

Litr 268R: Italian Cultural History: Food & Wine
John Felice Rome Center
Fall 2026
Sala 6
Mondays & Wednesdays | 10:30-11:45 am
Instructor: Elizabeth Simari
Email: esimari@luc.edu

Site visits and tastings fee: \$100

All dates are subject to change based on availability at off-site locations

Course Description

In order to learn about Italy and Italian culture together we will examine the country's food and food traditions. By looking at its individual products and different time periods throughout history together we will gain a greater understanding of Italian history and culture. During our semester together, we will use the food and wine of Italy as a way to discover the history of the country and the changes from Ancient Rome to modern times. All semester we will work on defining Italian food and map its changes from North to South, East to West, and question whether or not we can even define "Italian food".

We will gain a greater understanding of how Italian food has been shaped by the history of the country and food is a key for understanding the past and Italy is especially interesting in this respect since modern Italian identity is based, in large part, on food. By learning about individual products and how they are made we can gain insight into Italian culture and history. In a number of tasting experiences, power-point based lectures, discussions, films and one field study we will look at Italian food throughout history and then in more recent times: while also giving a strong grounding in contemporary Italian food culture.

Together we will also study the regional cuisines of the country and more specifically the micro cuisines that exist throughout Italy and the connections they share, examining even further the local food culture of the city of Rome and its historical and cultural significance. The semester will also be punctuated by our study of several raw agricultural products - grapes, wheat, olives, milk - and how and why they are transformed into essential components in the Italian diet: wine, bread, olive oil and cheese. Students will have the opportunity to participate directly in the transformation of these products.

By the end of the course the students will have acquired a more sophisticated understanding of food history as an interdisciplinary approach to studying Italian culture and society and as a frame for analyzing important aspects of Italian 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

There are no required texts for this course; all required readings will be on Sakai.

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.

- 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).

Field Study: Wine and Winemaking at Tenuta di Alberico

This year on Friday, September 25, students will travel to Tenuta di Alberico, an organic farm and winery, located on the edge of Rome to learn about winemaking. We will spend the day learning the steps from grape to bottle from the winemaker himself and tasting the wines they produce at the winery, run by Alessia Antinori, whose family has been making wine for more than 500 years. Students will participate in the grape harvest and the winemaking process and a light lunch will be served (Via del Fioranello, 34).

*Failure to attend this activity will count as an absence.

Assessment Components

• Participation	15%
• Field Study Essay	15%
• Regional Presentation	15%
• Field Notes (2)	20%
• Market Stall Profile	15%
• Final Exam	20%

Class Participation (15%)

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 assigned questions and discussion boards on Sakai, 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.

**** Devices are a distraction in the classroom for students and professors. Laptops and phones are not allowed in class. If devices are used in class, students will receive an automatic deduction of their participation grade.**

Field Study Essay (15%)

Drawing on their experience at the winery, students are asked to write and research an essay on a topic of their choosing related to their experience at L'Orto di Alberico. Potential topics may include: wine making, the process of fermentation in wine, organic/sustainable farming, family businesses in Italy, the importance of knowing where our food comes from, etc. These essays will account for 20% of the final grade. More details to follow. Essays are due Monday, October 6th at 9 am.

Regional Identities in Italian Cuisine Presentation (15%)

Students will be divided into groups of one or two and will be assigned one of two presentation days (November 2nd and 4th). Students will be assigned a region of Italy and are asked to present a quick snapshot of your region in terms of its terroir, land, food and wine. Please examine the region's terroir by discussing how the region's geography, natural resources and climate have influenced its traditions. Be sure to include at least three of the region's specialties and their origins.

Field Notes (20%, 10% each)

During our time in Rome we will be examining the urban food system of the market (which connects the city to the countryside). Public markets - present in every neighborhood in Rome - are fora for people, food and community. During our time in the Eternal City, we will visit the Trionfale Market together. During this visit you will start working on your field notes assignment and then you will visit another market on your own in Rome to get a taste for other markets in the city. The objective of field notes is to create a written, detailed record to collect data on the system being studied, including the setting, people involved, and information obtained.

Market Stall Profile (15%)

Following our visit to the Trionfale Market, students are asked to participate in a multi-course research project which aims at mapping the Trionfale market, its stalls and producers. You are asked to write an engaging and informative profile on one stall. Your description should capture both the practical details and the unique character of the vendor's presence. This project aims to create a digital guide and map which will promote the Trionfale Market to English-speaking travelers, students, and tourists.

More details to follow. Profiles are due Wednesday, November 18th at 10:30 am.

Final Exam (20%)

The final exam is the final step in the sequential learning process the course involves. In this exam you will bring together the various concepts/topics we have studied. The exam will take approximately 120 minutes to complete and is closed book/closed note. It will constitute 20% of the final grade. This is the only time the exam will be given. 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 Rome Center 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. You are responsible to comply with the LUC Student Handbook.

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.



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- Students may not plagiarize; the use of AI is considered plagiarism too and treated as such.
- Students may not submit the same work for credit for more than one assignment (known as self-plagiarism).
- Students may not fabricate data.
- Students may not collude. Students may not cheat.
- 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

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.

Notice of Reporting Obligations for Responsible Campus Partners

As an instructor, I am a Responsible Campus Partner ("RCP") under Loyola's Comprehensive Policy and Procedures for Addressing Discrimination, Sexual Misconduct, and Retaliation (available at www.luc.edu/equity). While my goal is for you to be able to engage fully and authentically with our course material through class discussions and written work, I also want to be transparent that as a RCP, I must notify the Office for Equity & Compliance ("OEC")/Title IX Coordinator when I have any information about conduct that reasonably may constitute Title IX Sex-Based Discrimination. Title IX SexBased Discrimination includes any of the following conduct, when the conduct was within the University's education program or activity.

Late or Missed Assignments & Exam Policy

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. If the assignment is handed in more than a week after the deadline, the deduction will increase at the discretion of the instructor.

As per the Rome Center 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 a 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 requiring academic accommodations should contact the Office of the Dean at the John Felice Rome Center, the first week of classes.

Review Session: We will review for the final exam. Students will be divided into groups and give a short five minute review of one of the topics to be covered in the exam. Your performance in these reviews will count in your participation grade. Students are expected to provide a summary/synopsis of what we discussed in class and not read their notes verbatim.

Office Hours: I will be available both before and after class. Alternative times can be arranged but it is always best to make an appointment. We can also be in touch via email if you have difficulties or queries.

Course Schedule

Extra Class Days:

Friday, September 18 – Wednesday schedule (per Rome Center academic calendar)

Friday, September 25 - Field Study Day



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WEEK 1

Monday, August 31: Introduction to the Study of Food

Wednesday, September 2: Modern Italian Food Culture

Required Readings: Dickie: 1-10, Parasecoli 257-276

WEEK 2

Monday, September 7: The Food in Ancient Rome

Required readings: Corbier 128-140; Steel 16-17

Wednesday, September 9: The Historical and Cultural Context of Wine: Whites & Library Research Discussion with Librarian Anne Wittrick

Required Reading: D'Agata on Italian wine

WEEK 3

Monday, September 14: Historical and Cultural Context of Wine: Reds

Required Reading: Parasecoli 258-259

Wednesday, September 16: No class: Papal Audience

Friday, September 18: The Historical and Cultural Context of Wine - Terroir

Required Reading: D'Agata 111-113, on terroir

WEEK 4

Monday, September 21: Somm: Into the Bottle by Jason Wise

Wednesday, September 23: Field Study prep day

Required readings: Johnson 26-29

Friday, September 25: FIELD STUDY- Visit to Tenuta di Alberico (Via del Fioranello, 34 Rome)

WEEK 5

Monday, September 28: No class (Cancelled after winery field study)

Wednesday, September 30: Visit to Trionfale Market



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Required reading: Black, "Porta Palazzo"

WEEK 6

Monday, October 5: Food Practicum: Bread

Required Readings: Franklin 235-241

Field study essay due at 9 am

Wednesday, October 7: From the Middle Ages to the Columbian Exchange

Required short film: "1492- Globalization and Fusion Cuisines" located on *Kanopy* from LUC Library site

Trionfale Field notes due before class

WEEK 7: FALL BREAK (9-18 OCTOBER)

WEEK 8

Monday, October 19: Interdisciplinary Campus event: Olive harvest

Required readings: Mueller

Wednesday, October 21: Italian Extra Virgin Olive Oil: Process of Production and Culture

WEEK 9

Monday, October 26: The Hot Beverage Revolution: Chocolate, Coffee, Tea

Required readings: Montanari (2009) 90-92, Standage

Wednesday, October 28: The Mediterranean Diet in the garden in the Rome Center Garden

Required readings: Moro "The Mediterranean Diet from Ancel Keys to the UNESCO Cultural Heritage".

WEEK 10

Monday, November 2: Regional Identities in Italian Cuisine Presentation

Wednesday, November 4: Regional Identities in Italian Cuisine Presentation

WEEK 11

Monday, November 9: The Food of Rome and Multiculturalism in the food of Italy

Required Reading: Zanini De Vita 5-18 and Parasecoli p. 198-206

Esquilino Field Notes due before class

Wednesday, November 11: The Birth of the Slow Food Movement

Required Reading: Laudan, R. "Slow Food: The French Terroir Strategy, and Culinary Modernism.

WEEK 12

Monday, November 16: The Risorgimento and Food: Unity Through a Cookbook

Required Readings: Dickie 211-232

Wednesday, November 18: Mussolini and Futurist Cuisine

Required Readings: Dickie 270-276

Market Stall Profile due at before class

WEEK 13

Monday, November 23: The Invention of Italian-American Cuisine

Required Readings: Levenstein 75-90

Wednesday, November 25: Italian-American food in Big Night (FILM)

THANKSGIVING BREAK

WEEK 14

Monday, November 30: Finish film and final discussion "Does Italian food exist?"

Wednesday, December 2: Final Review + bring your laptops to class to fill out course evaluation

WEEK 15: FINAL EXAM

TBD

Course Bibliography

Black, R. *Porta Palazzo : The Anthropology of an Italian Market*. 1st ed. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010.



- Corbier, M. "The Broad Bean and the Moray: Social Hierarchies and Food in Rome", in: *Food - A Culinary History*, ed. J.F. Flandrin and M. Montanari (English edition by Albert Sonnenfeld), 128-140. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.
- D'Agata, I. "Native Wine Grapes of Italy", University of California Press, 2014
- Dickie, J., *Delizia: The epic history of the Italians and their food*. London: Sceptre, 2007.
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- Laudan, R. "Slow Food: The French Terroir Strategy, and Culinary Modernism. An Essay Review of Carlo Petrini, trans. William McCuaig. *Slow Food: The Case for Taste* (New York: Columbia University Press). *Food, Culture, and Society: An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*, 7. 2. (2004), 133-144.
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- Moro, E. "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. (2016) pp. 655–61.
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- Riley, G. *The Oxford Companion to Italian Food*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Standage, T. *A History of the World in 6 Glasses*. Paperback edition. New York: Bloomsbury, 2006.
- Zanini De Vita, O. *The Food of Rome and Lazio: History Folklore and Recipes* (English edition by Maureen Fant). Rome: Alphabyte Books, 1994.