



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN (UIUC) - ROME center
SPRING FOOD AND CULTURE IN ROME PROGRAM

The aim of this 4-month academic program from January to May is to help students identify the major components of the term “food culture” in Italy and abroad.

Five courses are included:

- Food and Culture
- Food and Media
- Layers of Rome
- Contemporary Italian Society
- Italian Language

Short description of the program:

LAYERS OF ROME: The course will study the way in which Rome developed as a cultural center of world significance through its monuments and works of art. Rome's archaeological sites, monuments and architecture are stratified, and the layers of successive epochs remain visible. Each generation has sought to define the present and the future by appropriation of the past, often returning to the same sites to restore, alter, rebuild or destroy, taking materials and works of art from one place and reusing them in another. A splendid example of a multi-layered site is the church of San Clemente (visited by students); here a twelfth-century basilica which contains extensive mosaics, a chapel decorated by some of the most important artists of the early Renaissance, and a Baroque ceiling, stands above an early Christian basilica whose eleventh-century frescoes include one the earliest examples of written Italian to survive. Below this is a Mithraic temple (c. 200 AD) and the remains of a large public building dating to the first century AD. The course will include visits to this and other sites, such as the Colosseum and Palatine Hill, Mercati di Traiano, Pantheon, Monte dei Cocci, Santa Maria in Trastevere and so on. With the support of their professor, our students will examine some outstanding examples of Renaissance art and architecture, such as the Villa Farnesina, as well as Baroque masterpieces by Caravaggio, Bernini and Borromini. Finally, they will explore the major changes that took place in Rome in the modern period. Through visits and field trips, students will be able to explore how familiar symbolic means have been employed to either reinforce or subvert established ideas and how certain sites, statues or even blocks of stone, have been invested with multiple layers of meaning by successive generations.

CONTEMPORARY ITALIAN SOCIETY: This course aims to give an overall image of contemporary Italian society through the analysis of general aspects such as language, family, politics, religion, interaction between economic and social progress. Stereotypes and clichés related to Italian culture will be analyzed and challenged. The main goal of the course will be to deliver an up-to-date approach to a wide range of topics shaping the contemporary Italian culture stimulating a fruitful confrontation with the original culture of the participants. Themes and examples will be presented in class and discussed along with the assigned readings and films (dedicated movies screenings will be organized at Gustolab International Institute for Food Studies – editing room). It is really important for us to help students to understand and to become aware of the historically based complexity of the term "Italian culture". Three guided tours will be included and will enrich the course: Cinecittà Film Studios, Museo Dell'Altro Metropolit, Jewish Ghetto and Synagogue. Field trips such as Ethnographic Museum visit and Celebration and Tradition tour are dedicated to present to the students the importance of Italian language for Italian cultural identity and the geographically and historically based differences between the inhabitants of different Italian regions, cities and cultures. Today, Italy is a multicultural country in all respects. In 1861, the year of the unification of Italy, there were about 88,639 "foreigners" in our country (equal to about 0.4% of the resident population). In 2011, however, immigrants legally present in Italy exceed the threshold of 5 million (of which 1.3 million are from within the European Union) out of over 60 million residents, about 50 times more than in the past (8.2%). Compared to 2010, the number of foreigners in Italy increased by approximately 43,000 people. A small increase held back by the economic crisis that affected immigrants- even if there are many sectors where the contribution of immigrants continues to be fundamental such as construction, transportation and, in general, work that requires strong manpower. We are currently living in a "crisis" situation.

FOOD AND MEDIA: The course will focus on the intersection between food and media, a connection that has elicited much interest in communication studies over the past few years. Food has become a hot topic on TV, the Internet and the printed media. The goal of this course is to enhance the students' competence both on the subject matter and in the practical skills necessary to produce good communication about food and wine. The Food and Media course will be led by a lecturer who has also high professional competences and skills in the field of food videos, media and journalism. This is a great opportunity for our students: it will give them a realistic insight in the field of food and communication. In addition, the food and media lecturer will help and support our students to connect, meet and speak with experts in the food field such as key chefs, journalists, nutritionists, scientists, TV and media producers, etc. This is a multi-faceted course that will give students a solid foundation in understanding Italy's unique media environment as well as the opportunity to utilize Rome (and Italy) as a living laboratory for producing a final video product. Students will complete an original video research project about food paradoxes. Four teams will be created: each team will produce a short video (max 10-12 minutes). Four professional video instructors will be involved in this course: they will teach the students how to create, design, film and edit a short documentary. In fact, students will be able to take advantage of hands-on practice with different kinds of media, including digital video. I will be personally involved in the research and design of the storytelling of their video projects. Students will have the opportunity to enhance their creativity and their skills in doing "onsite" and "scientific" research, and will learn how to do interviews. For the Food and Media course, they will have the linguistic support of Italian students (from Italian Universities in Rome)

FOOD AND CULTURE: The course will examine Italian food (as a complex system) from the historical, political, economic, cultural, and culinary perspectives. Students will start with a general introduction to Italy and Italian food and wine with an emphasis on regional traditions. They will also examine contemporary issues, such as the success of the Mediterranean diet, food production, distribution, and consumption. Wine and specific food products, both artisanal and mass-produced, will be tasted and discussed, and their cultural signification evaluated. Three professors will be involved and they will teach several lectures covering subjects such as the history and sociology of food, wine culture and production and food & sustainability. Through the activity called "Eating Out tour", our students will gain knowledge of the orientation, evolution, and trends of food culture as related to the site of study –the city of Rome. Students will then be divided into three small teams: each team will attend three cooking classes/labs with a starred chef (Chef Cristina Bowerman). Students will gain awareness of the vast historical and cultural heritage of Italian cuisine, will develop understanding of the practice and rituals of meal preparation and consumption specific to Italian and European cultures, and will learn about how to cook in a sustainable way. Students will participate in two day-long excursions: at a Slow Food Organic cheese-making farm and at vineyard outside of Rome to study the process and production of wine. Students will interact with farmers and they will learn about organic and sustainable productions. The purpose of the two excursions outside of Rome is to help students be exposed to the traditional food production techniques and varied ingredients that blend together to produce the Italian Culture. The students will study and analyze the Mediterranean diet in-depth – a recurring theme in many of their in- class projects and discussions in class. Gustolab International Institute for Food Studies will organize a weekend excursion to the South of Italy (three days - all included) in Cilento, where the Mediterranean diet originated. During the three-day excursion, our students will be able to truly immerse themselves in the Med- diet/and healthy life style concept. A detailed tutoring and several meetings with experts (restaurant owner, nutritionists, farmers, sommeliers...) will help the students to reach informed conclusions and solutions (make connections between history, economy and people's food practices). Non-touristic field trips and some visits in rural area will allow the students to observe and experience the culture from an untainted perspective. Students will be part of various activities such as wine tastings with a sommelier; themed educational lunches and dinners; lectures and discussions with experts, and tours of Cilento's archeological sites. During the excursion, the students will have the opportunity to cook traditional meals and learn about ancient recipes, observe and analyze an Organic Mozzarella di Bufala production, visit a fig producer and meet with a fisherman.

ELEMENTARY ITALIAN I OR II: These introductory Italian language classes are designed to prepare students for practical communication in Italy, as well as to progress into Italian 102 and 103 upon their return to campus.