

# History of Italian Food and Culture

HIST 350

**Credits:** 3

**Prerequisite:** None

## Course Description

In this course we will trace the history of Italian food from a transnational perspective. Challenging nationalist historiographies we will focus on circulation, exchanges, hybridity and mobility. Borrowing from Edward Said's notion of "overlapping territories and intertwined histories," we will discuss how food is part of a stratified and heterogeneous modernity suspended between the local and the global. Special topics will include: Arab and Asian merchants before the European hegemony; Mediterranean currents; the Columbian exchange; Neapolitan food and the invention of tradition; Italian American food and issues of memory and ethnicity; Food and Southern Italian migrants in northern Italy; food and the *boom economico*; multiethnic food in contemporary Italy; space and place in connection with food in Italy and the United States. Some works of cinema and popular music will be included.

## Course Objectives

This course will ask students to:

- Expand their critical understanding of historical methodologies and engage in analysis by application of those methodologies to specific course topics;
- Integrate theory and practice as it applies to modern-day Italian foodways;
- Develop a more sophisticated understanding of how historical events are shaped by a combination of economic, political, and social factors.

## Assessment

20% Class Attendance and Participation

20% Written Assignments

30% Mid-Term Exam

30% Final Exam

## Grading

Grading will be done on a percentage basis:

A 95%-100%

A- 90%-94%

B+ 87%-89%

B 83%-86%

B- 80%-82%

C+ 77%-79%

C 73%-76%

C- 70%-72%

D+ 67%-69%

D 63%-66%

D- 60%-62%

F under 60

## Course Policy

### Required Readings:

Required readings are an integral part of this course and should not be considered supplemental. Reading assignments should be done for the class day they are assigned, and may be followed up by short written assignments. See below.

### *Written Assignments (20%)*

In the course of the semester there will be a number of short assignments to complete. There are two types of assignments: 1) those due on the day of class where the material is discussed, and 2) those following up on class discussions, due the next class period. All work must be completed to pass this course. These written responses are expected to be short but well-organized and well-written. Students are encouraged to ask the instructor for help in planning early assignments. Furthermore, students will have the opportunity to rewrite up to two of these short assignments to improve their grade.

### *Mid-Term Exam (30%)*

An exam covering all topics presented in the first half of the course. It will consist of identification, short answer, and essay questions. The exam will take approximately 90 minutes to complete and is closed book/closed note.

### *Final Exam (30%)*

The final exam is the final step in the sequential learning process the course involves. In this exam you 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 30% of the final grade.

### **Review Sessions**

Review sessions will be as indicated on the course schedule prior to the final exam.

### **Textbook**

There are no required texts; all required readings will be in the course reader. Additional reading assignments, both optional and required, may be made available by the instructor.

### **Attendance**

You are allowed 1 unexcused absence. Documentation for any other absence **MUST** be produced and **APPROVED** by the professor or the Academic Director. For absences due to illness, please provide the professor with a doctor's note upon returning to class as well as inform them and/or the school the first day of illness. Each unexcused absence after the 1st will reduce your grade by 3 percentage points.

### **Late submissions**

Assignments not submitted by the due date will receive a penalty of 10% for the first 24 hours, 20% for a 48 hour delay. No submissions will be accepted more than 3 days after the deadline, unless arrangements have been made with the instructor (for extensions under exceptional circumstances, apply to the course instructor).

### **Personal Technology**

Please turn cell phones off during class. Laptops may be used for note-taking, however social networking, emailing, surfing the Internet, playing games, etc. are absolutely forbidden during class.

Any student caught doing the aforementioned activities during class will be asked to turn off their cell phones and/or computers.

Repeated violations of this rule after the first warning will result in the student being marked absent for the day and permanently losing their laptop privileges. Be respectful; the use of personal electronic devices during class is limited to academic purposes.

### **Contesting a grade:**

If students wish to contest a grade they must make an appointment to do so in person. The student should contact the instructor with any concerns within ONE week of receiving the grade. The student must also demonstrate that they have read the comments accompanying the grade by presenting a brief written statement specifying why the grade does not reflect the quality of the work.

It is at the discretion of the instructor to decide whether the work and the student's request warrants any increase or decrease in the grade. Students should retain a copy of all submitted assignments and feedback (in case of loss) and should also retain all their marked assignments.

## Topics

### **Unit 1**

Overlapping territories, Intertwined Histories: Food and World History

### **Unit 2**

Before European Hegemony

### **Unit 3**

The Columbian Exchange

### **Unit 4**

Mediterranean/Atlantic

### **Unit 5**

The invention of Tradition

### **Unit 6**

Italian-American Food: Memory, Identity and Ethnicity

### **Unit 7**

Food & Cinema

Mid-term test

### **Unit 8**

Popular Music and Food

### **Unit 9**

The *Boom economico* and its impact on food

### **Unit 10**

Southern Italian Migrants in Northern Cities: Food Nostalgia

### **Unit 11**

Space, Place and Food

### **Unit 12**

The Globalization of Italian Food

### **Unit 13**

Migrant Communities and food in Contemporary Italy

Exam Review

Final exam

## **Bibliography for the Course**

Abu-Lughod, J., *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D.*, Oxford University Press, 1989.

Braudel, F., *Civilization and Capitalism 15<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century. Vol. 1, The Structure of the Everyday*, Harper & Row Publishers, 1982.

Braudel, F. *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II (Vol. 2)*, University of California Press, 1996.

Canepari, M. and Pessini, A., *Food in Postcolonial and Migrant Literatures*, Peter Lang Publisher, 2011.

Chambers, I., *Mediterranean Crossings*, Duke University Press, 2008.

DeSalvo, L. A. *Crazy in the Kitchen: Food, Feuds, and Forgiveness in an Italian American Family*, Bloomsbury, 2004.

Dickie, J., *Delizia: The epic history of the Italians and their food*, Sceptre, 2007.

Gabaccia, D., *We are What we eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans*, Harvard University Press, 2009.

Gardaphe, F., *Italian Touches: Recipes and Tradition*, Penfield Books, 2015

Mintz, S. W., *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*. New York: Penguin Books, 1986.