

**Syllabus**

**Course Description**

The Italian saying, “A tavola non s’invecchia” ("One doesn’t age at the supper table") expresses the importance of food and eating for Italians. In this course, we will examine the relationship between food and culture in Italy, from the Romans to the present, through a variety of readings, films, and tasting experiences. Because the study of food culture in Italy invites comparison with our own alimentary habits, we will consider the culture and politics of food in the U.S. and the effects of globalization. The principal aim of this course, therefore, is to encourage students to think critically about the cultural, political, and economic dynamics of food production and consumption.

**Schedule of Topics and Readings**

**WEEK 1 (Sept. 5 & 7)**
Introduction: Why this course? The History of Food and of Alimentary Habits as an Academic Subject  Are We What We Eat? Food and Identity (or the Perfect Mind/Body Problem)

Read: S. Boyd Eaton, M. Shostak, & M. Konner, Chh. 1 & 2 (pp. 1-37, available on Blackboard) of *The Paleolithic Prescription. A Program of Diet and Exercise and Design for Living* (1989);

**WEEK 2 (Sept. 10, 12, 14)**
Eating in Pre-historic Times  What We Know about Eating in Antiquity  Cooking and Dining in Imperial Rome

Read: A. Capatti and M. Montanari, *Italian Cuisine. A Cultural History*, Ch. 1 (pp. 1-34) & Ch. 2 (pp. 35-83); Apicius. *Cookery and Dining in Imperial Rome*, pp. 3-39; Gaius Petronius Arbiter, “Dinner with Trimalchio” from *The Satyricon*, pp. 38-84 (available on Blackboard).

**First installment** of food journals is due Friday Sept. 14 (minimum 4 pp.)
**WEEK 3 (Sept. 17, 19, 21)**

Read: A. Capatti and M. Montanari, *Italian Cuisine. A Cultural History*, Chh. 3 & 4 (pp. 84-154);
Apicius, Selected recipes from *Cookery and Dining*, pp. 43-231;
“Galen”, web essay in Brad Hume’s site dealing with the Chronology of the History of Science: http://www.udayton.edu/~hume/Galen/galen.htm

**WEEK 4 (Sept. 24, 26, 28)**
Agriculture, Trade, and Eating in the Middle Ages  Spices and Trade with the Orient

Read: A. Capatti and M. Montanari, *Italian Cuisine. A Cultural History*, Ch. 5 (pp. 155-186)
Marco Polo, excerpts dealing with foodstuffs (pepper, wine, falconry, hashish from *The Travels* (available on Blackboard).

Second installment of journals is due Friday, Sept. 28 (min. 4 pp.)

**WEEK 5 (Oct. 1, 3, 5)**
Eating in the City and in the Country in Late Medieval Italy  Making a Living in the Food Trade National and Regional Differences in Medieval Cooking

Read: Piero Camporesi *The Magic Harvest*, Chh. 1 & 2 (pp. 1-50);
Dante Alighieri, *Inferno* XXVI, XXXII-XXXIII (on Blackboard)
Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron* V 9, IV 9, VI 2. (on Blackboard)

**WEEK 6 (Oct. 10 & 12)**
The Role of Spices in a Healthy Diet in the Early Renaissance.  The Development of Taste and Etiquette  The Order of Food  The Renaissance Banquet

No class on Monday, Oct. 8 (Trinity Days).

Read: Piero Camporesi, *The Magic Harvest*, Ch. 3 (pp. 51-77);
Platina (Bartolomeo Sacchi) *On Right Pleasure and Good Health.*

Third installment of journals due on Friday, Oct. 12.

**WEEK 7 (Oct. 15, 17, 19)**
Food and Eating in Renaissance and Baroque Art Italian Cooking and New World
Read: (All readings for the week available on Blackboard)
Baldassare Castiglione, Excerpts from *The Book of the Courtier* (1528).
Giovanni della Casa, Excerpts from *Il galateo* (1558).

**WEEK 8** (Oct. 22, 24, 26)
Regional Cuisine in Modern Italy  The Science of Cooking and the Art of Eating Well, Italian Style

Read: Pellegrino Artusi, Selections from *The Science of Cooking*.
A. Capatti & M. Montanari, *Italian Cuisine*, Chh. 6 & 7 (pp.187-242)

Fourth installment of journals due on Friday, Oct. 26.

**WEEK 9** (Oct. 29, 31, Nov. 2)
Food and Language in Everyday Life and in Literature Religion and Food in Modern Italy

Read: Pellegrino Artusi, Selections from *The Science of Cooking*;
A. Capatti & M. Montanari, *Italian Cuisine*, Chh. 8 & 9 (pp. 243-301);
Piero Camporesi, *The Magic Harvest*, Ch. 7 (pp. 113-152).

**WEEK 10** (Nov. 5, 7, 9)
Food and Fascism  *Abbondanza!*: The Effects of Wealth and Change on Eating and on the Family in Contemporary Italy  The Wines of Italy.

“The Challenge of Abundance: Italy, 1945-1965 also in *Garlic and Oil*, pp. 127-150;
Italo Calvino, “Mushrooms in the City”, “The Lunchbox”, “The Poisonous Rabbit”, & “Marcovaldo at the Supermarket”. (All readings posted on Blackboard.)

Fifth installment of journals due on Friday, Nov. 9.

**WEEK 11** (Nov. 12, 14, 16)
The Making of Italian-Americans and Eating Italian Style in the U.S. The “Slow Food” Movement  Italy’s Multi-cultural Cuisine: Future Trends of Italian Food Due to the Effects of Globalization and Immigration to Italy  Food and Hospitality.

**Week 12** (Nov. 19)

Monday class only. Thanksgiving holiday.

**Sixth installment** of journals are due on Monday, Nov. 19.

**Week 13** (Nov. 26, 28, 30)

The Mediterranean Diet (or How Italian Food Can Help Save Us from Ourselves).

Read: Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation*.

**Week 14** (Dec. 3, 5, 7)

Informed Decision-making about Food: Eating, Health, Environmental Concerns, and the Market


**Week 15** (Dec. 10)

Conclusion.

**Seventh (and final) installment** of student journals is due on Monday, Dec. 10 (minimum 4 pp).

**Final Exam**: December 18, 9-12 am

**Course Requirements and Grading Policy**

-- Students will keep a “journal” (minimum 500 words = 2 typed pages per week) with their critical reflections on lectures, class discussion and readings. Students should also integrate other readings and personal experiences into their reflections. The due dates of journals is indicated in the schedule of classes and topics (= 50%).
-- Faithful class attendance, active participation in class discussions and oral presentations (= 25%).
-- Final Exam (= 25%).

Because I consider the student/instructor relationship to be a social contract and because I believe that students are best served by attending all classes, I will uphold the following policy: Students are allowed three excused absences for family reasons and/or for illness during the entire semester. If you have more than three excused absences the instructor reserves the right to lower
the final grade by one full letter grade (i.e. “B” to “C”). Chronic absenteeism and non-excused absences will not be tolerated and students will be asked to drop the course.

*Purchase & Reading List*


All other reading assignments and documents will be available on the campus intranet, Blackboard, or as handouts.

Moreover students should purchase an Italian cookbook. The cookbook will serve as important reference guide, a grammar of Italian cooking, and will facilitate discussion and class lecture about specific foods and dishes.