Course title: Food, Nutrition, and Culture  
Course code: FSCI 3001 CIEE  
Programs offering course: Open Campus Block  
Open Campus: Global and Community Health  
Language of instruction: English  
U.S. semester credits: 3.00  
Contact hours: 45.00  
Term: Fall Block II 2020

Course Description

This course explores the relationship between food, nutrition and health. A key idea analyzed in the course is that food is culturally defined. Key topics explained in the course include human nutrition, main classes of nutrients. The basics and benefits of nutritious diets are analyzed, and the Mediterranean and Italian diets are used as case studies. Concepts such as RDA (recommended dietary allowances), recommended DRI (dietary reference intake), and food pyramids are presented. Food security, nutrition and health challenges are addressed in the light of the new global issues: the use of GMOs, the increase of Fast Foods and the rise of Slow Food in responses to the homogenization of taste. The course also analyzes the contemporary dietary transitions and the globalization of foodways presenting cases of under nutrition and over nutrition, in their social, bio-cultural and psychological aspects.

Learning Objectives

By completing this course, students will:

- Distinguish the strong relationship between food, nutrition and culture;
- Develop a deepened understanding of the Mediterranean diet and its patrimonialization process;
- Implement specific and appropriate vocabulary in the field of nutrition and food studies;
- Develop the ability to write critically about European and Italian food cultures;
- Discriminate the main theoretical approaches to food and nutrition studies;
- Research the interdisciplinary nature of food studies;
- Develop informed knowledge around the notions of Mediterranean diet, balanced diet, RDA, DRI, food pyramid, sustainable food.

Course Prerequisites

None.

Methods of Instruction

This course will combine lectures, class debates, experimental activities, film screenings, articles reviews and onsite classes.

Rubrics will be used to assess each assignment.

Assessment and Final Grade

1. Written Assignments 10%
2. Research paper 20%
3. Menu Design 5%
4. Group Presentation 20%
5. Final Exam 25%
6. Participation 20%
TOTAL 100%
Course Requirements

Written Assignments

Students will be asked to write short essays on the topics covered in class. Rubrics will be used to assess each assignment.

Research paper

Students will be asked to write a research paper focused on one of the main Italian food products by invoking main issues addressed during the course, including historical, nutritional, productive, cultural, social and environmental values. Professor will provide extensive and precise guidelines.

Menu Design

Students will be asked to create a weekly menu for young adults (18-21 years old) by applying principles of the Mediterranean diet. Concepts, theoretical approaches and social aspects discussed in class should be also evoked. Professor will provide guidelines and menu samples.

Group Presentation

Integrating a role-play approach with reflexive thinking of the site visits, lectures and texts from the course, students will discuss in small groups main issues and contemporary challenges related to food, and present their conclusion to the class. Topics and format will be discussed and agreed with the professor during the second week of classes.

Final Exam

Students will take a final exam at the end of the course. The exam (multiple choice test and short essays) will include all topics analyzed in class.

Participation

Participation is defined as meaningful contribution in the digital classroom, using the resources and materials presented to students as part of the course. Meaningful contribution requires students to prepare in advance of each recorded session and regularly engage with the resources, discussions, reflective assignments, and all other online learning activities. Students are required to demonstrate engagement with course materials, for example, through insightful, constructive comments and by using subject-appropriate terminology in: online discussion boards, peer-to-peer feedback (after viewing the presentations of others), interaction with guest speakers, where available, and submissions related to other outside-of-class activities. Students should ensure that submitted commentary balances opinions, general impressions, and specific and thoughtful criticisms or contributions. Grades are based on the content, depth, and quality of the aforementioned types of meaningful contributions as measured per the Participation grading rubric in Canvas.

Students are also expected to use the Canvas inbox for communicating any clarifying questions they may want to ask about assessments or other course requirements.

Technology Requirements

Participation requires access to a computer with microphone (a headset and microphone are preferred over built-in sound devices) and webcam; a stable and strong internet connection; and a quiet and well-lit environment.

Attendance

Expectations: In an asynchronous online learning format, attendance takes the form of active student engagement:

- in instructional activities, course content, course tools
- with the course instructor, other students, and
- by timely completion of all assessments.

“Attendance” is more than just logging into the course on Canvas. Students must establish a record of participation in academically related activities in order to comply with this requirement.

Academically related activities include, but are not limited to:
submitting an academic assignment;
• taking an exam or quiz;
• attending a study group that is assigned by the instructor;
• participating in an online discussion about academic matters, designed by the instructor; or
• initiating contact in Canvas with the instructor to ask a question about the academic subject studied in the course.

Academically related activities do NOT include activities where a student may be present, but not academically engaged, such as:

• logging into an online class without active participation
• contributing to or engaging in the CIEE Orientation or Community Course(s)

**First Week of Class:** Online courses officially commence on the first day of the term. Students must demonstrate engagement in class by no later than day 5 of the term, or risk being administratively dropped from the course with no opportunity to re-enroll. Students administratively dropped from the course for failure to engage will be considered withdrawn from the program and subject to CIEE financial withdrawal policies and fees.

**Duration of Course:** Continued, regular class engagement is required throughout the scheduled duration of the course, and disengagement will result in a lower participation grade for any affected CIEE course. Due to the intensive schedules for completing courses online, consistent failure to engage in the course on a weekly basis (defined as failing to engage for two or more weeks of online learning) will result in a formal written warning from the CIEE Center Director.

CIEE instructors / staff will monitor student engagement on a weekly basis.

The weekly schedule below outlines due dates for asynchronous learning activities for this course.

*N.B. Please note the class schedule is subject to change if opportunities arise to enhance the curriculum.*

**Weekly Schedule**

**Week 1**

Class: 1.1 Introduction: We are what we eat

This class will present the syllabus, with emphasis on assessment methods and course requirements. It will then introduce the concepts of food, nutrition and culture with a particular emphasis on the socio-cultural aspects related to human eating. We will unveil some unwritten food rules and etiquette in order to prove that change in traditions and identity has always occurred.

Readings:
Gibbons (2007); Scego (2005); Gabaccia (1998); Severgnini (2007); Goodman, Durour & Pelto (2000)

**Week 2**

Class: 2.1 Past and present of Italian foodways

**Italian/European food history and geography**

This class will present a concise journey through the history of Italian and European foodways from pre-history to the present day. The specificity of local cuisine and habits; the growth of national culinary traditions; the dialogue between higher and lower classes’ diet and between northern and southern cuisine will be discussed, with a particular emphasis on the Italian case.

Readings: Capatti & Montanari (2003); Standage (2005)

Class: 2.2 Past and present of Italian foodways
Food production and eating culture in Italy

Productive processes (namely, political and cultural) of the main contemporary Italian foodscape, products and dishes, including seasonality and quality turn including certifications (DOP, IGP, DOC, etc.) will be illustrated and discussed, with a particular emphasis on wine.

Due date for submission of Short essay 1

Class: 3.1 Nutrition and the Mediterranean Diet

**Human Evolution and Nutritional Needs**

Nutrients per category will be analyzed in order to discuss and establish the basis of a healthy diet and the evolution of the humankind. Digestion and assimilation of nutrients will also be addressed in relation to the role of fire and cuisine in the human development.

Readings:

Nestle (2013); Phull (2015); Moyer-Nocchi (2015)

Class: 3.2 Nutrition and the Mediterranean Diet

**Principles, benefits and components**

In 2013, the Mediterranean diet was included in the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity: the elements of the nutritional recommendation will be analyzed and discussed together with the patrimonialization process. The history of the Mediterranean diet will also be outlined through Ancel Keys researches and the American influence on the process of appropriation of the Mediterranean Diet as an Italian identity marker.

Readings:

Anderson (2005); Venturini (2016); Laudan (2017)

Class: 3.3 Nutrition and the Mediterranean Diet

**Onsite class at Eataly**, food market and restaurant for the promotion of the Mediterranean diet and the associated social rituals: students will be introduced to Italian food, Mediterranean diet, and the associated social rituals

**Due date for submission of Short essay 2**

Week 4

Class: 4.1 Dietary regimes in space and time

**The food we need**

The history, recommendations and validity of the RDA (recommended dietary allowances) and the recommended DRI (dietary reference intake) will be discussed and compared. Food pyramids will be analyzed through the application of nutritional principles and measures. Different dietary regimes will be analyzed and compared.

Readings:

Couniham (1999); Pollan (2006); Walker Bynum (2008)

Class: 4.2 Dietary regimes in space and time

**Health challenges**

Dietary transitions and globalization of foodways will be analyzed presenting cases of under nutrition and over nutrition, in their social, bio-cultural and psychological aspects. The practice of fasting among women of the Medieval Europe will be compared to contemporary Italian and American eating practices relating the body and its intake in a social perspective.

Readings:

Parasecoli (2007); Rozin (1999); Teti (1995)

Class: 4.3 Dietary regimes in space and time

**Onsite class: Mercato Esquilino and Cold Palace Fassi.** A visit to two cornerstones of food business in Rome will highlight the influences of history and globalization on foodways.
Class: 5.1 Contemporary challenges

Societal and environmental challenges

Food security, nutrition and sustainability will be addressed and discussed in the light of the new global challenges: the use of GMOs, the increase of Fast Foods and the local responses to the homogenization of taste. History, principles and practices of the international Slow Food Movement, will be presented, in the framework of alternative markets.

Readings:
Leitch (1999); Clap (1999)

Class: 5.2 Contemporary challenges

**Big Night: the cultural context of food**

By analyzing scenes from the 1996 American film Big Night, students will discuss the representation of Italian food culture through the media, while contrasting and comparing personal perceptions before and after studying abroad. Rituals and symbolic value of specific foods and national dishes will be discussed through the analysis of specific experiences.

Readings:
Sage (2011)

Class: 5.3 Contemporary challenges

**Onsite class at Mercato di Campagna Amica Tiburtino:** students will visit a farmers market where an expert from Coldiretti (the Italian farmers’ association) will explain sustainability policies and initiatives. The cooperation between consumers and local producers in supporting a healthy and sustainable diet will be discussed.

**Due date for submission of Research Paper**

**Week 6**

Class: 6.1 Final Week

Group Presentations, debate and conclusions

**Due date for submission of Menu Design**

Class: 6.2 Final Week

**Cooking class at Punto di cottura** (www.puntodicottura.it): students will learn how to prepare homemade pasta, a basic of the Mediterranean diet in Italy, and have lunch together.

Class: 6.3 Final Week

Final Exam

**Course Materials**

**Readings**


**Additional readings (handouts)**

E. D. Anderson, Everyone eats, introduction (p. 1-9) (From: E.N. Anderson, Everyone eats, understanding food and culture, NY UP, 2005)
Tom Standage, A History of the world in 6 glasses, chapter part 2, “Wine”


C. Counihan, What does it mean to be fat, thin and female, in C. Counihan The anthropology of food and body, Routledge, 1999, pp. 76-91

C. Counihan, Food rules in the United States, in C. Counihan The anthropology of food and body, Routledge, 1999, pp. 113-128

“Slow food” Movement; selected articles

D. Gabaccia, We are what we eat: ethnic food and the making of americans, Harvard University Press (a selection)


S. Phull, The mediterranean diet: socio-cultural relevance for contemporary health promotion, in The Open Public Health Journal, 2015, 8: 35-41

P. Rozin, C. Fischler et al., Attitudutdes to food and the role of food in life in the U.S.A., Japan, Flemish Belgium and France: possible implications for the diet-health debate, in Appetite, p.163-180, 1999

Severgnini. La Bella Figura. A Field Guide to the Italian Mind, “The restaurant: one way of sitting in judgment” (pp. 21-31) 2007

V. Teti, Food and Fatness in Calabria, in I. De Garine and N. Pollock (eds.) Social aspects of obesity, Taylor and Francis, 1995, pp. 3-30

T. Venturini, Our daily bread. Eataly and the reinvention of the Supermarket, in Conference of economic de-growth for economical sustainability and social equity publication, pp.1-6, 2008


Further reading materials will be assigned on a week-by-week basis

**Online Resources**

Canvas

**Media Resources**