



LEARNING ABROAD CENTER

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Food & Identity in the Mediterranean: A Cultural History

Course Details

Course Designator & Number: FLOR 3015

Number of Credits: 3

Language of Instruction: English

Contact Hours: 45

Instructor: Guido Gualandi, Ph.D.

Course Description

This course is an investigation into how the identities of different peoples in the Mediterranean can be understood through the lens of the food they cultivate, trade, and eat. After an introduction to different definitions of identity, with a particular focus on the formation, maintenance, and evolution of group identity through cultural practices, the course will analyze the history and culture of food in different civilizations of the Mediterranean basin: Phoenicians, Ancient Hebrews, Greco-Romans, and others. Study of the different diets of the Byzantines and the Venetian merchants, and the influence of the spice trade and nascent Islam during the Middle Ages, will show how identities are formed, consolidated, and changed through food. The Renaissance, especially in Florence, will be the object of an in-depth analysis as a pivotal time in Western food culture and in the arts. The course will then investigate the relationship between Florentine and French elite identities via the birth of modern table manners (and dishes) and their connection with the rise of the first nation states. The last part of the course will consider modern states, migration, and how these interconnect with agricultural practices and industrial food processes that have changed the nature of food production in the Mediterranean.

Course Objectives

- Understand the complexity of the Mediterranean food culture.
- Navigate the history of the people of the Mediterranean.
- Identify cause and effect relations in the meeting of different groups over time in the Mediterranean area.
- Master different definitions of culture. Address how culture contributes to group and individual ideas of identity.
- Reflect critically on their own (students') cultural identities.
- Demonstrate an ability to relate food culture to cultural identity.

Methodology

Students learn through various methods, including lectures, class discussions and debates, individual and small group projects and presentations, individual research tasks, and personal reflections. Of particular interest to this course are a number of site visits that illustrate historical and theoretical concepts explored in the classroom through real-world applications (e.g., fishing community, heritage grain producers, olive oil cooperative, etc.). Students will be required to do a research project and give short presentations. The classes will draw on extracts from documentary material and include the contribution of guest speakers.

Required Reading / Materials

- Abulafia, David, *Rethinking the Mediterranean*, Oxford UP 2006. *Food: A Culinary History*, Edited by JL Flandrin and Massimo Montanari, Columbia University Press, 1999.
- Carboni, Stefano. *Moments of Visions: Venice and the Islamic World, 828-1797*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2007.
- Chambers, Iain. *Mediterranean Crossings: The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity*. London: Duke UP, 2008.
- Erdinc, Ferda. "Journeys Through Smell and Taste: Home, Self, Identity." *Food and Memory: Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery 2000*. Ed. Harlan Walker. Totnes-Devon: Prospect Books, 2001. 89-99.
- Gertel, Jörg & Sarah Ruth Sippel. *Seasonal Workers in Mediterranean Agriculture: The Social Costs of Eating Fresh*. London: Routledge, 2013.
- Kothari, Geeta, "If You Are What You Eat, Then What Am I?" *The Kenyon Review*, New Series, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Winter, 1999), pp. 6-14.

- Gualandi, Guido “Orbetello Lagoon Sustainable Fishing Practices in a Unique Fisherman Community,” *Livelihoods and socio-ecological production landscapes and seascapes (SEPLS) (Satoyama Initiative Thematic Review Vol. 3)*, United Nations University (ONU-IAS and IGES). February 2018.
- Nowak, Zach. 2012. “Italian Stuffed vs. Maghreb Wrapped: Perugia’s Torta al Testa Against the Kebab.” *Oxford Symposium of Food and Cookery 2012*. Oxford: Prospect Books, 2013. 101-107.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage, 1979.
- Petrini, Carlo. *Slow Food Nation*. New York: Rizzoli Ex Libris, 2007.
- Triandafyllidou, Anna. “National Identity and the Other.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21.4 (1998): 593–612.
- Turner, John. “Towards a cognitive redefinition of the social group.” In H. Tajfel ed., *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1982.
- Wright, Clifford. *A Mediterranean Feast*. New York: William Morrow, 1999.

Suggested Readings

- Appadurai, Arjun. “How to Make a National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 30 (1988): 3-24.
- Artusi, Pellegrino. *Science in the Kitchen and the Art of Eating Well*. Toronto: Toronto UP, 1970.
- Gualandi, Guido “Heritage Grains Renaissance”, *Incorporating concepts and approaches of SEPLS into policy and decision-making (Satoyama Initiative Thematic Review Vol. 2)*, United Nations University (ONU-IAS and IGES). October 2016, 26-35.
- Helstosky, Carol. *Garlic and Oil: Politics and Food in Italy*. New York: Berg, 2004.
- Meneley, Anne. “Like an Extra Virgin.” *American Anthropologist* 109.4 (2007): 678-687.
- Parasecoli, Fabio. *Al Dente: A History of Food in Italy*. Chicago: Reaktion Books, 2014
- Whitaker, Elizabeth D. “Bread and Work: Pellagra and Economic Transformation in Turn-of-the-century Italy.” *Anthropological Quarterly* 65.2 (1992): 80-90.

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 | |
| 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

| Assignments | Percentage of Grade |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| Participation in class | 25% |
| Cultural activities | 25% |
| Quizzes | 25% |
| Final oral exam | 25% |
| Overall grade | 100% |

Assessment Details

Reflection Paper & Presentation

The reflection paper topic, chosen among class contents, must be discussed and approved by the instructor and the students in an open discussion.

Detailed guidelines will be provided by the instructor at the beginning of the semester. The paper must be 3–4 pages long and double-spaced in Times New Roman (12pt), with 2.5-cm/1-inch margins on all four sides.

Students must attend class to submit work on the day it is due; submissions after deadline, except for excused absences, will not be graded for credit.

Midterm Exam & Final Exam

The midterm and final exams aim to evaluate the students' understanding of the readings and class discussions and the students' critical thinking. The midterm exam will cover the material read and discussed in class up to the date of the exam, and the final exam will be comprehensive, covering all course contents.

Both exams will consist of short essay-type questions, which will require students to demonstrate their knowledge of specific terms and concepts and compose their ideas in one or more paragraphs addressing specific topics related to course contents.

Class Participation & Attendance

Attendance and active participation are required. Students are expected to complete the

readings assigned for each class meeting beforehand and to actively participate in class discussions.

Course Content

Unit 1

Setting the context

- Overview of geography and history of the Mediterranean
- Historical perspectives on the study of food; introduction to course material
- Food walking tour
- **Reading:** Flandrin, “The Humanisation of Eating Behaviors,” Flandrin-Montanari 1999. pp. 13-20.
- **Discussion:** Students present their expectations for the course. Setting up the paper.

Unit 2 (two hours)

Are you what you eat?

- Building an identity via food: food creates borders, unites, and excludes.
- **Readings:** Erdinc, Ferda. “Journeys Through Smell and Taste: Home, Self, Identity.” pp.89-99. Nowak, Zach. 2012. “Italian Stuffed vs. Maghreb Wrapped: Perugia’s Torta al Testo Against the Kebab.” pp.101-107. Kothari, Geeta, “If You Are What You Eat, Then What Am I?” pp. 6-14.
- **Discussion:** Students will be invited to consider their identity through their diet. Several identities will emerge, leading to a discussion on food identities.

Unit 3

What concept of culture are we employing? (guest lecture)

- A framework for understanding different definitions of culture, and what they imply about how culture is created and perpetuated, contributes to group and individual ideas of identity.
- Exploration of various definitions of identity, with a particular focus on the concept of group identity through the lens of social identity theory. Formation, maintenance, and evolution of group identity through cultural practices related to food will be explored throughout the course, and this class provides the conceptual base for understanding identity as a construct and framework. Students will also be introduced to the epistemological distinction between “belief” and “knowledge.”
- **Reading:** Turner, John. “Towards a cognitive redefinition of the social group.” pp. 15–40.
- **Discussion:** During this class, students will be asked to reflect on their own implicit understanding of identity, use the group identity lens to analyze their own social worlds, and create an identity map as a starting point in understanding the confluence of external forces that influence definitions of self.

Unit 4

Food culture in ancient Egypt & ancient Mesopotamia

- **Readings:** Flandrin-Montanari 1999, "The Social Function of Banquets in the Earliest Civilisations," "The Dietary Rules of Ancient Hebrews," "The Phoenicians and the Carthaginians." pp. 32-65.
- **Visit:** Florence Museo Archeologico
- **Discussion:** The Neolithic revolution

Unit 5

Are you what you drink?

- The early Mediterranean diet; Greeks, Romans, Etruscans and the culture of the symposium
- **Readings:** Flandrin-Montanari 1999, "Part 2, The Classical World". pp.69-162. Abulafia, David. 2006, "Rethinking the Mediterranean" pp.64-93.
- **Activity:** Wine Tasting
- **Paper due**

Unit 6

Early Medieval food culture: food and religious identity

- The Byzantines, the Arabs, Christianity, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, and Islam
- **Readings:** Flandrin-Montanari 1999, "The Food of the Others," "Romans Barbarians and Christians" pp.153-167 and "Arab Cuisine and its Contribution to European Culture." pp.207-223. Carboni, Moments of Visions: Venice and the Islamic World, 828-1797. pp12-72.
- **Reflection:** How much is religion influencing the way I eat?

Unit 7

Review & midterm exam

Unit 8

Sicily study tour—no class

Unit 9

Spring break—no class

Unit 10

The birth of a new identity: the “gastronome”

- The Renaissance Banquet, the role of Florence in Europe, The French “Taste” Revolution in the 17th Century
- **Readings:** Flandrin-Montanari 1999, “The Early Modern Period” pp.349-373 and “From Dietetics to Gastronomy” 418-432.
- **Reflection:** The modern banquet

Unit 11

Friday field trip (all day—counts as double class)

- **Spanish heritage in Southern Tuscany:** Field trip Orbetello, a community of fishermen and the heritage of a Spanish Presidio, maintaining an identity for 1,000 years
 - Students will meet the fishermen, eat their food, and discover which one is linked to Spain and which to Tuscany
- **Reading:** Gualandi 2018, pp. 25-33.

Unit 12

Slow Food: heritage, social commitment, & post-industrial food identities in Italy

- **Readings:** Petrini, pp.IX-X and 1-28
- **Visit:** L’angolo dell’Erta: the new Italian approach “beyond slow food”

Unit 13 (two hours)

Identity encounters in the Mediterranean today

- Migration and identity in the Mediterranean. European migration, stereotypes, exclusion/inclusion, tradition versus innovation. (I)
- **Readings:** Said, *Orientalism* pp.9-57. Chambers, “A Postcolonial Sea” pp. 23-49.

Unit 14

Identity encounters in the Mediterranean today

- Migration and identity in the Mediterranean. European migration, stereotypes, exclusion/inclusion, tradition versus innovation. (II)
- Viewing Italy and the West from the eyes of the migrant.
- **Activity:** The migrant tour—a visit of Florence markets and shops presented by members of the migrant community

Unit 15

Review & final exam

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](#).