



LEARNING ABROAD CENTER

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Sustainable Food Systems of Italy

Course Details

Course Designator & Number: CFAN 3516

Number of Credits: 3

Language of Instruction: English

Contact Hours: No formal office hours; email: @mwhite@umn.edu

Instructor: Mike White

Course Description

Everyone must eat to survive. Therefore it follows that understanding ecological, cultural and ethical aspects of food production and consumption are important for all global citizens. Many of today's most serious environmental problems intersect with food production activities and some conclude that many of the world's most productive agricultural systems cannot be sustained indefinitely at current productivity levels.

Food systems are an integral part of culture and it is important to gain understanding about how cultural food choices can have ethical, environmental, and health consequences. Learning about aspects of the Italian food system and how it has evolved while maintaining its unique culture, high quality, and sustainability even in this modern age of globalization and homogenization can give students insights into different ways of thinking about sustainability and the food they eat.

In this course, we will examine the concepts of sustainability in relation to food production and culture in a country and place where food is a fundamental component of the regional and national culture. This course will introduce you to past and present Italian culture through the foods, their cultural importance, and the concepts of sustainability.

We will study aspects of sustainability in the context of cultural, social, economic, and environmental considerations in which food is produced, prepared, and eaten. We will discuss the cultural myths and realities surrounding food and Italian food culture and rituals. We will also examine Italian attitudes towards food in relation to your own, and we will be challenged

to think about our own assumptions about food and the American relationship with food and its food systems.

You will be engaged in group and individual projects, assignments, and excursions with the expectation that you will learn to articulate how a trip to the grocery store or market is tantamount to an ethical act and a “vote” to sustain a food system of choice. Group excursions will be organized to situate food production and consumption in a regional, historical and sustainability contexts. Course readings and discussions will draw on a variety of disciplinary perspectives around the theme of sustainability, including cultural, anthropological, historical, and sociological perspectives. Studying food system sustainability in context will give you direct experience with Italian culture in general and that of Sicily, Tuscany, and Emilia-Romagna in particular.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course you will be able to:

- Describe and discuss concepts of the three pillars of sustainability and engage in ethical debate as it applies to food systems and their cultural role historically and in contemporary society.
- Work in a group setting to develop reports and presentations describing the historical development, function and sustainability of a selected number of Italian food systems.
- Locate and critically evaluate information about an Italian food system, its sustainable production philosophies, ecological and socioeconomic characteristics.
- Identify and reflect on aspects of intercultural sensitivity and development.

Methodology

It is arguable that agriculture is the first liberal art and is a root component of all cultures. People settled in places and cultures developed where they could sustainably feed themselves. It was only after a consistent and adequate food supply had been established that societies and individuals had the luxury of time and energy to devote toward the development of other aspects of civilization that we more commonly associate with culture and liberal art such as sophisticated government, arts, sophisticated communications, technologies, etc. Humans began converting from hunter-gatherer societies to feeding themselves through plant and animal cultivation and domestication approximately 10,000 years ago. Now, effectively all humans are dependent on agriculture for their food. The availability of food or ability to produce food was the first seed of a civilization and therefore a primary component of their culture. The very word “agriculture” has the word “culture” embedded into it, which supports the notion that food production systems are a foundational component of culture development throughout the world.

This course utilizes food system assessment and concepts of sustainability as tools for learning about a new culture. We will learn about Italian culture through the investigation of Italian food systems, sustainability, ethical considerations of food production and consumption, and environmental impacts of food production through first-hand experience, classroom discussion, and class excursions. You will be formed into base groups of 4 or 5, and each group will choose a specific Italian food system to study and research pre-departure as well as during the three weeks in Italy. Your groups will develop and present a class presentation and turn in a final term paper based on their research, readings and from information gathered from class excursions, and experiences during their three weeks in Italy. You will keep a daily journal and write reflections on class experiences.

Student Learning Outcomes

This course is designed to address a number of student learning outcomes. Through experiential learning, classroom discussion, graded case studies, group work, and individual reflections, students with various learning styles and from diverse backgrounds and cultures will **learn to locate and critically evaluate information** to identify, define, and solve problems and address questions involving environmental, social, and economic sustainability of food systems in Italy, the United States, and the world. We will study food systems in the context of regional and national culture and the environment in Italy with an eye on the effects of globalization. You will **master a body of knowledge** about Italian agroecosystems and concepts of sustainability, using research, cooperative learning, and ethical debate as **modes of inquiry**. These learning outcomes highlighted above will be assessed through a graded group research project that involves research on the history, environment, and social supports of an Italian food system. The grade will be based on thoroughness of research and critical evaluation of the environmental, economic, and social aspects of the food system. This course is designed to enhance student **understanding of diverse philosophies and cultures within and across societies** and will be evaluated using the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), taking a graded Canvas Module on intercultural learning and through journaling and over six graded written reflections 2–10 pages long. You will be required to **communicate effectively** in graded class presentations and ungraded discussions as well as in group and individual writing assignments. Through use of the core concepts of the developmental model of intercultural learning and from study of Italian cultural perspectives of food production and its sustainability, you will enhance your **understanding of the role of creativity, innovation, discovery, and expression across disciplines and cultures and acquire skills for effective citizenship and life-long learning**.

Course Prerequisites

Complete Pre-Departure Survey

- This survey will provide information about your goals and expectations for this course so that it can be used to help you meet these goals. You will be asked similar questions at the end of the course. Comparing the pre and post answers will provide information that can be used to improve the course in the future.

Footprint Calculator Quiz & Paper

- Take the Footprint Calculator Quiz (footprintcalculator.org/) and write a 1-page paper that includes the following:
 - Give your score as to the number of planets if everyone had the same footprint. Briefly describe why you think your score looks like this.

Pre-Departure Quizzes (3 total)

- Read the materials on the course Canvas site about the following topics: 1) Concepts of Sustainability; 2) Biodynamic Farming; 3) The Slow Food Movement; and take the online quizzes:
 - 1. Quiz 1 will cover the Sustainability readings provided
 - 2. Quiz 2 will cover the Biodynamic Farming readings provided
 - 3. Quiz 3 will cover the Slow Food Movement readings provided

Pre-Departure Group Outline with first Paragraphs

- Each group will perform pre-departure research and work individually and together to develop an outline of their group's final project containing the first paragraph of each section of the project.

Liberal Education

This course will enable you to experience and understand globally important, sustainable food systems and will encourage better global citizenship. An enhanced realization of how individual food choices can impact the environment and society will broaden your liberal education and arm you with experiences and skills to address difficult local and global issues. As stated by the 20th-Century educational theorist, John Dewey, "all genuine education comes about through experience." Through this course, you will come to understand these concepts through first-hand experience. The experiential learning approach to this course will profoundly educate you about ecological and public ethics concerns involving sustainable food production and allow you to link your personal life with local and global issues of importance.

Common Liberal Education Theme Criteria:

Thinking ethically about important challenges facing our society and world:

This course examines the concepts of ethical aspects of food production and consumption as these relate to food system sustainability from a global and cultural perspective. You will be engaged in group and individual projects, assignments and excursions with the expectation that you will come to realize that a trip to the grocery store or market is tantamount to an ethical act and a "vote" to sustain your food system of choice.

Reflecting on the shared sense of responsibility required to build and maintain community:

You will reflect using daily journaling, as well as in group and individual guided reflections and research projects about our shared responsibility to our local and global communities to sustainably produce and make available the basics of life including food and water. This shared responsibility is a theme that is woven throughout the course and is the subject of class discussions, reflections, and assignments.

Connecting knowledge and practice:

This science-based course focuses on using and interpreting scientific data to make personal and societal choices that when brought into practice, align knowledge and ethics with individual and community practice. You will be challenged to support the way you approach food and food systems with strong scientific facts and reflect on the impact and ethics of your own food and lifestyle choices.

Fostering a stronger sense of our roles as historical agents:

In this course, we examine local, regional, and global food systems in the context of historical, environmental, societal and economic factors. Through this, you are better prepared to place yourself in this historical continuum and see yourself as a historical agent and how your actions may affect the future.

Meeting the Environment Theme:

- The course raises environmental issues around the topic of food production-environmental interactions which have major global significance. We will investigate the environmental, socio-political and economic interactions that sustain and threaten specific food systems in the host country and culture.
- Fundamentally, agriculture production and food consumption involve multiple interrelationships between the natural environment and human society. Human society depends on the natural environment in order to sustain its food supply as well as healthy water and air. In this course, we investigate, discuss and debate the many ways that society, the environment and food systems affect each other and are interrelated.
- The course introduces the underlying scientific principles behind the environmental issues being examined through lectures and discussions involving nutrient cycling through various ecosystems, energy flow through food systems/webs and the thermodynamic implications of different food system constructs.
- We will explore the limitations of technologies and the constraints of science on the public policy issues being considered. In the EU, GMO (genetically modified organisms) are banned.

This creates a very different interrelationship between science and public policy as compared with the US. Much of the course involves comparison and contrast among cultures and countries. We visit and interview farmers and producers ranging from very large production agriculture to very small organic or biodynamic production systems. This creates a rich environment for discussions and learning around technologies, science and public policy and the impacts on how various food systems are structured.

- You will learn how to identify and evaluate credible information concerning the environment through group and individual research projects investigating the sustainability of specific food systems. We discuss what makes a credible scientific source and how to evaluate information and different information sources.
- You will demonstrate an understanding that solutions to environmental problems will only be sustained if they are consistent with the ethics and values of society. A linchpin of the concept of sustainability is that any system must be socially and politically acceptable for society to support its existence. Therefore, the sustainability of any food system relies on it meeting societal norms and ethics regarding its practices and outcomes.

Meeting the Global Perspectives Theme:

- The course, and most or all of the material covered in the course, focuses on the world beyond the United States: The course content is focused on the country of Italy and its various regions. You will perform research and study aspects of culture, history, environment, economics, and society as they relate to local and global Italian food systems. You are asked to reflect on what you've learned and translate that into the context of your own lifestyle and culture to make sense of the differences you uncover while studying Italian food system sustainability.
- The course either (1) focuses in depth upon a particular country, culture, or region or some aspect thereof; (2) addresses a particular issue, problem, or phenomenon with respect to two or more countries, cultures, or regions; or (3) examines global affairs through a comparative framework: This course focuses in depth on the Italy and Italian culture. It addresses specific issues around unique Italian foods and food systems and places these in a local, regional, and global context. These food systems are compared and contrasted with each other and discussed in terms of how they fit into an increasingly globalized economy and resulting cultural changes.
- You will discuss and reflect on the implications of issues raised by the course material for the international community, the United States, and/or for their own lives: A core aspect of the learning in this course involves group discussions and individual reflections about the implications of food production sustainability and the ethics of consumption as this impacts the international community, the US and each of us personally. The class has frequent debriefs and

discussions during the month in Italy about these topics and we delve deeply into how deeply personal and globally important these issues are.

Meeting the Diversity Enriched Curriculum Requirements:

The College of Food, Agricultural, and Natural Resource Sciences is committed to graduating students with intercultural competence; that is, the ability to work across both cultural and individual differences effectively—a skill that is necessary to every discipline in this college. This course has been approved for the Diversity Enriched (DE) college designator. This means that you will have the opportunity, through assignments and activities, to develop the skills that are required for intercultural competence such as: understanding the role that culture plays in determining beliefs and actions, the ability to withhold judgment while learning about cultural differences, the ability to view issues from other cultural perspectives, and, eventually, the ability to blend these perspectives into novel approaches to the pressing issues of your discipline.

Grading

Grading Rubric

Letter Grade	Score or Percentage	Description
A	93–100	Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.
A-	90–92	Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
B+	87–89	
B	83–86	
B-	80–82	Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
C+	77–79	
C	73–76	
C-	70–72	Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to fully meet the course requirements.
D+	67–69	
D	60–66	

Letter Grade	Score or Percentage	Description
F	0–59	Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I.

Summary of How Grades Are Weighted

Individual Assignments	Points	Due Date
Take IDI Intercultural Learning Module IDI Paper	5	March 22 March 28 April 25
Syllabus Quiz	5	March 31
Course Goals and Personal Food Culture Paper	5	March 31
Footprint Calculator Paper	5	April 25
15 Pre-Departure Quizzes (3 @ 5 points each)	15	April 26
Pre-Departure Survey	5	April 27
Individual Peer Review of First Draft	10	May 24
Guided Reflections (4 @ 5 points each)	20	June 4
Journal	25	June 22
Individual Learner Reflection	25	June 22
Post-Return Survey	5	June 22
Re-Take IDI	5	June 22
Group & Class Participation	20	N/A
Overall points	150	

Group Assignments	Points	Due Date
Pre-Departure Group Outline with First Paragraphs	10	May 8

First Draft	5	May 19
Group Presentation of Project	15	May 31
Final Group Project	20	June 4
Overall points	50	

200 total points can be earned in this course.

Readings

Readings will be provided on the Canvas course site.

Assignments

You can find the full course calendar on Canvas.

FIRST STEPS (Steps 1-4) Assignments

These steps 1-4 assignments should be completed prior to the orientation meeting.

STEP 1: Initial Google Form

- Complete Food System Choice for Group Project Google Form

STEP 2: Syllabus & Course Information

- Read through the syllabus, travel planning, and course calendar.
- Complete Syllabus Quiz

STEP 3: Goals & Personal Food Culture Paper

- 1-2 page paper that includes at least 1 paragraph each describing the following:
 - Briefly describe why you signed up for this course (your goals).
 - Briefly describe your personal food culture/the food culture you grew up with.
 - Briefly describe how you think Italian food culture is similar and different from yours.
 - Why do you think your food culture and Italian food culture are similar and/or different? (Food culture can include things like: does your family eat together, where do you buy or obtain food, how long does a meal last, what is a typical meal for you, what role does food play in family traditions, etc).

STEP 4: Introduction to Intercultural Development

- Take the IDI (Intercultural Development Inventory). You will receive an email inviting you to complete the assessment from idiadmin@idiassessment.com. Please complete as soon as you are able. The assessment will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.
- Complete the Intercultural Learning Module (ICLM) AFTER you have taken the IDI.
- Complete 1-2 page IDI Paper to describe your IDI and ICLM experience.

In-Country Assignments

These assignments should be completed while in Italy.

First Draft Group Project/Paper

- The first draft of the paper will be completed in country and given to another group at the beginning of the first week of class for peer review.

Individual Peer Review of the First Draft of a Different Group's Project

- Each student will be responsible for reviewing and editing the first draft of a different group's project paper turned in during the first week of the course. These individual peer reviews and edits will be attached to the final group projects, which will be due on the last day of class.

Guided Reflection Assignments (4 total) (Follow the outline below)

- Write 1-page reflections (following the Guided Reflection Outline below) for any 4 impactful experiences you choose. Be sure to reflect on this experience in the context of the IDI and from what perspective you likely will experience difference: Look for similarities with your culture and if you notice there are differences, describe in a non-judgmental way why you think things are done differently here.

Reflection experiences can include any excursion or other cultural experience during the program.

Guided Reflection Outline:

Guided Reflection Outline:

- 1) What you *experienced* (what did you do; provide some details);
- 2) What you *thought* about the experience;
- 3) How you *felt* about the experience (did this feel like a cultural experience; why or why not?)
- 4) What *meaning* you made from the experience?
- 5) *Intercultural meaning* of the experience: Write this with the context of our class **IDI Feedback** not judging "good or bad" but reflecting on the cultural aspect of the experience in terms of commonalities with and differences from your culture focusing

on why things might be done differently and how you might respond differently or adapt to those differences.

Description of Group Project

You will be placed into a food system project group of 4 or 5 based on one of your top 3 choices for a food system to study. During the first part of the semester, you will select a section of the project to take responsibility for developing and will be expected to work collaboratively with your group members to produce a high-quality and well-synthesized presentation and final report.

Each group will produce a group outline containing the first paragraph of their group project report and for each section (history, environment, social supports, economic viability) of their project. For the group presentation, the members of each group will work together to produce a 15-minute PowerPoint Presentation and a 10-page final paper describing their chosen food system. Food system-groups will be expected to perform research about your food system and obtain other information from exploration, excursions, discussions, and presentations.

Each group will be expected to equitably divide the workload and work together to produce the outline, class presentation and final paper. The first draft of the paper will be developed and given to another group at the beginning of the first week of class for peer review. Each individual in the peer-review group will produce a peer review of the other group's first draft and provide feedback following the peer review process described in class. These peer reviews will be attached to the group's final project and graded. The groups will use these peer reviews and editorial comments to produce a final paper of the group project and turn it in with a copy of the first draft and all the individual peer reviews as well as their anonymous grade of each group member's contribution/participation.

Group Presentation of Project

- Groups will present their final project research to the class. Group Presentations should highlight the main issues to be covered and each group member must present part of the project.

Final Group Project/Paper

- The groups will use the first draft and the peer reviews and editorial comments to produce a final paper of the group project. The final paper along with the individual peer reviews and edits will be due on the last day of class.

Group & Class Participation

- Each group member will anonymously grade the participation/contribution of their group members using an online assessment tool. This grade in conjunction with the instructor's assessment of class participation will count toward the total points of the final grade.

Post-Return Assignments

These assignments will be completed within two weeks of returning home from Italy.

Journal

- You will begin making journal entries at our pre-departure meeting and orientation meetings and then keep a daily journal of your experiences, thoughts, feelings and findings during the course beginning with our departure. You should purchase a dedicated hard-cover notebook for this purpose. The journal may be kept using a free-writing style and will be presented to the instructor during the course and used to produce the final Individual Learner Reflection at the end of the course.

Individual Learner Reflection Paper

Develop an "Individual Learner Reflection" into a 5-10 page paper, a video presentation, or other creative form of expression about how this entire Global Seminar learning experience worked for you.

- In your first assignment, you were asked to describe how you think Italian food culture is similar and different from yours. Now that you have been to Italy, how your views have changed or been about similarities and differences between the Italian food culture and your own.
- What are key similarities you noticed between Italian and U.S. culture?
- What are key differences you noticed between Italian and U.S. culture and why do you think these things are done differently in Italy without judging whether the difference is good or bad?
- What happened during the course that reinforced or changed previously held beliefs about sustainability and culture?

- Think about all you have experienced and learned... then look back on your IDI feedback...look at your daily journal and reflect on your total experience and your personal journey in the course and try to describe the impact on your world perspective. It might be helpful to think of each assignment, the IDI, each reflection and journal entry as individual stepping stones along the way. Walk through these in your mind until you come to the end. Then describe the journey and include things like what were your fears, excitements, expectations? Were they realized or unrealized? What are the remaining unanswered questions?
- Now that you have had some time to reflect on this experience, when you close your eyes and think about this experience, what mental images come to mind, what are their meanings to you and how has the experience affected you?
- Finally, write a short elevator speech (short paragraph) you could use with a future employer, at an interview or with anyone interested describing how your experience abroad has better prepared you as a professional in your field, as a community and global citizen. (This is something you could use on your resume or personal statement).

Post Return Survey and IDI Re-Take

- Take these online within 2 weeks of returning or one week after receiving the IDI retake invitation.

Policies

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to be on time and attend all classes while abroad. Many instructors assess both attendance and participation when assigning a final course grade. Attendance alone does not guarantee a positive participation grade; the student should be prepared for class and engage in class discussion. See the on-site syllabus for specific class requirements.

University of Minnesota Policies & Procedures

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:

Scholastic Dishonesty

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials

without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.

Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an “F” or “N” for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

Student Conduct

The University of Minnesota has specific policies concerning student conduct. This information can be found [on the Learning Abroad Center website](#).

Late Work Policy

All assignments will be due when indicated on the syllabus/by the professor. Assignments submitted late will have points deducted by 10% initially and the deduction will progressively increase.

Disability Accommodations

The University of Minnesota views disability as an important aspect of diversity, and is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. The Disability Resource Center (DRC) is the campus office that collaborates with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations.

- If you have, or think you have, a disability in any area such as, mental health, attention, learning, chronic health, sensory, or physical, please contact the DRC office on your campus (UM Twin Cities - 612.626.1333) to arrange a confidential discussion regarding equitable access and reasonable accommodations. Disability.umn.edu

Mental Health & Stress Management

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating, and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance and may reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. University of Minnesota services are available to assist you. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the [Student Mental Health website](#).

Office for Equity & Diversity

The UofM is committed to achieving excellence through equity and diversity. A diverse student body enhances the academic and social environment for all students and prepares students to thrive in an increasingly diverse workforce and society. Equal educational access is critical to

preparing students for the responsibilities of citizenship and civic leadership in a heterogeneous society. [Office for Equity and Diversity](#)

Sexual Harassment

"Sexual harassment" means unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and/or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or academic environment in any University activity or program. Such behavior is not acceptable in the University setting. For additional information, please consult the [Board of Regents Policy](#).

Expectations

- Attend everything, on time
- You are ambassadors, no "ugly American" behaviors
- You are respectful with each other and those you interact with (hotel, bus, hosts, etc.)
- Apartment etiquette: no noise, no partying
- Drunkenness is not tolerated; zero tolerance for illegal substance
- Take care of each other
- Safety first (no risky behaviors)
- No use of social media dating apps (Tinder, Bumble, etc.)
- Always secure your passport, credit cards and electronics
- Bring Dramamine for buses and planes
- Pack water (sometimes food) on excursions

We are family/community

- We take care of each other—buddy list
- No one walks alone after dark
- We are a diverse group and respect each others opinions and beliefs
- We get along
- Expect and prepare for emotional ups and downs
- Watch each other's back

By enrolling in this course, you are agreeing to follow the university and syllabus policies. This includes the wearing of face coverings, distancing, safety protocols and behavior expectations including respectful discourse and taking responsibility to care for each other. If you have symptoms or feel you have been exposed to COVID-19, stay home and contact Boynton Nurse Line at 612.625.3222. Inform the instructor that you will be absent and need to access the course remotely. Follow university and state protocols for contact tracing and to prevent spread. Your safety and the safety of the class in this learning experience are paramount and everyone's responsibility.

