Time around the Table: a Culinary History of Italy

Class time and location: Tuesday and Thursday, 3:00 - 4:15, LIB 230

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Office Hours: Monday, 2:00-3:30
Wednesday, 10:30-12:00
By appointment
Resource team:

Library Liaison: Joy Pile, Research and Instruction Librarian, LIS
Davis Family Library 210
443 5140; pile@middlebury.edu

Technology Liaison: Shel Sax, Director of Educational Technology, LIS
Davis Family Library 222
443 5679; sax@middlebury.edu

Writing Tutor and ACE: Catherine (Francie) Alexandre ’12
calexand@middlebury.edu


* Additional required readings will be made available throughout the semester in class, via the Middfiles server.

Internet Resources: * A copy of the syllabus is on our page of the Course Hub.

* Course folder in Middfiles server: first access your “middfiles” network folder. Next open the “classes” folder, then the “Fall11” folder, and finally the “FYSE1344A” folder. Course materials will be posted in the “SHARE” sub-folder.

Other material: Please get (buy, re-use, build) a three-hole binder for this course, where you can organize readings/handouts/syllabus/reading responses, etc.

1. Course Description – In this course, food will be our guide in the exploration of Italian history and culture. Eating is a primordial need, we all need the same basic nutrients, but societies around the world have taken very different approaches to satisfy the same physiological need. Thus food is a powerful lens through which we can look at and learn about a culture. Food does not only nourish our bodies: the choices that a culture, in our case Italy, made and makes about issues surrounding food tell us about identity, be it social, national, regional, ethnic, or religious.

Starting with ancient Rome, we will try to answer a number of questions: What do we mean when we talk about Italian food? What did one eat in Ancient Rome, or during the Middle Ages, or during the Renaissance? And what about today? What are the historical events that have given shape to what we have in mind when we say “Italian food”?

All along the semester, we will also discuss how what we study about Italy and its food is relevant for us here and now? What do the choices we make about food, as individuals, family, and/or nations convey about us?

And of course we will cook and eat together!
2. **Operation and Logistics** – We meet twice a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 3:00 till 4:15 in Library 230 (LIB230).

The two weekly meetings are at the heart of our seminar; attendance, therefore, is mandatory. The only exceptions are absences with a dean’s excuse. Unexcused absences will be reported to the Dean of Students, Katy Smith Abbott, and to your Commons Dean, Ian Sutherland, and they will result in grade reduction (a third of a grade per absence).

The seminar will function mainly by discussion and will evolve, I hope, into a “community of scholars” exploring a topic as broad and as rich as ours. I will lecture very little, and when I do, it will be to present material that provides you with basic information. You will not be tested on it (we don’t have tests); instead, it should give you a foundation upon which you will build your own research project.

At the end of the semester we will have a “Student Research Symposium,” that will give you the opportunity to present your research publicly and in a formal setting.

3. **Assignments** – Every First Year Seminar is a writing-intensive course, so we will be writing a lot! Your work will take many different shapes, from informal (your food journal and the blog/on-line discussion) to more formal writing, culminating in a formal presentation and research paper. For every assignment I will provide you with a handout that, besides telling you what you need to do, will also explain the goal of that assignment and my expectations.

I will not grade every assignment you turn in; instead, twice during the semester (Week 7 and Week 12; more details to follow), I will grade the portfolio you will put together as we progress in our work. I know that for many students it is difficult to let go of the idea of getting a grade for every piece of writing. If you are one of them, please know that at any given moment I am happy to meet with you to talk about how you are doing in the class.

We will keep a food blog, [http://timearoundthetable.blogspot.com/2011/09/welcome-to-our-blog.html](http://timearoundthetable.blogspot.com/2011/09/welcome-to-our-blog.html). Starting in Week 1, in teams of two you will be responsible, taking turns, for our weekend conversation about food. Details to follow.

As for your food journals, keep on using them over the course of the whole semester, writing down your thoughts/observations/questions about food and our seminar. It is a way to keep on “conversing” with the materials of the course, also outside the classroom, and to take regularly some distance and reflect. As I will soon ask you to come up with ideas for your Research Paper, the journal is an ideal place to take note of possible topics and theses. I expect at least three entries per week, two or three paragraph long, and that you put real thought into them. I will collect your journals three times over the course of the semester.

Please remember that this Syllabus is a flexible document. This means that some of the readings might change, depending on where our discussion takes us. If I decide to modify a reading, I would substitute it with another of the same approximate length, and I would let you know immediately. This means that when you receive urgent messages from me, it is your responsibility to read them.
4. Grade Breakdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio 1</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>(Paper 1 and 2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio 2</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>(Research paper)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>(Response papers, blog, journal, attendance, active presence in class)</td>
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I will give you a detailed explanation of these assignments as we start working on them.

5. Honor Code – During all portions of this course you are expected to follow the Middlebury College Honor Code. For information regarding this code, please consult the User’s Guide that I distributed and/or refer to the College Handbook (http://www.middlebury.edu/about/handbook/student/Academic_Disciplinary_Policies). It is your responsibility to abide by the Honor Code as stated. Over the course of the semester some assignments will involve collaboration with other students, whereas others will be independent. I will do my best to be very clear about the expectations of any given assignment, but please do not hesitate to ask me if something is not clear.

6. Classroom Etiquette – Out of respect for other students and the instructor, you should arrive in class on time and stay until class is over; coming and going in the middle of a class is highly disruptive. When in class, you may not use electronic devices. Please, turn off iPhones, iPods, iPads, BlackBerries, or any other form of cell phone, MP3 player, etc.

Please do not bring food in class, which is a strange thing to say for a class that is about food! When somebody eats in class everybody else gets distracted/hungry and the mind wanders away from what we are doing. Every now and then I will bring food for everybody, for academic reasons, of course! Drinks are acceptable.

7. Few Final Words: How to Succeed in This Course!

a. Give yourself time to do the work, to read and digest what you read; do not wait until the last minute. This also means do not procrastinate. There will be stressful moments over the course of the semester: the more organized and intentional about your work you are, the more smoothly you will go through those moments.

b. Never hesitate to ask questions; if we are in the middle of something and I feel that answering your question would divert us from what we are working on, I will ask you to wait until the end of the class. You can always send me an e-mail; I check my mailbox regularly, but not after 9:30 PM.

c. Never hesitate to ask for help, and to use the resources that are at your disposal. Come by my office (Voter 114), I am always happy to meet with you. Besides my office hours, I am available by appointment every day of the week, and am often in my office if you just want to stop by.

d. Enjoy your work and make the material and issues your own. Easy to say, I know, but it works!
8. Syllabus

W, 7 Sept.: Orientation, MNR 314, 8:30-10:30 – Course Introduction. Food journals. Sign up for Advising sessions: those who need to take placement exams should NOT sign up for this afternoon.

11:30-12:30 or 1:30-3:00: Go to Pre-Advising at the CTLR, in the Davis Family Library. VERY useful! The 1:30-3-00 session is the one that works for those who need to take placement exams.

A helpful link: http://www.middlebury.edu/academics/resources/advising/first/choosingcourses

⇒ Assignment for Tuesday, 13 September:

1. Carefully re-read the Syllabus of our course.
2. In Food is Culture, read “Series Editor’s Preface,” p. vii-ix, and “Introduction,” pp. xi-xii. Reading Response (see handout).
3a. If My Food Were Text, 1: once over the next five days, when you go eat lunch or dinner in one of the dining halls, or at the Grille, or at a restaurant, bring pen and paper (your food journal would be perfect!) with you; choose one of the dishes you are eating and, taking at least 15 minutes, write down everything your five senses take in about the food. Be vivid and specific (show, don’t tell). Add details about the place, the company, and the atmosphere. Bring to class on Tuesday.

3b. Create a list of 50-100 specific, colorful details about the food you are considering for your Paper 1. Bring to class on Tuesday.

Week 1

T, 13 Sept.: Discussion of readings. If My Food Were Text, 1: share descriptions. Discussion of first paper.

⇒ Assignment for Thursday, 15 September

2. Read Massimo Montanari, “Food Systems and Models of Civilization,” pp. 69-78, that you can download from our folder in Middfiles.
3. If My Food Were Text, 2: create a list of 50 specific, vivid details about the food(s) you are considering for your If My Food Were Text paper, and write two descriptive paragraphs about the food.


⇒ Assignment for Tuesday, 20 September:

3. If My Food Were Text, 3: add a story to your If My Food Could Speak paragraph.
4. Blog 1 – Participate in the on-line discussion on our site:
Week 2


Assignment for Thursday, 22 September:
3. If My Food Were Text, 4: complete Draft 1.

R, 22 Sept.: Discuss readings and blog. Workshop: If My Food Were Text, draft 1.

Assignment for Tuesday, 27 September:
2. If My Food Were Text, 5: draft 2.

F, 23 Sept.: END OF ADD PERIOD

Week 3

T, 27 Sept.: Discussion of readings and blog. Workshop: If My Food Were Text, draft 2.

Assignment for Thursday, 29 September:
1. Sign up for conferences with me on our Google calendar (more details in class).

R, 29 Sept.: Discussion of readings. Writing exercise.
Prof. Louisa Burnham, History Department

Assignment for Tuesday, 4 October:
1. With your team member, look for a recipe for our dinner together and prepare a brief presentation and a shopping list. See Handout for details.
3. It is time to start thinking about your Research Paper! In the next 5 days, take the time you need to think of two or three ideas for a topic and a thesis. Make sure that the library has enough material to get you started. Bring your ideas to class on Tuesday.
4. No blog this weekend.
Week 4

T, 4 Oct.: Discussion of readings. Presentation of recipes. **Paper 2:** Peer Review of draft 1.

⇒ Assignment for Thursday, 6 October:

2. **Paper 2:** start work on draft 2.

R, 6 Oct.: Discussion of readings. **Paper 2:** progress report of draft 2.

Prof. Sandra Carletti, Italian Department: *Food Touches Everything*

5:30-8:00: *Let’s cook!* Italian dinner cooked by you (with help, if desired) at Cook Commons Faculty Residence, 46 South street.

⇒ Assignment for Tuesday, 11 October:

3. On our Google calendar, sign up for conference with Francie Alexandre on Draft 2 of paper 2.
4. **Paper 2:** draft 2.
5. Blog 3 – Bianca & Will

Week 5

T, 11 Oct.: Discussion of readings and blog. **Research Paper:** first progress report.

⇒ Assignment for Thursday, 13 October:

1. TODAY! Sign up on Google calendar for conferences with me on final version of Paper 2 and Research Paper.

R, 13 Oct.: Discussion of readings.

⇒ Assignment for Tuesday, 18 October:

2. Read John Dickie, “Ferrara, 1529: A Dynasty at Table,” pp. 77-99. (Middfiles)
3. **Research Paper:** prepare a preliminary bibliography. Write a working title and a thesis statement, and bring them to class on Tuesday.
4. Blog 4 – Jamie & Lexi
F, 14 Oct.: END OF DROP PERIOD

Week 6


☞ Assignment for Thursday, 20 October:

2. Read Allen J. Grieco, “Food and Social Classes in Late Medieval and Renaissance Italy,” pp. 302-312 (in Middfiles).
3. Research Paper: prepare a detailed outline of your paper and bring a copy to class on Thursday.


☞ Assignment for Thursday, 27 October:

1. Research Paper: give some flesh to your outline and to your bibliography! Many more details in class. Prepare a list of questions for Joy Pile and remember to bring at the library and technology workshop on October 27th.
2. Prepare a detailed outline for your presentation and bring it to the library and technology workshop next Thursday, October 27th.
3. Blog 5

Week 7

T, 25 Oct.: Fall Break! Remember to keep on writing on your food journals!


F, 28 Oct.: Midterm Portfolio due in my office by 5:00, Voter 114.

☞ Assignment for Tuesday, 1 November:

2. No blog this weekend.

Week 8

T, 1 Nov.: Research Paper: peer review of draft 1. Writing workshop: how does an effective conclusion look like?
Assignment for Thursday, 3 November:

3. Keep working on your presentation!

R, 3 Nov.: Discussion of reading. Progress report on presentations.

Week 9 and 10: Student Research Symposium

![Image of ancient figures]

Thoughts about Food and Food for Thought

A Student Symposium

T, 8 Nov.: Student Presentations 1-4
R, 10 Nov.: Student Presentations 5-8
T, 15 Nov.: Student Presentations 9-12
R, 17 Nov.: Student Presentations 13-16

R, 17 Nov.: 6:00-8:30, Dinner in Honor of the Symposium Presenters
Cook Commons Faculty Residence
46 South street

Assignment for Thursday, 10 November:

1. On our Google calendar, sign up for conference with Francie Alexandre about Registration.
2. Work on your Research Paper (see handout).

Assignment for Tuesday, 15 November:

1. Work on your Research Paper (see handout).
2. Blog 6
Assignment for Thursday, 17 November:
1. On our Google calendar, sign up for conference with me about Registration.
2. Work on your Research Paper (see handout).

Assignment for Tuesday, 22 November:
1. Work on your Research Paper (see handout).
2. Blog 7

Week 11

Thanksgiving Break! This is a beautiful holiday, centered on a meal. What a fantastic opportunity to use your food journals!

Assignment for Tuesday, 22 November:
1. In Food is Culture, read “Identity, Exchange, Traditions, and Origins,” pp. 133-137, and “Roots: A Metaphor to Use All the Way,” pp. 139-140.
2. Explore the website http://www.slowfood.com/ Make sure to click on “About Us” and “Our Philosophy” to get a sense of what the Slow Food movement is about.

Week 12
T, 29 Nov.: Discussion of readings, meals, papers and websites!

Assignment for Thursday, 1 December:
2. Keep working on your Research Paper!

R, 1 Dec.: Discussion of reading.

Assignment for Tuesday, 6 December:
2. Portfolio 2 and Food Journals due by 5:00 in my office, Voter 114.
3. Blog 8

Week 13
T, 6 Dec.: Discussion of reading and Slow Food debate.
Deirdre Heekin and Caleb Barber
5:30-8:00: Let’s cook again! Second Italian dinner cooked by you (with help, if desired) at Cook Commons Faculty Residence, 46 South street.

R, 8 Dec.: Closing remarks, yours and mine! Happy Holidays!