COURSE DESCRIPTION

The object of the course is to examine the concepts of sustainability in relation to food and cultural identity in a country where food production, agricultural traditions, culinary techniques, table myths and rituals, are intertwined with local, regional and national environmental, economic and ethical well being.

Italy’s long and complex formation as seen through its agricultural ‘regional’ traditions, is a fundamental component of the regional and national culture.

Sustainability is dependent on three factors: Social/Culture, Economic and Environmental. Without a balance between the three elements sustainability cannot be maintained. However as Italy’s regional cultural identity is so strongly connected to food we will discover the ways that this ‘imbalance’ has been accommodated and exemplifies a very special way to excellence and sustainability. With this in mind 3 faculty will be teaching this program to cover, in detail, the three diverse aspects.

This course will look at three distinct levels of sustainable food research, policy and innovation:

From the United Nation's Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), based in Rome we will look at international food production policies aimed at sustaining and enhancing food production and the influence they have had on the Italian as well as European food systems. From the non governmental Symbola organization for Quality Italian products we will look at ground breaking agricultural research and innovation aimed at improving the environment, and finally we will look at the privately owned Castello Banfi Winery which has been awarded for it’s ethical, responsible and innovative agricultural practices that have brought great benefits to the local community.

With these examples we will explore the impact on regional, not to say “municipal” matrix of Italian food production and preparation, many of whose most renown dishes are not by chance named after this or that city. This “locality” of the Italian food system will be examined not only in its “high” manifestations, of which the lavish and astonishing banquets of the Renaissance and the Baroque Age represent the supreme instance, but also with regards to “street food” and the scanty diet of the poor, out which nonetheless came culinary institutions that still survive intact which strongly support local produce and food preparation. We will also explore ‘aesthetic’ sense of Italian culture that is intrinsic to the survival of traditional foods, the innovation to enhance historic food production and the preservation of the highest quality while serving a growing market.

But besides these regional and aesthetic considerations, equal emphasis will also be put on another intrinsic feature of Italian food culture: the insistence, no matter its degree of stylishness and sophistication, on good quality and genuineness. This explains why in the past two decades Italy has become a model to imitate when it comes to producing, selecting and cooking ingredients, in the widespread belief that health, environment, and quality of life may depend on whether one can learn some of the food lessons that the so called Mediterranean diet has to offer. Symbola and Slow Food Italy are two examples of research and policy makers that have contributed to the economic survival and enhancement of many areas of food production in Italy.

All throughout, it will be a main intention of the course to present and discuss Italian Food Culture from the point of
view of sustainability issues. Just because of their strong ties with the surrounding territory, their relying on local products and markets and their respect of the traditional lore that presides over the preparation of typical dishes, still charged of a deep cultural significance, Italian food systems have proved so far a powerful antidote to contemporary standardization and globalization. Not by chance Italy is the European country that allots the largest size of territory to biological cultivations, of which is the biggest exporter in the world. Notable are also the increasing efforts of Italian governments, within the European Community, towards the protection and promotion of products of controlled origin, and the important role played by associations such as *Symbola, Green Italy* and, above all, *Slow Food Italy*.

The course will be structured around this cluster of topics:

**Italian Food: national and/or regional:** Lectures will discuss this peculiar dialectic between national and regional by relating it to the country’s delayed unification and in comparison with an equally famous but more “centralized” European culinary tradition. They will also provide a mapping of Italy, highlighting region by region the typicality of their cuisine and related food systems, focusing in particular on those of Toscana, Lazio, Abruzzo and Campania, also through excursions and *practical cooking seminars* in which traditional sustainable foods are highlighted. Through these food preparation workshops students will explore the simplicity, quality and sustainability of local foods. Through lectures with policy makers and researchers with *Symbola* and *Castello Banfi* we will understand how high yield production can be maintained with a mixture of state of the art science, traditional agricultural practices along with strong community involvement. Through visits to private, local and municipal ‘orte’ or gardens we will look at responsible, sustainable food systems.

**Food and Religion:** The influence of the catholic liturgical calendar on food rituals linked to religious festivities and implying weekly or annual variations of diet: Carnival and Lent, and the days or periods of lean and fatty diets. Although diminished by the increasing secularization of society and by a slackening of prescriptions on behalf of the Roman Catholic Church, the course will show how relevant local institutional and cultural influences have been, for instance as far as the “culture of fish” is concerned. This will demonstrate an example of cultural/social influence that promote and therefore sustain certain food systems.

**The Table of the Poor/ Home Grown Seasonal Food Production:** Alongside the “haute cuisine”, meant for diners of status and involving prestigious ingredients and exotic flavorings that hint at distant regions, there developed in Italy an equally great tradition of a more homely and familiar way of preparing and consuming food, linked to seasonal products of the territory and to age old skills. Home and municipal gardens and orchards have been and are still intrinsic to the community food source and we will visit various locations throughout Rome to understand how this ‘responsible’ food system is being promoted and flourishing.

**A Healthier Style of Eating:** The launching in the early 90ties of the so called Mediterranean diet, made mostly of grains, fruits, beans, and vegetables and including little meat and plenty of olive oil, as a help to prevent obesity, cardiovascular diseases and many types of cancer. Lectures will examine this relevant aspect also with the contribution of a major expert in the field. We will discover why regional foods, traditional food growing practices are of benefit not only to the local economy but to the health of the community Innovation and technology: *Symbola*, the organization for quality Italian production has recently developed biodegradable plastic bags made from corn oil. Not only does this help the environment but also supports local agriculture. They have lobbied the national government to outlaw traditional plastic bags by 2011.

We will look at the latest local, national and international innovations with examples from *Castello Banfi Winery, Symbola and the FAO* that have resulted in policies that ensure sustainable agricultural practices on a variety of levels.

**A Model of Sustainability:** Although the pressure of food industry and the hectic rhythms of contemporary life have begun to affect also the Italian style of eating, especially in great metropolitan areas, Italy can still represent a very significant model of how to conjugate excellence and sustainability, thank to the strength of its traditions and the several...
initiatives being taken to preserve and promote them. We will look at global efforts through the **FAO** and we will also look at the sense of community that is intrinsic to sustainable food systems in Italy. *Castello Banfi*, one of the most successful wineries in Italy provided its best clones to all of its neighbors knowing that if other members of the community are successful that everyone will benefit. Their responsible farming techniques have created one of the most successful wine producing areas of Italy and we will discuss with their lead scientists and policy makers this model of sustainability.

Through the study of the various Italian perspectives of food production and sustainability students will explore the role and influence of cultural identity, tradition & innovation, research and policy on local, national and international food systems.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

- The course aims to define elements of sustainability using Italy’s culturally influence food production systems. At the end of the course, students should be able to delineate and locate varied sustainable food systems in Italy within their regional and sociohistorical context.
- This course is intended to sharpen the students’ awareness both of the quality of food production and the influence on the local economics and the environmental leading to a greater understanding and more responsible attitude towards the ethics of sustainability.
- In addition to its theoretical analysis, this course will involve direct experience in the field, consisting of excursions to sites (farms, oil-mills, cellars, local markets), where foods are produced and consumed as well to policy making NGO’s such as the FAO.
- Three regional food cooking lessons will help students to familiarize themselves with the technical and material aspects of food production and preparation prior to visiting these areas.
- Students will be organized into four groups. Each group will be assigned a research project on the food production traditions of one of the four Italian regions selected for the course.
- Students will present this group research to the class for discussion, and develop a term paper based on their research, readings, and information gathered from class excursions and experiences.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

**GENERAL OUTCOMES**

At the end of the course students should be able to identify, define, and solve problems; locate and critically evaluate information; master a body of knowledge and a mode of inquiry; understand diverse philosophies and cultures within and across societies; communicate effectively; understand the role of creativity, innovation, discovery, and expression across disciplines; acquire skills for effective citizenship and life-long learning.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND PREREQUISITES**

No prerequisites are needed. The mid-term and final exams will be based on the material presented in class. An oral presentation and a written paper are compulsory. Students are requested to respect the deadlines indicated in the syllabus. Students are recommended to take notes on the material presented in class; part of the information provided by the professor is complementary to that in the readings. Information deriving from excursions, colleagues’ oral presentations, and other material discussed in class is an integral part of the course and should be appropriately assimilated by students, with a view to improving their performance in exams and in their general intellectual profile.
METHODOLOGY

One three-hour class per week, in which lectures, excursions and seminars will alternate. Lectures will be followed by a class discussion in which students will participate, drawing on the reading material assigned as homework, as well as on the theoretical basis provided by the instructor. Seminars will consist of student-led group workshops in which the most relevant issues arising from the topics presented during the course will be investigated and discussed.

OUT-OF-CLASS ACTIVITIES

Students will be led by the instructors on several visits and excursions meant to provide them with a first hand experience of what they are learning in class. A number of professionals will be invited to discuss their work, thereby affording the students insight to various activities connected with the culture of food. A chef will give a brief cooking seminar regarding the gastronomy of the four regions selected for the course.

REQUIRED READING/MATERIALS

Michail Pollan, The Omnivore’s Dilemma. A Natural History of four Meals, Penguin, 2006

RECOMMENDED READING:

C. Counihan & P. Van Esterik (Eds), Food and Culture: A Reader, London, Routledge, 1997
P.Artusi, Science in the Kitchen and the Art of Eating Well, University of Toronto Press, 2003

GRADING

CLASS PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDENCE

Participation is a vital part of your grade, which means mandatory attendance. Students are also expected to participate actively and critically in class discussions, and the participation portion of the class will be graded accordingly. Students must read assignments BEFORE the class, and come in on time. If you need to miss class for medical reasons, please let the Director of Academic Affairs know in advance of meetings so plans can be made accordingly. If you miss any meetings without an excused absence from the Director, your final grade will be lowered accordingly. Students are responsible for making up any missed assignments.

TEAM PROJECT PRESENTATION AND PAPERS

The topics for the oral team project presentations will be chosen by students from a list proposed by the professor. Each presentation should not exceed 20 minutes and students are expected to transform their presentation into a paper of about 2000 words. The paper should include pertinent references to at least two secondary academic sources. Criticism and personal opinions are particularly encouraged!
MIDTERM AND FINAL EXAMS

The mid-term exam consists of two parts (I. 8 short questions – short answers; II. An essay question) regarding the topics discussed up until that point (all questions will require an answer). The final exam consists of two parts (I. 8 short questions – short answers; II. two essays) and concerns the topics discussed after the mid-term exam.

CRITERIA FOR GRADING AND GRADING STANDARDS

Summary of how grades are weighted:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95+</td>
<td>Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>86-89</td>
<td>Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>76-79</td>
<td>Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>66-69</td>
<td>Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60-65</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>&lt;60</td>
<td>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.</td>
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Preparation and participation 10%
Term Project 40%
Midterm 25%
Final exam 25%
Overall grade 100%
## Class Schedule and Description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Lecture</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meeting Place:</strong> in-class</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Topic:</strong> Italian Food: national and/or regional? Besides trying to answer the questions so intrinsic to the foods of Italy, a map will be drawn of the most famous regional “specialties” and related food systems, focusing in particular on those of Toscana, Lazio, Abruzzo, and Campania.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Activities:</strong> 1. Course presentation; distribution of the syllabus; course requirements and expectations; methodology. Lecture on the specific topic. 2. Class discussion and presentations.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assigned Readings Week 1</strong></td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 2</th>
<th>On-site</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Topic:</strong> Symbola and Sustainable architecture in urban and rural Italy. Symbola, the association for quality Italian agricultural products will look at their research and policy making in the development of environmental and economically stimulating innovations.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Activities:</strong> Lecture with Symbola director. Visit to corn oil/ plastic manufacturer. CASE STUDY: Biodegradable plastic from corn oil and the economic stimulation of local economies.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assigned Readings Week 2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<th>Week 3 &amp; 4</th>
<th>On-site</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topic:</strong> The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization and food production policies. World sustainable food policies and practices will be evaluated in relation to Italian food agricultural practices.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Activities:</strong> Visit to FAO World headquarters research lab. CASE STUDY: Traditions, innovation and community will be themes that will be explored.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Assigned Readings Week 3 &amp; 4</strong></td>
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</table>
### WEEK 5

**LES SSON 5**

**On-site**

**Topic:** Castello and Banfi visit. Responsible agriculture and economic stimulus for sustainable growth. Traditions and innovation in “green” economies. Castello Banfi will be our CASE STUDY for private initiative in sustainable development.

**Activities:** Visit to Castello Banfi. Lecture with Banfi development officer. Pre-study tour cooking lesson on traditional Tuscan regional foods.

**Assigned Readings Week 5**

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### WEEK 6 & 7

**LES SSON 6 & 7**

**Lecture**

**Meeting Place:** in-class

**Topic:** CASE STUDIES; We will review our three Case Studies; From FAO, Symbola and Castello Banfi we will look at the various levels of sustainable innovations and initiatives.

**Activities:** Lecture/ workshops with FAO and Symbola faculty. Class Presentations.

**Assigned Readings Week 6 & 7**

**MIDTERM EXAM**

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### WEEK 8

**LES SSON 8**

**Lecture**

**Meeting Place:** in-class

**Topic:** Food and Religion: The influence of the Catholic liturgical calendar on food rituals linked to religious festivities and implying weekly or annual variations of diet.

**Activities:** Lecture on topic. Cooking lessons with traditional southern Italian religious based food prior to group visit to Naples.

**Assigned Readings Week 8**
### WEEK 9

**LESSON 9**

**Lecture**

**Meeting Place:** in-class

**Topic:** The Formation of Taste: A sociohistorical survey of the development of Italian food and an exploration of the economic, environmental factors of these traditions. 1. The Legacy of Ancient Rome, 2. The Renaissance Banquet, 3. Slow Food Italy and the Food Revolution.

**Activities:** Lectures on the specific topics

**Assigned Readings Week 9**

### WEEK 10

**LESSON 10**

**On-site**

**Topic:** The Table of the Poor/Rich Garden: Regional foods, street foods and the communal garden. Sustainable agricultural practices out of necessity that became tradition.

**Activities:** Lectures on the specific topic. Class discussion and presentations. Visits to communal ‘orte’ gardens in Rome. Cooking lesson using garden grown ingredients.

**Assigned Readings Week 10**

### WEEK 11

**LESSON 11**

**Lecture**

**Meeting Place:** in-class

**Topic:** Slow Food Italy will provide a lecture based on *A Healthier Style of Cooking*, the launching in the early 90s of the Mediterranean diet as an aid to preventing obesity, cardiovascular disease and many types of cancer. Lectures will examine this relevant aspect augmented by the contribution of a major expert in the field. We will also look at the economic impact of Slow Food on a regional and national basis.

**Activities:** Lectures on the specific topic. Class discussion and presentations.

**Assigned Readings Week 11**
| LESSONS 12 & 13 |

**WEEK 12 & 13**

**Lecture**
- **Meeting Place:** in-class
- **Topic:** FAO: Models of Sustainability; a review of the concepts and practices related to sustainability through the diverse CASE STUDIES of the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), Symbola and Castello Banfi as final preparation for group projects.

**Activities:** Group Workshops with 3 faculty.

**FINAL EXAM DUE**

**TERM PROJECTS PRESENTATIONS**

### ATTENDANCE POLICY

Regular attendance and punctuality are mandatory in order to earn full marks. The final grade will take into consideration preparation required for class (i.e. readings) and participation in class discussions. The assigned readings relate to topics that will be discussed in the week to follow and can be found in your course reader. This allows you to prepare for class discussions in advance. If you should like to investigate any given week’s topics further please refer to the recommended readings listed.

If you need to miss class for medical reasons, please let the Director of Academic Affairs know in advance of meetings so plans can be made accordingly. If you miss any meetings without an excused absence from the Director, your final grade will be dropped accordingly. In the case of absences, it is the student’s responsibility to find out what information was given in class including any announcements made.

### UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA POLICIES AND 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 and student needs. This information can be found on the Learning Abroad Center website.