



ANTH/FSST/SOC 375 The Anthropology of Food and Eating: Understanding Self and Others

Course Syllabus

Instructor: Elisa Ascione, Ph.D.

Credits: 3

Contact Hours: 45

Prerequisites: None

Class Hours: TBA

Office Hours: TBA

Course Type: Standard Course

Lab Fee: € 120

Course Description

This course will address food-related issues from an anthropological perspective. It will examine the role that food plays in shaping: group and personal identities; ethnic affiliations in a global world; religious boundaries through rituals, taboos, and avoidances; and revitalization of local and global communities. Through readings assignments, and ethnographic research in the city of Perugia, students will explore how food traditions and local food are maintained and transformed over time and space, and how culinary knowledge is used to mark cultural belonging and differences. The course will focus on food as cultural heritage through an analysis of culinary tourism, the culture of restaurants, and UNESCO protection of endangered diets. Furthermore, it will apply gendered perspectives on the body and analyze power dynamics in Italian families through food consumption and preparation. Students will study food as a site of cultural transmission but also of dissent and resistance. The course incorporates a short ethnographic project on restaurants and cultural heritage. Through these exercises in qualitative research, students will become engaged in original research in and out the classroom.

Learning Outcomes and Assessment Measures

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. *identify* the connections between contemporary Umbrian, Italian, and global food cultures through the examination of the food practices of individuals and communities;
2. *recognize* the environmental, sociocultural, and economic factors that affect food supplies, food security, and health.
3. *design* an appropriate, ethical ethnographic project and—working directly with local partners who are actively involved in various aspects of the food system (production, distribution,

- consumption)—collect data on how individual food behaviors are shaped by their society’s foodways;
4. *carry out* that project while approaching cultural differences with an unbiased framework;
 5. *communicate* their research about various aspects of contemporary food systems using twenty-first-century tools while practicing systematic, ethical, and public-facing scholarship.

Learning Outcomes

Assessment Measures

Course requirements that will be used to assess students’ achievement for each learning outcome

understand how individual food behaviors are shaped by their society’s food cultures;

Fieldnotes Assignments

approach cultural differences with an unbiased framework;

Discussion Questions

increase their knowledge of local and global cultures through the examination of the food practices of individuals and communities design and carry out a qualitative research project

Group Discussions on Reading Assignments

Ethnographic Essay

apply ethnographic research skills to contexts in which the cultural, political, and economic value of food can be developed and increased for the benefit of communities and societies;

In-Class Presentation on Intangible Heritage

recognize the efforts behind organizations and museums that promote and develop food-related cultural events.

Ethnographic Essay

Course Materials

Readings—Course reader available at local copy shop. See “Umbra Institute Course Materials - Textbooks and Readers” handout provided in the orientation folder for more information.

Assessment

Participation	20%
“Food and Identity: A Personal Heritage” recipe preparation and tasting	20%
Intangible Heritage Oral Report	15%
Field notes journal 1	P/F
Field notes journal 2	10%
Field notes journal 3	10%
Final essay	25%

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Grading

Letter grades for student work are based on the following percentage scale:

Letter Grade Range	Numerical Score Equivalent	Student Performance
A	93% - 100%	Exceptional
A-	90% - 92%	Excellent
B+	87% - 89%	
B	83% - 86%	Superior
B-	80% - 82%	
C+	77% - 79%	
C	73% - 76%	Satisfactory
C-	70% - 72%	
D+	67% - 69%	
D	63% - 66%	Low Pass
D-	60% - 62%	
F	59% or less	Fail (no credit)

Course Requirements

Grades are based on participation, papers, and presentations.

Participation (20%)—For a spirited discussion, students' active attention and participation are required.

Class participation grade is based on four points:

1. Being on time in class and respectful behavior
2. Working in pairs/in group, and showing helpfulness towards classmates
3. Interest in the course and its topics
4. Readings should be done for the class the day they are assigned. In order to show that they have done the readings, students must raise their hand in class offering their perspective on the reading, and/or asking questions about parts that they didn't fully understand.
5. Students will be asked questions in discussion groups on the main ideas and concepts found in the readings. Ability to engage in such discussions is crucial for a participatory classroom environment.

Food and Identity A Personal Heritage Recipe Presentation and Tasting (20%)—Interview a family member and ask them for a recipe that is important for them and/or for your family. Alternatively, find a recipe that's important for you. Tell the class the story of this recipe, reflecting on the meaning that it has for you or your family, and how this relates to your cultural background. Cook the recipe at home and bring a small sample to taste. Send to the professor the recipe on a word file.

Please note: each person will be reimbursed up to a maximum of €10 for buying ingredients/materials needed for the recipe. The receipt must be given to the administration office. No refund is possible without a valid receipt.

Intangible Heritage Oral Report (15%)— In groups, 15 minutes class presentation on one food and one non-food item from the UNESCO Intangible Heritage List

Field Note Journal (10% each)—Field notes journal entries refer to the written account derived from data collected during observations and interviews. Each entry should be typed with full sentences and

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printed and stapled (min 4- max 6 pages, Times New Roman, size 11 font). They must be divided into **two sections**:

On the left (usually longer, descriptive and with many details): artifacts, décor, and elaboration of food service, food, people's behavior, what the staff/owners tell us.

On the right (usually shorter, condensed and more analytical): MUST CONTAIN 1) some level of interpretation or a hypothesis about what you saw in the observations 2) at least one reference to the readings you have done

Final Ethnographic Essay (25%)—Title: “Food as Cultural Heritage. Food and identity negotiation in three Perugian Restaurants” (min 5 max 6 pages, size 11 font, 1.5 spaced lining, bibliography on a separate sheet)

The final essay must include the readings you have done for this class and original data from your own fieldwork. Bibliography - **At least five references** from the reader + **a minimum of two** from other scholarly sources (only peer-reviewed scientific articles/books in the social sciences) that you find independently. Harvard in-text referencing style).

In the essay you should be able to answer the following questions:

- Why are restaurants more than just places where food is exchanged for money?
- Why is local food important, or why not, for the restaurants that we visited?
- What is the relationship with the past and the vision for the future proposed by restaurants and food joints?

Submitting Work Late

If students submit work after the deadline, they will incur a 5% grade deduction for each working day the assignment is late. Working days are Monday through Friday. To avoid penalty, students must get approval for an extension at least one day prior to the deadline. The instructor will not accept work that is later than seven working days. If students are absent, they must email the assignments to the professor to avoid penalty.

Incomplete/Longer Assignments

If assignments are shorter or longer than the assigned number of pages, there will be a 5% grade deduction for each missing or extra page.

Attendance Policy

Class attendance and participation in all course activities is mandatory. Because this is a one-credit course with limited class meetings, students are allowed one “free” absence, which do not need to be justified. It is the students' responsibility to save this absence in case of real necessity (sickness or any other unforeseen circumstances that may prevent students from being in class or attending a required activity). Each additional absence, unless for a very serious reason, will lower the students' grade by one grade level (i.e. a final grade of a B+ would be lowered to a B).

If students miss class or a required class activity, they are responsible for obtaining notes from other students and/or for meeting the professor during office hours. It is also the policy of the Institute that any student who has eight or more absences automatically fails the class. Except in the case of medical emergencies, absences are not accepted when tests are scheduled; tests cannot be made up. Furthermore, scheduled times and dates indicated for exams, quizzes, oral presentations, and any other graded assignments cannot be changed for any reason. Even if more sections of the same class

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are activated, students may only take exams during the scheduled times and dates for the section they are enrolled in. Presence during mandatory course activities is especially important for student performance in class. Missing a required activity, unless for a very serious reason that is communicated to the professor and the Academic Director in a timely manner, will lower students' final grade by one grade level (i.e. a final grade of a B+ would be lowered to a B). **The two dinners in the evening, and the visit to "La Bottega" during class time, are part of your fieldwork and considered mandatory fieldtrips.**

Academic Integrity

All forms of cheating (i.e. copying during exam either from a fellow student or making unauthorized use of notes) and plagiarism (i.e. presenting the ideas or words of another person for academic evaluation without acknowledging the source) will be handled according to the Institute Academic Policy, which can be found in the Umbra Institute Academic Policies and Conduct Guidelines.

Classroom Policy

Please refrain from computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices during class time or during course activities. Active class participation is part of students' final grades. Students are expected to follow the policy of the Institute and demonstrate the appropriate respect for the historical premises that the school occupies.

Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

WEEK 1

Introduction to Anthropology of Food.

In this first class, the instructor will explain the structure of the course, with special reference to Italian food production and food culture.

Bio-Cultural Perspective on Nutrition.

While it is easy to see that the direct consequences of food intake are biological, it is also apparent that the nature of that food intake is shaped by a wide variety of geographical, social, psychological, religious, economic, and political factors. Today's lecture will explore the concept of culture from an anthropological point of view and of food as a communication system for groups and individuals.

Readings

Fischler, C. (1988) "Food, Self and identity", pp. 275-292, *Social Science Information*, n. 27.

Fetterman, David M. 2010. *Ethnography: Step-by-Step*. 3rd ed. Applied Social Research Methods Series 17. Los Angeles: SAGE. pp.16-18

Additional Readings

Harris, M. (1985) "The Abominable Pig" pp.59-71 in Counihan, C. Van Esterik, P. eds. (2013) *Food and Culture. A Reader*. New York, Routledge

WEEK 2

Social Functions of Food.

Food is a vehicle for expressing friendship, smoothing social intercourse, and showing concern. It is also ridden with status symbolism and is manipulated to demonstrate differences in social settings.

Readings

Fieldhouse, P. (1995) *Food and Nutrition. Customs and Culture*. Springer Science + Business Media, pp 1-13, 78-93

Qualitative research methods and ethnographic research

In this lecture students will discuss the centrality of ethnographic work in anthropology and will explore tools for doing research in urban settings through participant observation and ethnographic interviews.

Readings

Fetterman, David M. 2010. *Ethnography: Step-by-Step*. 3rd ed. Applied Social Research Methods Series 17. Los Angeles: SAGE pp. 20-26; 33-53

Additional Readings

Emerson, R. M. Fretz, R.I. Shaw, L. L., (2007) "Participant Observation and Fieldnotes", pp. 371-387 in Atkinson, P. et al *Handbook of Ethnography*, Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore: Sage Publications

WEEK 3

"Ethnographies of Where We Eat": The Anthropology of Restaurants.

Restaurants often represent the cultures of cities, regions, ethnic groups, and nations. From the sensual and local, to the symbolic and global, restaurants constitute a social phenomenon that can be studied through ethnographic practice.

Readings

Beriss, D. and Sutton, D.E. (2007) *The Restaurant Book: Ethnographies of where we eat*: Bloomsbury Publishing, London, New York, pp. 1-10;

Yan, Y. (2008) "Of Hamburger and Social Space: Consuming McDonald's in Beijing", in *Food and Culture: A Reader*, edited by Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, pp. 500-522: Routledge, New York

Food as Cultural Heritage

Heritage usually means an act of transmission from the past to the present. Today, the class will critically analyze the concept of "heritagization" and think about the ways in which social actors give value to food cultures in different settings.

Readings

Ascione, E. (2017) "Food and Cultural Heritage: Preserving, Re-inventing and Exposing Food Cultures", pp 301-313 in *The Handbook of Food and Popular Culture*, edited by Peter Naccarato and Kathleen LeBesco. London, U.K.: Bloomsbury Publishers

Additional Readings

Di Giovine M.A. Brulotte R.L. eds. (2013) *Edible Identities: Food as Cultural Heritage*, Farnham, Burlington: Ashgate Publishing. In the library.

WEEK 4

Restaurant Ethnographic Fieldwork, Activity 1 (Dal Mi Cocco). Dinner Dal Mi Cocco Restaurant (Please **always** remind me of your special dietary requirements in advance). Do an online research on the restaurant, bring pen and paper to write your notes.
Meet at 8.25pm at the Fountain

Additional Readings

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Sherman Heil, B. (2007) "Ethnographic Interviewing", pp. 388-402 in Atkinson, P. et al *Handbook of Ethnography*, Los Angeles, London, New Dehli, Singapore: Sage Publications

Vivanco, L.A. (2017) *Field Notes: A Guided Journal for Doing Anthropology*, Oxford University Press

Food as Intangible Heritage

Oral in class report of UNESCO intangible heritage items

<https://ich.unesco.org/en/lists>

WEEK 5

Medical Anthropology: Food and Health

In this class, we explore anthropological accounts of health and illness through notions of "individual, symbolic and social bodies", focusing on traditional healing practices in Italy and across the world.

Readings

Quave, Cassandra Leah, e Andrea Pieroni. 2005. «Ritual Healing in Arbereshe Albanian and Italian Communities of Lucania, Southern Italy». *Journal of Folklore Research* 42 (1): 57–97.

Assignment: Hand in Field Notes Journal 1, printed and stapled (Dal Mi Cocco). This assignment is meant as a trial and will receive a Pass/Fail grade if it is handed in on time. From next time, journal entries will be graded according to the guidelines provided.

Food and Identity A Personal Heritage Recipe Presentation and Tasting (A-L).

Please note: each person will be reimbursed up to a maximum of 10€ for buying ingredients/materials needed for the recipe. The receipt must be given to the administration office. No refund is possible without a valid receipt.

WEEK 6

Food and Identity A Personal Heritage Recipe Presentation and Tasting (M-Z)

Please note: each person will be reimbursed up to a maximum of 10€ for buying ingredients/materials needed for the recipe. The receipt must be given to the administration office. No refund is possible without a valid receipt.

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Restaurant Ethnographic Fieldwork, Activity 2. Dinner at Mangiar Bene (Please **always** remind me of your special dietary requirements in advance). Do an online research on the restaurant, bring pen and paper to write your notes.

Meet at 7.,30pm at the Fountain

Additional Reading

Mars, G. (2007) "Food, Family and Tradition in Northern Italy: The Rise and Fall of a Michelin-starred Family Restaurants", pp. 167-190 in Beriss, D. And Sutton, D. Eds. *The Restaurant Book: Ethnographies of where we eat.* Oxford and New York, Berg

WEEK 7

Cooking as Embodiment (A-L)

In this class we will use the kitchen as a laboratory to reflect on ordinary cooking as an embodied form of knowledge

Reading

Sutton, D. (2003) "Hands that remember. An Ethnographic approach to everyday cooking", Expedition Magazine, Penn Museum, Vol 45. N.2

Cooking as Embodiment (M-Z)

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Reading

Sutton, D. (2003) "Hands that remember. An Ethnographic approach to everyday cooking", Expedition Magazine, Penn Museum, Vol 45. N.2

SEMESTER BREAK

WEEK 8

Food, Migration, and Ethnic Identity: The Case of Italian-Americans.

Migration is a global phenomenon caused not only by economic factors, but also by social, political, cultural, and environmental factors. Diasporic groups and individuals that migrate and settle out of their country of origins re-create, change, and adapt their food cultures in the new settings. + Review al Mangiar Bene in class

Reading

Di Giovine, Michael A. 2010. "La Vigilia Italo-Americana: Revitalizing the Italian-American Family Through the Christmas Eve 'Feast of the Seven Fishes'." *Food and Foodways* 18 (4): 181–208.

Zhen, W. (2019) *Food Studies: A Hands-On Guide*. London ; New York: Bloomsbury Academic. pp. 77-85

"Big Night": A Movie about Food, Migration and Identities

WEEK 9

Food, Religion, and Rituals.

Food is an important part of religious observance for many different faiths, including Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism.

Reading

Del Giudice, L. (2010) "Rituals of Charity and Abundance: Sicilian St. Joseph's Tables and Feeding the Poor in Los Angeles", *Californian Italian Studies*, 1(2), pp.1-30

Additional Reading

Douglas, M. (1966) "The Abomination of the Leviticus", pp. 48-58 in Counihan, C. Van Esterik, P. eds. (2013) *Food and Culture. A Reader*. New York, Routledge

Food and Rites of Passage

Different societies use food to communicate messages/convey meaning through food sharing and food avoidances, marking the most important rites of passage.

Reading

Van Gennep, A. (1960) *The Rites of Passage. A Classic Study of Cultural Celebrations*: The University of Chicago Press, Chicago. Summary pp1-4.

Field, C. "Rites of Passage in Italy." *Gastronomica* 10, no. 1 (February 2010): 32–37.

Choose between

1) Campbell, O. (2019) *The Rebirth of Placenta Rituals*

<https://www.sapiens.org/body/placenta/>

2) Daigneault, A.L. (2019) *Witnessing an Endangered Puberty Ritual*

<https://www.sapiens.org/body/puberty-ritual/>

WEEK 10

Food Artisans Ethnographic Fieldwork, Activity 3 (La Bottega).

The class will visit a local food artisan for participant observation, note taking, and formal/informal interviews. Do an online research on the restaurant, bring pen and paper to write your notes.

After this visit, anytime during the week, you will have to carry out (in pairs) 30 minutes of observation and note taking to gather more data for your final paper.

Please note: each person will be reimbursed up to a maximum of 5€ for buying food and drink needed for this assignment. The receipt must be given to the administration office. No refund is possible without a valid receipt.

Additional Readings

Spradley, J. (1980) *Participant Observation*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, Fort Worth et al.

Slow Food and the Politics of "Virtuous Globalization"

The Slow Food movement advocates the protection of cultural landscapes, local traditions, and economies within debates about cultural homogenization and Europeanization. The class will analyze how niche productions are linked by this social and cultural movement. + In class review of Osteria a Priori fieldnotes

Readings

Leitch, A.M. (2003). "Slow Food and the Politics of Pork Fat: Italian Food and European Identity." *Ethnos* 68 (4). pp. 437-462

Additional Reading

Petrini, C. (2003) *Slow Food: The Case for Taste*. New York Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press

Readings

Black, Rachel. 2012. *Porta Palazzo: The Anthropology of an Italian Market*. Contemporary Ethnography. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. pp.1-7; 13-24; 65-70

WEEK 11

Slow Food Presentation and Tasting of Presidia in Aula Magna
With Chef and Slow Food Representative Marino Marini
6.45 to 8.30pm

Food, Tourism and Cultural Change.

Literature in the anthropology of tourism has analyzed the cultural change that happens in the age of global tourism. Food has often been employed to develop tourism through promotion of “typicality” at food fairs and related events. Food is a powerful tourist attraction and a way to incorporate cultural differences and otherness when travelling.

Readings

Long, L. (2004) “Culinary Tourism. A Folkloristic Perspective on Eating and Otherness”, pp. 20-50 in Long, L. ed. *Culinary Tourism*, Kentucky University Press

Additional Readings

Stronza, A. (2001) “Anthropology of Tourism: Forging New Grounds for Ecotourism and other Alternatives”, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 30, pp. 261-283

Burns, Peter M. 1999. *An Introduction to Tourism and Anthropology*. New York: Routledge. pp. 103-108

Picard, David, e Michael A. Di Giovine. 2014. «Introduction: Through Other Worlds». In *Tourism and the Power of Otherness: Seductions of Difference*, a cura di David Picard e Michael A. Di Giovine. Bristol; Buffalo: Channel View Books.

WEEK 12

Food, Gender, and Family Life.

Food provision and preparation are gendered activities. In Italy, domestic space has traditionally been associated with femininity, but this has changed in recent years with more women in paid labor and more men preparing food for their families. Today, the class will analyze how gender shapes food roles

Readings

Zhen, W (2019) *Food Studies. A hands-on guide*. London: Bloomsbury, “Kinship”, “Gender” and “Race” sections

Counihan, C.M (2004) *Around the Tuscan Table: Food, Family and Gender in Twentieth-Century Florence*, London and New York: Routledge, pp.79-95

The Anthropology of the Body

The relationship between people and their bodies is very complex. Women are often the main provider of nourishment for their families but are expected to be in “control” of their own consumption. Men are also increasingly concerned about constructing corporeal perfection and regulating consumption.

Readings:

Bordo, S. (2009) “Not just ‘a White Girl’s Thing’”: The changing face of food and body image problems”, pp. 263-275 in Counihan, C. Van Esterik, P. eds. (2013) *Food and Culture. A Reader*. New York, Routledge

Parasecoli, F. (2005) “Feeding Hard Bodies: Food and Masculinities in Men’s Fitness Magazines” pp. 284-298 in Counihan, C. Van Esterik, P. eds. (2013) *Food and Culture. A Reader*. New York, Routledge

WEEK 13

Writing Session for Final Essay. Bring Your Field Notes, Your Reader, and Your Laptop.

Reading

Germann Molz, J. (2004). “Tasting an Imagined Thailand. Authenticity and Culinary Tourism in Thai Restaurants.” In *Culinary Tourism*, edited by Lucy M. Long, 53–75. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky.

Concluding Remarks

Writing Session for Final Essay. Bring Your Field Notes, Your Reader, and Your Laptop.

Final essay due in print and stapled before 5.00pm in professor’s mailbox (First Floor)

WEEK OF FINAL EXAMS AND SPECIAL ACADEMIC EVENTS

The Final Exam and Special Academic Events Calendar will be provided later in the semester