



## **Sustainable Food Systems of Italy** **CFAN 3516**

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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.

This course 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. The course will introduce students to past and present Italian culture through the foods, their cultural importance, and the concepts of sustainability.

Students 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. Students will also examine Italian attitudes towards food in relation to their own and will be challenged to think about their own assumptions about food and the American relationship with food and its food systems.

Students will be engaged in group and individual projects, assignments and excursions with the expectation that they 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 the sustainability, including cultural, anthropological, historical and sociological perspectives. Studying food system sustainability in context will give students direct experience with Italian culture in general and that of Tuscany and Emilia-Romagna in particular.

### **Liberal Education**

This course will enable students 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 students' liberal education and arm them with experiences and skills to address difficult local and global issues. As stated by the twentieth-century educational theorist, John Dewey, "all genuine education comes about through experience". Through this course, students will come to understand these concepts through first-hand experience. The experiential learning approach to this

course will profoundly ‘educate’ students about ecological and public ethics concerns involving sustainable food production and allow them to link their personal lives with local and global issues of importance.

### **Course Philosophy**

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 the people 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’ imbedded 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. Students learn about the 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, through classroom discussion as well as on class excursions. Students in this course 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. Student 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. Students 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, diverse backgrounds and cultures will ***learn to locate and critically evaluate information*** in order ***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. Students 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 Developmental Inventory (IDI), taking a graded Moodle Module on intercultural sensitivity and through journaling and over six graded written reflections of 2-10 pages in length. Students will be required to ***communicate effectively*** in graded class presentations, ungraded discussions as well as in group and individual writing assignments. Through use of the core concepts of the intercultural developmental continuum and from study of the Italian perspective of food production and its sustainability, students will enhance their ***understanding of the role of creativity, innovation, discovery, and expression across disciplines*** and cultures and ***acquire skills for effective citizenship and life-long learning***.

### **Common Liberal Education Theme Criteria:**

#### Thinking ethically about important challenges facing our society and world:

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

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

Students 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 focusses 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. Students are challenged to support the way they approach food and food systems with strong scientific facts and reflect on the impact and ethics of their 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, students are better able to place themselves in this historical continuum and see themselves as historical agents and how their actions may affect the future.

### **Meeting the Environment Theme:**

- The course raises environmental issues around the topic of food production-environmental interactions which of major global significance. Students 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 depend 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.
- Students 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.
- Students 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.

- Students 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. Students perform research and study aspects of culture, history, environment, economics and society as they relate to local and global Italian food systems. They are asked to reflect on what they learn and translate that into the context of their own lifestyle and culture to make meaning of the differences they 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 focusses in depth on the Italy and the 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 resultant cultural changes.
- Students 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.

### **Course Objectives**

#### **Upon completion of this course students will be able to:**

- Describe and discuss concepts 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.

### **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 month-and-a-half before departure, the group members will select a section of the project to take responsibility for developing and will be expected to work collaboratively with their group members to produce a high-quality and well-synthesized Presentation and final report.

The group will produce a Pre-Departure Group Outline containing the first paragraph of their group project report and for each section of their project, which will be **due on May 5<sup>th</sup>** . For the group presentation, the members of each group will work together to produce a short Power Point Presentation and a 10-page final paper describing their chosen food system. Food system-groups will be expected to perform research about their 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 discussion and final paper. The first draft of the paper will be developed and given to another group 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.

### **Pre-Departure Assignments**

- **Take IDI by following email link received from the CFANS Office of Diversity and Inclusion**
  - Take the online intercultural Moodle module AFTER you have taken the IDI <https://ay16.moodle.umn.edu/course/view.php?id=14366>
  
- **Pre-Departure First Steps Syllabus Quiz (5 points)**
  
- **Course Goals and Personal Food Paper (5 points)**
  - Write a 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)
  - This paper is due and should be uploaded on the course Moodle Site by the first orientation meeting.
  
- **Pre-Departure Survey and IDI Paper (10 points):**
  - Take the IDI (Intercultural Development Inventory) and
  - Briefly describe your IDI experience after having completed the Intercultural Moodle Module (1-2 pages)
  - Fill out the “Pre-Departure Survey” Link On Moodle Site when it opens

You will be getting (or may have already gotten) an email from the IDI Administration site ([idiadmin@idiassessment.com](mailto:idiadmin@idiassessment.com)). They will be contacting you with you IDI username and password and you should log on and take the IDI as soon as possible after receiving this email. The IDI will take ~20 minutes. Please try not to get frustrated if the questions seem repetitive. This is an instrument designed to assess development and will provide us with some useful tools that will help us

to get the most out of our coming intercultural experience. Also you will be asked to take the online intercultural moodle module

It would be best to try to get your IDI taken within a week of getting this email.

We will have a class pre-departure feedback session at our pre-departure meeting with the director of the CFANS office of Diversity and Inclusion. This feed back session is intended to help you make meaning of your experience while abroad and to help you to use the IDI to inform your reflection exercises.

- **Footprint Calculator Quiz and Paper (5 points)**

- Take the “Footprint Calculator (<http://www.earthday.org/footprint-calculator>) 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 (Moodle) - 3 Quizzes at 5 points each (15 points total):**

Read the materials on the Course Moodle site about following topics: 1) concepts of sustainability; 2) Biodynamic Farming; 3) The Slow Food Movement; and take the on-line Quizzes:

- 1-Quiz 1 will be on Sustainability on readings provided
- 2-Quiz 2 will be on Biodynamic Farming on readings provided
- 3-Quiz 3 will be on the Slow Food Movement on the readings provided

- **Pre-Departure Group Outline with first Paragraphs due May 5 (10 points):**

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. This outline with paragraphs is to be **sent to the instructor by May 5<sup>th</sup>**.

## **Remaining Assignments**

- **Journal (25 points):**

You will begin making journal entries in April (one for each of the Pre-Departure and Orientation meetings and each of the assignments) 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.

- **Guided Reflection Assignments (using outline below) - 4 assignments @ 5 points each (20 points total):**

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 noticed there are differences, describe in a non-judgmental way **why you think** things are done differently here.

*Reflection experiences Tuscan Lunch; Food Market Tour; Slow Foods Lecture; Val di Chiana Excursion; Cooking Class Experience; Parma/ Modena Excursion; Castello Banfi excursion; Any day/experience of importance to you; Departure dinner..*

### **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? and
- 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 reflect 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.

- **Individual Peer Review of the First Draft of a different group’s Project (10 points):**  
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.
- **Group & Class Participation (20 points):**  
Each group member will anonymously grade the participation/contribution of their group members using an on-line Moodle Assessment Tool. This grade in conjunction with the instructor’s assessment of class participation will count for 20 points of the final grade.
- **Group Presentation of Project June 7-8 (15 points):**  
Groups will present their Final project research to the class on **June 7/8**. Group Presentations should highlight the main issues to be covered and each group member must present part of the project.
- Fill out Group Grading Quiz evaluating groupmate effort in group project.
- **Individual Learner Reflection and IDI Re-Take (25 points) - Due 2 weeks after the last day of class.**  
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 reinforced 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 comes 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).
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- **Post Return Survey and IDI Re-Take (10 points). Take these on-line within 2 weeks of returning or one week of receiving the IDI re-take invitation.**

### **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.

## **Class & Course Event Attendance are Mandatory as are behavior/conduct expectations**

It is expected that every student will attend every class and each course event for the full duration without exception. Most (but not all) of these course events are listed on the course calendar on the Moodle site. Those who do not attend or comply with the behavioral expectations discussed and listed on the course web site will be sent home.

### **Important Links**

- **Students with Disabilities:**  
Please consult the U of MN Disabilities Services website at the following link and note that all students with disabilities should notify the instructor before the course begins regarding required accommodations.  
<https://diversity.umn.edu/disability/>
- **Office for Equity and Diversity:**  
Office of equal opportunity and affirmative action  
<https://diversity.umn.edu/eoaa/>
- **GLBTA**  
<https://diversity.umn.edu/glbta/>
- **Women's Center**  
<https://diversity.umn.edu/women/>
- **English as a Second Language:**  
<http://iss.umn.edu/resources/esl.html>

*Use of electronic translators are welcome in this course.*

## Course Grading

### Individual Assignments:

<u>Points</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
5	Pre-Departure First Steps, Syllabus Quiz
5	Pre-Departure 1: Personal Food Culture and Course Goals Paper (1-2 Pages)
10	Pre-Departure 2: Take IDI and Pre-Departure Survey and IDI Paper (~1 Pg)
5	Pre-Departure 3: Footprint Calculator
15	3 Pre-Departure Quizzes
25	Journal
20	Guided Reflections on excursions and topics (4 @ 5 points each)
10	Individual Peer Review of First Draft
20	Group & Class Participation
25	Individual Learner Document
10	Post-Return Survey and Re-Take IDI (On Line)

### Group Assignments:

<u>Points</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
10	Pre-Departure Group Outline with first Paragraphs
15	Group Presentation of Project
25	Final Group Project

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**Total: 200 points**

### Grading Scale:

<b>A = 93%</b>	<b>B = 83-86%</b>	<b>C = 73-76%</b>	<b>D = 63-66%</b>
<b>A- = 90-92%</b>	<b>B- = 80-82%</b>	<b>C- = 70-72%</b>	<b>D- = 60-62%</b>
<b>B+ = 87-89%</b>	<b>C+ = 77-79%</b>	<b>D+ = 67-69%</b>	<b>S = 70%</b>

### University of Minnesota Grading Standards:

- A** -achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.
- B** -achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
- C** -achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
- D** -achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.
- S** -achievement that is satisfactory, which is equivalent to a C- or better (achievement required for an S is -at the discretion of the instructor but may be no lower than a C-).
- F (or N)** -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.

**I(Incomplete)** -Assigned at the discretion of the instructor when, due to extraordinary circumstances, e.g., hospitalization, a student is prevented from completing the work of the course on time. This requires a written agreement between instructor and student before the last day of instruction.

**Academic Dishonesty:** Academic dishonesty in any portion of the academic work for a course shall be grounds for awarding a grade of F or N for the entire course.

**Credits and Workload Expectations:** For undergraduate courses, one credit is defined as equivalent to an average of three hours of learning effort per week (over a full semester) necessary for an average student to achieve an average grade in the course. For example, a student taking a three credit course that meets for three hours a week should expect to spend an additional six hours a week on coursework outside the classroom.

## READINGS

Provided on Course Site

