

Litr 268R: Italian Cultural History: Food & Wine
John Felice Rome Center
Summer Fusion Experience 2025: Rome & Abruzzo

Instructor: Elizabeth Simari
Monday-Thursday 9:30-11:30
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Practicum/Site visits fee: \$100

* ALL DATES AND ONSITE CLASSES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE DUE TO COVID SAFETY PROTOCOLS, ETC.

The John Felice Rome Center of Loyola University Chicago welcomes you to Italy for a unique adventure this summer. Summer 2025 marks the eighth year of this Fusion program, in which students dive into photography and the culinary past and present of Italy. In five weeks you will learn everything you have always wanted to know about the city of Rome, as well as one of Italy's most beautiful regions: Abruzzo. Together we will explore the history, the culture, the customs, food systems and the cuisine of the city and countryside of Italy, and you are invited to explore and to see it all through a different lens – in the literal sense of the word. This “Fusion Experience” brings culture and digital photography together in one package. You will learn to observe and to record both the past and the present, and to appreciate the widest variety of flavors and tastes, to grasp culture and nature, and to understand how it has formed a city, a country, and its peoples throughout the centuries – until the present day!

After two and a half weeks in **Rome**, at the campus of the John Felice Rome Center, you will transfer to the breathtakingly beautiful region of **Abruzzo**. From there you will explore this spectacular part of Italy, learning about many aspects of life in the countryside, which is so rich in history and traditions, especially when it comes to food and wine.

Course Description

In order to learn about Italy and Italian culture together we will examine the country's food and food traditions. By looking at the country's urban and rural food systems, we will gain a greater understanding of Italy and Italians themselves.

How can one define Italian food? Are the Italian dishes and products - that are so well-known all over the world - from the country or the city? How does food change from North to South, East to West? Can we even define Italian food at all?

While in Rome students will get a chance to look at how the past has shaped what the people of Italy (and more specifically of Romans) eat today. And, because Rome has a number of neighborhoods each distinct in their own culinary traditions, we will spend our time in the Eternal City examining Roman food culture, in addition to examining urban foodways and how they are connected and disconnected from the countryside. In Rome we will spend our time examining the spaces where food is grown and sold: urban gardens, open-air markets and supermarkets.

When we travel to Abruzzo – in addition to witnessing first-hand the production of typical products: cheese, chocolate, wine, etc – we will examine the specific traditions and history of the region's food and compare them to those we saw in Rome. This context will allow us to compare the food culture of both Rome and Abruzzo in addition to the urban and rural foodways of both places.

Learning Outcomes

On completion of the course students should be able to:

- Analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments and points of view regarding food systems and culture and history
- Develop a more sophisticated understanding of Italian history through the country's gastronomy, especially that of urban and rural Italy
- Identify how food and drink has shaped Italy today
- Understand the importance of knowing where what we eat comes from and how it is made

Required Text / Materials

There are no required texts for this course; all required readings will be on Sakai. It is a good idea to download them before leaving for Abruzzo as the internet is limited there.

Attendance Policy

In accordance with the JFRC mission to promote a higher level of academic rigor, all courses adhere to the following attendance policy. Prompt attendance, preparation and active participation in course discussions are expected from every student. Any lateness or leaving class early will impact the final course grade.

Attendance is mandatory at every class meeting for each course. Absence due to sickness or injury needs to be corroborated by a doctor's note. Students arriving late to class twice will be credited with one absence in accordance with the JFRC's Attendance policy. Three (3) absences will result in an automatic failure, "F". Travel does not constitute a reason to miss class.

COVID and Campus Health

The JFRC will conduct all activity according to policies and best practices as prescribed by the Italian Ministries of Health and Education and in consultation with the Loyola University Chicago main campus. At present masking, social distancing and periodic testing are required to keep our campus and community safe. A complete set of COVID policies, taking into consideration the most up-to-date mandates and recommendations, will be provided at the start of the semester. These policies will be subject to change as the situation warrants. Please note that due to social distancing requirements, JFRC class capacities are rigid. Therefore special requests for extra seats, overrides or unofficial auditing will not be permitted.

The collective health of the Rome Center is everyone's responsibility. Do not attend class if you are ill.

Assessment Components

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| ● Participation | 20% |
| ● Photo Essay 1 | 20% |
| ● Roman Neighborhood Presentation | 20% |
| ● Wine Presentation | 20% |
| ● Photo Essay 2 | 20% |

Class Participation (20%)

For spirited discussion, we will need your active attention and participation. Class participation grades are not automatic. They are based on oral contributions to the collective learning experience of the class. Participation means active engagement in the course: being consistently prepared for class (having carefully read that day's assignments), asking questions, responding to questions, offering your own insights and opinions, and attentive listening to others.

Photos Essays (20% each)

All students are required to write two photo essays throughout the summer session. These essays are intended to provide an opportunity for students to record information and observations (Be specific!) and integrate class readings, discussions, as well as their own personal experiences throughout the summer. More information will follow.

Roman Neighborhood Presentation (20%)

For the first presentation – which will account for 20% of your grade – students will be divided into three groups and will be assigned a neighborhood in Rome for one of two presentation days (May 31/June 1). Students will act as guides, leading the rest of the class around the neighborhood and illustrating the food history and culture of the area.

- a. Presentations should last **30-45 minutes**. A timer will ring at the 45 minute mark and students will be asked to conclude immediately at that point.
- b. Presentation topics are as follows: (1) the Jewish Quarter or Ghetto, (2) Esquilino, both the new and old markets (3) Trastevere.
- c. Students are encouraged to meet with the instructor beforehand in order to discuss their presentations and to receive the necessary readings, which will serve as the starting point for their presentations.

Abruzzo Wine and Viticulture Presentation (20%)

Following a visit to a winery and a wine practicum by Prof. Simari, students will be asked to give a 10-minute presentation on one wine from Abruzzo. This presentation will account for 20% of your final grade.

- a. Presentations should last 10-15 minutes. A timer will ring at the 15 minute mark and students will be asked to conclude immediately at that point.
- b. Groups of students will be assigned one bottle of wine from among the three most important wines of Abruzzo: Trebbiano, Cerasuolo or Montepulciano, and asked to speak about the history of the grape and the wine, the producer etc.
- c. Each group will be assigned to present their bottle of wine during one of our dinners in Abruzzo. After the presentation we will taste the wine as a class.

Grading

94-100: A
90-93: A-
87-89: B+
84-86: B
80-83: B-
77-79: C+
74-76: C
70-73: C-
67-69: D+
60-66: D
59 or lower: F

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are unacceptable at the JFRC and will be dealt with in accordance with Loyola University Chicago's guidelines. Please familiarize yourself with Loyola's standards here:

http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml. You are responsible to comply with the LUC Student Handbook.

Late or Missed Assignments

Late or missed assignments will not be accepted for grading without the authorization of the instructor.

Accessibility Accommodations

Students registered with the Student Accessibility Center requiring academic accommodations should contact the Office of the Dean at the John Felice Rome Center, the first week of classes.

Office Hours: While we are on campus, I will be available both before and after class. Alternative times can be arranged but it is always best to make an appointment. Otherwise you will always be able to find me at all times when we are at the agriturismo in Abruzzo. We can also be in touch via email if you have difficulties or queries.

Course Schedule

WEEK 1

Monday, May 19: Introduction to the Study of Food & Contemporary Italian Food Culture

Required Readings: Dickie: 1-10, 13-16 Parasecoli 257-276

Tuesday, May 20: Visit to Trionfale Market and Supermarket: Field notes

Required viewing: Ted Talk by Carolyn Steel entitled “How food shapes our cities”; Black, “Porta Palazzo”

Wednesday, May 21: No class - Please visit your assigned Roman neighborhood

Thursday, May 22: The Food of Rome from Ancient to Modern Times: Tour of Testaccio Neighborhood and Eataly (The Food of Abruzzo)

Required readings: Root, “Lazio” “Abruzzo”;

WEEK 2

Monday, May 26: JFRC garden planting day / Honey in Italian cuisine

Required readings: TBD

Tuesday, May 27: Honey extraction with beekeeper, Marco Maldera (confirmed 10 am)

Required readings: Patel

Wednesday, May 28: Visit to Urban Garden - Coop Coraggio (confirmed) 9am - noon

Thursday, May 29: Student presentations (Esquilino Market, Mercato Centrale, Ghetto) 9am - noon

WEEK 3

Monday, June 2: No class

Tuesday, June 3: San Giovanni di Dio Market tour and food photography with Alice Adams Carosi (GROUP 1)

Wednesday, June 4: San Giovanni di Dio Market tour and food photography with Alice Adams Carosi (GROUP 2)

Thursday, June 5: No class

Write Photo Essay: – Examine one aspect of the urban food system in Rome. (800-1000 words): Due Wednesday, June 5 at 9am

Saturday, June 7: Departure for La Porta dei Parchi (Anversa degli Abruzzi, Abruzzo)

***During our time in Abruzzo class time will consist of a morning or afternoon activity, sometimes followed by a debriefing session to discuss how the reading and your hands-on experience fit together. Our schedule will be fluid and is subject to changes, we ask for complete cooperation.**

On arrival: After settling in at Porta dei Parchi will participate in a Pasta Cooking Class

Sunday, June 8: Photo tour of Gola del Sagittario with Prof. Denlinger & Wine of Abruzzo tasting with Elizabeth

WEEK 4

Monday, June 9: Shepherding at Porta dei Parchi

Ever heard of transhumance? It's a phenomenon that is specific to Abruzzo whereby sheep migrate to different areas of the mountain depending on the season. Today we are going to act as shepherds for the day and hike into the mountains with sheep to learn about this phenomenon which has been occurring in the Abruzzo for hundreds of years. We will also take up our discussion again about the differences between the food of the city and of the countryside.

Required Reading: Montanari "At last the farmers win"

Cheese-making demonstration and tour of farm at Porta dei Parchi & Sheep-milking

Because cheese is the ultimate "cultural" food product, today we will stay onsite to discover how it is made at Porta dei Parchi. In addition to the production process, we will discuss the microbiology of cheese as well as its cultural context in contemporary Italy.

Tuesday, June 10: Abruzzo cooking class

Today students will enter the kitchen and help the kitchen staff prepare a traditional Abruzzese meal.

Required reading: Freson 167-168

Evening film: "Cooked: Earth" by Michael Pollan

Wednesday, June 11: Olive Grove and Mill at Della Valle Oliveto and Praesidium Vineyard

Through the centuries wine and olive oil has been essential to the Italian diet. During our visit to the olive grove, we will witness how this nectar of the ancient Romans is made. Just like wine, different oils have different properties and uses. The reading will help us explore olive oil's ancient roots and its modern history. After the olive mill, we will visit a nearby "diffused" vineyard to look at the process of winemaking and how this winery is placing value in its location.

Required Readings: : *"Extravirginity: The Sublime and Scandalous World of Olive Oil"* by Tom Mueller (ebook located on LUC libraries website) page 15-35, 137-139; Johnson on Winemaking

*Before lunch, I will hold a wine tasting in order to prepare for our visit to the vineyard.

Thursday, June 12: Abruzzo cooking class

Required reading: Freson 167-168

Today students will enter the kitchen and help the kitchen staff prepare a traditional Abruzzese meal.

Optional: Gardening with Viola

*Wine presentations @ dinner

Friday, June 13: Chocolate Factory & Confettificio at William Di Carlo Factory

Both confetti, traditionally eaten at rites of passage (births and weddings) and chocolate have been in Italy since the Renaissance. However, while chocolate was brought to Europe from the New World, confetti originated from the Old Continent from traditions surrounding fertility and renewal. Today we will look at how these sweet treats are made and the history behind each confection while touring a traditional candy factory.

Required Readings: Riley 138

Optional reading: "How chocolate became sweet" in *Let the Meatballs Rest* by Massimo Montanari (ebook on LUC library website)

***Following our trip to the confettificio we will make a stop in the town of Sulmona and have a picnic lunch**

*Wine presentations @ dinner

Saturday, June 14: Visit to Lake Scanno & picnic

*Wine presentations @ dinner

Sunday, June 15: No class

WEEK 5

Monday, June 16: Morning Departure for Rome

Tuesday, June 17: STUDY DAY

Wednesday, June 18: Review Session 9:30-11:30 am

PHOTO ESSAY DUE: THURSDAY, JUNE 19 AT 9AM

Course Bibliography

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Capatti, A., and Massimo Montanari, transl. by Aine O'Healy, *Italian Cuisine: A Cultural History*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.

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- — "Romans, Barbarians, Christians: The Dawn of European Food Culture" and "Production Structures and Food Systems in the Early Middle Ages" in: *Food—A Culinary History*, ed. J.F. Flandrin and M. Montanari (English edition by Albert Sonnenfeld), 165-177. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.
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- Moss, S. and A. Badenoch *Chocolate: A Global History*, London 2009.
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