is it an issue?
Wine culture
Wine Tourism
Wine and alcoholism

Over the course of three weeks you should observe and investigate various angles of your topic, keeping a notebook of observations and insights. (Taking photographs will also help.) Be creative. Hang out in coffee shops, flip through magazines, take photos of billboards, walk through grocery stores, watch t.v. with the sound off, look at paintings and look at people looking at paintings, talk to fellow students about their experiences, etc.

Upon your return to the United States, you should carry out a similar observational exercise on the same topic. Look for similarities and differences between the two countries in cultural representations. Make notes and take pictures again to jog your memory when you go to write up your paper. (You will have to turn in your notebooks, photographs, etc., along with your paper.)

The final paper should compare and contrast your observations in Italy and the United States. It should include some sort of sociocultural discussion of what might account for the differences and similarities. The best papers will weave description, history, and theory into a tight, creative, and informative representation of this important cultural aspect of food and/or nutrition. Remember that the goal here is to produce a paper that could only have been written after having done on-the-ground research in Italy, keeping in mind that the paper has to be clear enough so that someone who didn't go to Italy will understand your main points. You need to use peer reviewed journals, books, to support your research. All your sources should be documented in the paper.
La Pietra Student Conference on the Mediterranean Diet

On our last day at La Pietra we will be hosting a mini conference on the Mediterranean Diet based on your projects. Students will be divided into panels of 4 or 5 presentations, according to common themes. A moderator and two discussants will be chosen for each panel. (The assignments and schedule will be compiled and distributed by June 8th. Moderators will introduce the topic of the panel and the speakers, and will also be responsible for keeping time. Speakers will have 5 minutes to present their research findings in Italy. (A computer and projector will be available for those who need it). Timing will be kept very strictly (so rehearse your presentation in advance). After all of the presentations on the panel are finished, each discussant will have 5 minutes to comment on the presentations and propose questions for discussion. 10 minutes of Q&A discussion will follow the presentation of discussants.

Conference presentations and participation will count for 20 percent of your grade on the final project (see details below).

Organization of the Final Project

Clear organization will help you complete the assignment. To help you structure the paper, here are some guidelines:– an estimate of length of paper is about 12 pages (not including photos, reference page etc)

Title: Pick a good, strong title that conveys your topic and your perspective on it.

Introduction: Explain why you picked the topic and its significance for understanding Italian food and/or nutrition culture. (1-2 pages)

Methods: Here’s where you explain what you did to investigate the topic. Explain the places you went, the people you talked to, why you picked these places or people, etc. (1-2 pages)

Observations: Report on what you found in an interesting and organized way. Use subtitles and question to define specific areas of discussion, if necessary.

Discussion: Here’s where you discuss the comparison—explore similarities and differences between what you observed in Italy and the U.S. What is their significance? Use research to help understand and explain the comparison.
Conclusion: Summarize the main point of your paper. You might want to talk about the limitations of your investigations or implications for future research.

References: List what seems relevant, and provide citations for any direct quotations from literature or research. Follow the university’s guidelines on plagiarism. Any evidence of plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course.
Include any books, and the peer reviewed journal sources used in your paper

Attachments: Use tables, figures, photos, pamphlets, or anything else that pertains. Journals, notes, and/or other raw data that relate to the project should also be included, but please do not send large binders, photo albums, or other heavy objects that will be difficult to return—they will not be returned!

Due date: The completed project is by due on August 16, 2013. Late Papers will have points deducted. Please discuss with Lisa Sasson if you have an emergency and must have an extension.
You will send an electronic copy of your paper (without the supporting documents—notes, etc) to: lisa.sasson@nyu.edu and sarah.demott@nyu.edu
And also a hard copy with all your supporting documents should be handed in to the department or mailed to:
NYU
Department of Nutrition, Food Studies and Public Health
411 Lafayette Street 5th floor
New York NY 10003
Attn: Lisa Sasson

Papers and supporting documents can be picked up from the department.

Grading of the Final Project
Presentation in Conference 20%
Observation research (in Italy & U.S.) 30%
Final written paper 50 %

COURSE GRADING AND STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Attendance and Punctuality: You are required to attend all scheduled lectures, cooking classes, and field trips as indicated on the syllabus. If you are ill or cannot make a scheduled event, you should notify us beforehand. We have scheduled many early morning trips and other meetings that require timely departure in order to make our appointments on time. As many people are granting us special access or custom tours, we
don’t want to be late, and we won’t be able to hold up the group for stragglers. Please be ready to leave, with everything you need, by the departure time specified in the syllabus.

Participation and Preparedness: 25%
You are expected to read all the assigned readings before class and actively participate in lectures and discussions. The more prepared you are for the lectures and events the more you will get out of this experience. Many of the lecturers coming to speak to our group don’t regularly participate in these sorts of programs with foreign students. This is a rare opportunity to bring up topics related to your projects, ask questions, or otherwise plumb an impressive array of esteemed experts from different fields. It is not only good for your own edification to engage them directly; it demonstrates respect and appreciation for their time.

Behavior
Act responsibly and be respectful of your classmates, employees at La Pietra, our lecturers, and invited guests. Although this is not part of your grade, it is expected that your behavior be professional and appropriate 100% of the time. As cliché as it sounds, we are not only representing ourselves, but also our department, our university, our city, and our country.

Attire
As they say, “when in Rome, do as the Romans do.” Italians dress stylishly but much less casually than Americans, i.e. no revealing tops, no bare midriffs, no very short shorts or skirts. Also note that in many churches your arms and legs must be covered. And here’s a hot Prada tip that will help you not be mistaken for a tourist: Italians loathe flip flops—they consider them disrespectful anyplace that isn’t near a beach.

Research Project: 75%
A detailed description of the project is provided above.