



**JOHN FELICE
ROME CENTER**

FONU 226R: The Mediterranean Diet: Culture, Health and Nutrition

John Felice Rome Center

Fall 2026

Wednesday | 9:00am-11:30am

Dr. Andrea Carvelli

Email: [TBA](#)

Office Hours: Wed., 11:30-12:30pm (by appointment only)

Number of credits: 3 credits

Pre-requisites: None



Course Description:

Explore culture through the foods and foodways of the Mediterranean Diet. Through didactic and experiential activities, this course examines food patterns of the Mediterranean areas using a multidimensional approach, including its historical roots, cultural significance, dietary patterns, nutrient profile, and associated health outcomes by exploring the most iconic foods of Italy and the wider Mediterranean. The course will explore their origins, methods of production, nutritional values, and impact on health and the environment. A key focus will be the contrast between Italian and American eating habits, highlighting how these cultural differences may influence public health in both countries. Core Mediterranean staples across different cultures will be examined in depth, covering their manufacturing processes, nutritional makeup, consumption trends, and potential health implications.

Course Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Identify common food sources of nutrients in the eating patterns of selected cultures of the Mediterranean.
2. Describe foods, dishes and preparation methods common to selected nations and cultures of the Mediterranean.
3. Explain traditional food use in selected areas of the Mediterranean including health and illness.



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4. Compare and contrast typical eating habits of the US and the Mediterranean, including the culture food markets.
5. Discuss experiences with Mediterranean food and wine.

This course aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)



Required Materials:

The Mediterranean Diet: An Evidence-Based Approach, 2 edition.; Preedy, V. R., Watson, R. R., Eds.; Academic Press: Boston, MA, 2020.

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.

Once-a-week classes:

- After 1 absence, a 2% final grade reduction will be applied for each missed class.
- Missing 3 classes or more will result in an automatic failure (F).

Assessment Components

• Participation	10%
• Midterm Exam	25%
• Food Diary	20%
• Presentation	20%
• Final Exam	25%

Grading

94-100: A

90-93: A-



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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 Integrity

Plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct are unacceptable at the the Rome Center and will be dealt with in accordance with Loyola University Chicago's guidelines. Please familiarize yourself with Loyola's standards here: <https://catalog.luc.edu/academic-standards-regulations/undergraduate/>. You are responsible to comply with the LUC University Catalog.

Late or Missed Assignments & Exam Policy

Late or missed assignments will not be accepted for grading without the authorization of the instructor. ***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 reason; 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) requiring academic accommodations should contact the Academic Affairs office at the John Felice Rome Center during the first week of classes.

Statement on Title IX

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.

Course schedule

Week 1 Wednesday, September 2

On the origins and evolution of the Mediterranean diet

The Mediterranean diet as UNESCO intangible cultural heritage of emblematic communities (Cyprus, Croatia, Spain, Greece, Italy, Morocco, and Portugal)

Macronutrients overview: carbohydrates, lipids, proteins

Health Focus: the Mediterranean Diet, obesity prevention, and fitness



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Week 2 Wednesday, September 9

Overview of traditional recipes with pasta, cous cous, and rice in the Mediterranean
Carbohydrates: Simple (sugars) and complex carbohydrates (starch and glycogen)
Glucose metabolism: carbohydrates as the short-term cellular fuel.
Health Focus: the Mediterranean Diet and dietary habits for children and adolescents

Week 3 Wednesday, September 16 - NO CLASS (Papal Audience)

Friday, September 18 (FRIDAY MAKE-UP CLASS)

Overview of sheep, goat, and cow cheeses of the Mediterranean
Lipids: Simple (mono/di/tri-glycerides) and complex (phospholipids and sphingolipids)
Fatty acids metabolism: lipids as the long-term cellular fuel.
Saturated fatty acids, MUFA (oleic acid), PUFA (omega-3 and omega-6): physiological and nutritional implications.
Health Focus: the Mediterranean Diet and mental health

Week 4 Wednesday, September 23

Overview of animal and plant-based proteins in traditional recipes
Proteins: Chemical structures (primary to quaternary), roles (hormones, enzymes etc.)
Aminoacids metabolism and difference between animal and plant-proteins.
Dietary fiber: The importance of NON-assimilation and the relationship with the gut microbiome.
Fermented food for a balanced and health gut microbiome.
Health Focus: the Mediterranean Diet and cancer prevention

Week 5 Wednesday, September 30

Biochemical insights for cooking: Exploiting macronutrients for culinary purposes
Micronutrients: Vitamins (A,D,E,K, B1 to B12)
Health Focus: the Mediterranean Diet and aging + REVISION

Week 6 Wednesday, October 7 MIDTERM EXAM

FALL BREAK 9-18 OCTOBER

Week 7 Wednesday, October 21

Principles of building a proper Mediterranean diet (the nutrient pyramid)
The importance of eating seasonal.
The importance of cooking methods
Visit to Farmers' market.

Week 8 Wednesday, October 28

Meal nutrient composition.
Daily and weekly meal planning according to the Mediterranean model.
CLASS ACTIVITY: Composition of a weekly meal plan based on learnt concepts.



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Week 9 Wednesday, November 4

Cholesterol cycle

The importance of reducing sugar and lipid blood levels.

The formation of the atherosclerotic plaque.

Health Focus: The Mediterranean diet to prevent cardiovascular diseases.

Week 10 Wednesday, November 11

Moderate red wine consumption in cardiovascular disease: ethanol versus polyphenols

Wine tasting

Week 11 Wednesday, November 18

The Mediterranean diet and a changing environment: water scarcity, climate change and biodiversity loss (eutrophication, biomagnification, positive/negative impact of the “Green Revolution” and approaches to protect the soil).

Week 12 Wednesday, November 25

Regional variations: Italy, Greece, Spain, Morocco

Focus on traditional recipes across the Mediterranean.

THANKSGIVING BREAK NOVEMBER 26-29

Week 13, Wednesday, December 2

Students' presentations

Final review

7-10 DECEMBER FINAL EXAM WEEK