



FACULTY-LED  
STUDY ABROAD

## KIIS Italy Program, Summer 2026

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### IDST 350 Topics: Regional Italian Cuisine and Culture

**Instructor:** Dr. Chrol

**Email:** chrol@marshall.edu

**Instructor's office hours:** on site and by appointment

*Syllabus subject to change*

#### **1. Course Description:**

Our idea of Italy was in large part created by Italians working abroad, having nostalgia for a past that never existed. The fascinating thing is that this very nostalgia helped create some aspects of modern Italian national culture. However, Italy is a hyper-local country, and for the last 3,000 years of recorded history has resisted being unified into a single "Italy".

In this class we are going to investigate the regional differences of the locations we visit in two ways. First, we will do a deep dive into what makes the food of each place different. We won't *just* be eating a lot of great food, we will consider environmental, political, historical and social factors. Second, we'll look at tourist accounts from different eras, namely the ancient world, the Grand Tour, and US servicemen during WWII, and compare them with what we see. You will explore our cities in time and space, unpacking what makes each place unique but also what *you* bring to the table.

#### **2. Overall KIIS Program Student Learning Outcomes:**

#### KIIS Study Abroad Mission Statement:

KIIS provides high-quality education abroad programs for students from all diverse backgrounds that promote deep international learning, are integrated into the curriculum, and encourage critical and creative thinking. Our goal is to help students understand the wider world and develop personal and professional skills for lifelong enrichment. We strive to go beyond generalizations and cultural stereotypes to help foster a nuanced appreciation of the world in which we live.

#### Students participating on KIIS study abroad programs aim to:

- 1) Understand contemporary issues of their host country/countries (i.e. KIIS program location).
- 2) Develop skills to interact comfortably in a global setting.
- 3) Understand other cultures.

Prior to your KIIS study abroad program, and again at the conclusion of your program, KIIS will ask each student to a) answer a few multiple-choice questions, and b) write a short reflective essay (two paragraphs in length) related to the elements detailed above. There is no right or wrong answer, and your responses will not affect your grade in any way. The purpose of the exercise is to help KIIS measure the effectiveness of its study abroad programs.

### **3. Course Objectives and Specific Learning Outcomes:**

The primary goals of the course are two. First, you are going to learn about the environmental, political, historical and social factors that make the food culture of each of the places we visit distinct. Second, you will hone your intersubjective understanding by reading travel accounts from different time periods.

Specifically you will:

- Read primary and secondary materials relevant to the development of the food cultures of the locations we will visit, as well as travel accounts of those locations. You will learn historical, political, and scientific data through reading.
- Investigate in teams a specific aspect of the foodways, culture or cuisine in our cities
- Analyze the above to construct two mental models. In the first, what makes the cuisine in each of the places we visit distinct. In the second, how tourism and travel reflects the expectations of the traveler and not necessarily what the traveler sees.
- Write your analyses in Reflections and Investigations
- Develop your ability to express your ideas through writing and through class discussion.
- Enhance your skills at close reading of texts, art, and locations

### **4. Major Topics covered in the Course:**

There are two main sets of topics that we will cover in each of the locations of our trip: food and tourism.

As for food: There are many diverse inputs that create local food culture, and Italy has more than most places. If you think of any commercial or movie that touches on Italian food, you may picture a large family boisterously enjoying a large meal with many bottles of wine. A century ago this image would have been completely alien to any Italian in Italy, as evidenced by government scientists' reports that were concerned the average worker could not afford enough calories to thrive and be productive. Food was scarce. Nonetheless,

Italians who left the country to work started to create the image we are familiar with and through their consumption of food exports in turn shape Italy's foodways through industrialization. This is one example of the historical perspective we can take on food culture in Italy. Italy has recently been on the forefront of rejecting modern food practices, starting the locavore and slow food movements. In addition to thinking on the large scale about how food works in Italy, we will also consider how the specifics of a location helped develop their cuisine. For example, the length of protein strains in different types of wheat determines the length of pasta that can be made, and what foods go with which type of pasta varies. Politics, industry, religion and local history will also work into our analyses.

As for travel: Horace once wrote that a traveler can change the sky above their head but not the contents of their heart. When we read travel accounts of the different places we travel to we will pay attention to the ways the tourist is attempting to impose their point of view on each place. We will consider how different the experiences were of a Roman or Greek who passes through the same countryside as we; why creating an idea of an idealized Rome was so important to aristocrats on the Grand Tour; how cultures clashed as GIs fought their way up the peninsula during WWII.

By learning about the specificities of the Italian neighborhoods and by doing the cultural analysis of the tourist readings you will gain insight on what opinions and attitudes you bring to the table, both metaphorically and literally.

## 5. Required Readings and Materials:

### Materials

You will need

- a small, portable pad of paper for taking notes
- a device that can access Google Classroom that can also read PDFs
- a device that can take pictures and upload them to WhatsApp.
  - o **A modern cell phone can usually handle the two above.** If you don't want to bring a computer, don't feel you have to. We will have access to WiFi in the hotel, so if you don't want to get a data plan, you don't have to. Your parents may be sad that they can't reach you at all hours, though.

**When we get closer to departure you will receive a link to our Google Classroom, as well as a private Instagram account**

### Readings

We will be reading selections from primary and secondary sources. Some examples of primary source material are Martial and Lucan's poems on travel, Grand Tour accounts, and wartime tourism books created by the War Department. Some examples of secondary sources are regional histories, works on food and politics, and mildly technical explanations of food chemistry.

All our readings will be open source, creative commons, out of copyright or fair use. In the Google Classroom you will receive PDFs of all our texts, and all those PDFs will be excerpted from online sources. Since we can't trust our internet while traveling, please download the pdfs to your device before leaving the US.

Your assignments will preferably be submitted through Google Classroom, though if you need to hand-write your assignments that is available to you.

## 6. Graded Assignments:

Your grade will comprise the following:

- 20% Investigation project
- 20% Date project
- 10% Food Journal
- 20% Travel Lit Reflections
- 30% Participation

You will do two group projects on the trip. They are group projects not because Dr. Chrol hates you, but because talking to strangers can be scary, so doing your research in a group will lessen that anxiety. You will have different groups for each project.

The first group project is the **Investigation Project**, where you and your group will take notes on various markets we visit in our three regions, and talk to people who are selling the foodstuffs to find out how locals think about their region's food. You will fill out worksheets and give a presentation on your findings at the end of your trip.

The second group project is the **Date Project**. You will interview a local about what food and where they would go in various types of dates. You will fill out worksheets and give a presentation on your findings at the end of your trip.

Your **Food Journal** will be reflections on the food you eat on the trip and how your deepening knowledge about Italian food culture affects the way you experience that food. There will be a public post that you will do before you leave for Italy, but every other journal entry will be private to you and the professor. If you want to hand-write your journal that is acceptable. And, yes, you will have the chance to take pictures of your food, post it on Instagram and get credit for it.

We will be reading various pieces of travel advice at points in the term, you will submit two **Travel Lit Reflections** based on how well these pieces hold up with your experience as a traveler.

**Participation** is based on your willingness to participate in class discussion, a few online discussions, and posting to our class Insta. You don't need to know anything in advance of the class, and shouldn't worry about being 'right'. Some of the techniques we will employ are to give you ways of refining your subjective experiences and structure what you witness. Do the readings, share your voice, you'll do well.

More detailed explanations of how these assignments work will be found on our Google Classroom page.

The grading scale is:

- A = 90-100
- B= 80-89
- C= 70-79
- D= 60-69
- F= below 59.4

## 7. Attendance Policy:

KIIS program participants are expected to be punctual to and in attendance at all classes, presentations, meetings and required excursions, and to remain with the program for the full academic period. Unexcused absences from classes and/or mandatory meetings will result in a lowering of the student's final grade, as will excessive tardiness. Multiple unexcused

absences could result in expulsion from the program. Any absence from an academic class session must be excused for medical reasons.

### **8. Disability Accommodation:**

KIIS will make every reasonable effort to provide accommodations for program participants with special needs or disabilities, but we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. Be aware that many foreign countries do not have comprehensive legislation comparable to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). As a result, businesses and other establishments operating in foreign countries may not be able to provide accommodations.

If you have a disability accommodation need, we recommend you contact your KIIS Campus Representative, <https://www.kiis.org/about-kiis/contact-us/campus-representatives/> early in your program selection process so that s/he has time to discuss any specific needs, including which KIIS programs may be best suited. You also are welcome to contact KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning, [maria.canning@wku.edu](mailto:maria.canning@wku.edu), to discuss your disability accommodation needs (e.g. housing, transportation, excursions, class schedule, etc.).

Immediately after acceptance, notify KIIS Admissions and Enrollment Specialist, Haley McTaggart, [haley.mctaggart@wku.edu](mailto:haley.mctaggart@wku.edu), if you have a special need or disability that might require any form of accommodation abroad. Failure to notify KIIS may prevent you from participating on your KIIS program.

If you require any accommodations abroad, you must provide KIIS Admissions and Enrollment Specialist, Haley McTaggart, an accommodation letter from your home campus' disability accommodation office that lists the accommodations you are eligible to receive. Please do not request accommodations directly from your KIIS Program Director or other KIIS Faculty; the KIIS Office will notify your KIIS Program Director and/or Faculty after we have received your above accommodation letter.

In some cases, you may need to make arrangements for a caregiver to join you on your KIIS program, should your physician, campus disability accommodation office, or KIIS make such a recommendation or require it.

### **9. Title IX / Discrimination & Harassment:**

Recent attention to gender discrimination and sexual harassment at colleges and universities reminds us of the importance of adhering to standards of ethical and professional behavior. KIIS Study Abroad is committed to supporting and encouraging safe and equitable educational environments for our students, faculty, and program directors. Students, faculty, and program directors are required to be civil and treat each other with dignity and respect. As such, harassment and/or discrimination of any kind will not be permitted or tolerated.

Sexual misconduct (sexual harassment, sexual assault, and sexual/dating/domestic violence) and sex discrimination are violations of KIIS policies. If you experience an incident of sex/gender-based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report it to a) KIIS Assistant Director, Maria Canning (+1-859-200-1000) or KIIS Executive Director, John Dizgun (+1-270-227-2288), b) WKU's Title IX Coordinator, Ena Demir (270-745-6867 / [ena.demir@wku.edu](mailto:ena.demir@wku.edu)) or WKU's Title IX Investigator, Michael Crowe (270-745-5429 / [michael.crowe@wku.edu](mailto:michael.crowe@wku.edu)). Please note that while you may report an incident of sex/gender based discrimination, harassment and/or sexual misconduct to a KIIS program director and/or faculty member, KIIS program directors and faculty are considered

"Responsible Employees" of Western Kentucky University and MUST report what you share to WKU's Title IX Coordinator or Title IX Investigator.

If you would like to speak with someone who may be able to afford you confidentiality, you may contact WKU's Counseling and Testing Center, <https://www.wku.edu/heretohelp/> at 270-745-3159.

For more information on KIIS Title IX, see <https://www.kiis.org/students/health-safety/title-ix-clery/>; additional Title IX resources can be found here <https://www.wku.edu/titleix/titleixbrochure2020.pdf>.

Everyone should be able to participate on a KIIS program, attend a KIIS event, or work in a KIIS environment (e.g. KIIS office) without fear of sexual harassment or discrimination of any kind. Be respectful of each other.

## 10. Schedule

**Readings and assignments are due the day scheduled, so on 21 May you will have shown up having posted your response to the "What do you think of when you hear the phrase 'Italian food'" question on our Google Classroom, and having read the syllabus and the How to Taste Food Like a Chef page, and Meals and Patterns of Eating entry in the Oxford Companion to Italian Food**

It is also recommended you read some of the pieces before we go. It'll be pleasant to sit on a bench beside the Arno and gain insights into your culinary adventure, but you don't want to be pressed for time when there are cool sights to see.

**This schedule will likely change.** Some locations outside of the hotel are on the syllabus, others will be decided ahead of time and communicated through WhatsApp. Because we are a small class, we are more likely to meet in a park than in the hotel, also Italy might throw some good or bad surprises our way.

**Pre-assignment before our first class: Go to our Google Classroom and answer the "What do you think of when you hear the phrase 'Italian food'" question**

Week 1

18 May                      Leave for Italy

19 May                      Arrival

                         Evening Arrival in Hotel

- Tip: Stay awake. It's going to be super hard to stay awake, you will want to take a nap. It is far better for your jetlag for you to get direct sunlight between 10-2 (don't get a sunburn!) and go to bed early than for you to get a small nap. Note that we are going to get walking at 9 tomorrow morning, try to get to sleep at a reasonable hour. You can be a night owl when your body adjusts in 2-3 days.

20 May                      10-12 AM Orientation  
   1:15 PM              Walking tour of city center  
   3                      Basilica di Santa Croce

- Recommended watching: *Linear Perspective: Brunelleschi's Experiment*  
<https://youtu.be/bkNMM8uiMww>
  - (It's recommended because you will be there, right where one of the most important developments in Western art history happened!)
- Recommended listening: Gola on Italian Food Rules
  - The Meals and Patterns of Eating will help you navigate menus, the Gola podcast has some tips and more information. Don't be afraid! You have the massive advantage that you are Americans, young and students, nobody is going to have ANY expectations of you.
- **You should start a regular habit of jotting down notes and taking pictures of every meal for the food journal.** Instructions for the Food Journal may be found on the Assignment on our Google Classroom

21 May            **9-12 Class in the hotel: Introduction, Food, Tourism**

- Homework:
  - Do the What do you think of when you hear the phrase 'Italian food' question **before leaving the states**
  - Read the syllabus, How to Taste Food Like a Chef page, and the Meals and Patterns of Eating entry in the Oxford Companion to Italian Food

22 May            **9-11 Class: Introduction to Tuscany**  
 5:45    Duomo climb

- Read Grand Tour Advice, and the Tuscany, Fast Food and Slow Food entries in Oxford Companion to Italian Food

23 May            Free day

Week 2

24 May            Free Day

25 May            9-12    Visit to Fiesole  
**2-3.30 Class: Storico Mercato Centrale**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Food Journal due
- **CLASS WILL MEET AT THE STORICO MERCATO CENTRALE in the Piazza del Mercato Centrale, 50123.** The historic central market is a 20 minute walk from our hotel, and will look familiar because you will be returning to this area for the Accademia this afternoon
- Read Mediterranean Diet, DOC DOP IGP SGT in the Oxford Companion to Italian Food, read Ancient Travel selections

26 May            8:30    Uffizi Gallery

- You should keep your ticket stub from the Uffizi as it gets you into some other awesome sites

27 May            **A block class day: Trip to Pisa**

- Class will take place in Pisa. We will go together on the train, visit one of the 3 famous markets there, you will work with your Investigation group. We will discuss Garlic and Oil during lunch. You will then go with your Date group to one of the two other markets, class will vote on which one. There will be plenty of free time to see the famous leaning tower.

- Read Garlic and Oil Selections

28 May B Block Class Day

29 May **10-12 Class: Mercato di Sant'Ambrogio**

- **CLASS WILL MEET AT THE MERCATO DI SANT'AMBROGIO in the Piazza Lorenzo Ghiberti, 50122.** This more traditional market is about a 30 minute walk from the hotel.
- Read Attention and Florence in the Pocket Guide to Italian Cities  
4.45 Accademia

30 May Free day

Week 3

31 May 9:30 depart for Sienna, visit San Gimignano  
Sienna Night Stroll

1 June Palazzo Pubblico + Duomo Visits  
Cooking Classes

- 2<sup>nd</sup> Food Journal due

2 June Morning class TBA  
Festa della Repubblica!

- Read Cucine delle nonne and Cucina Povera in the Oxford Companion to Italian Food

- 1<sup>st</sup> Travel Lit Reflection due

3 June Morning class TBA

**Class will go to the Mercato delle Merci, we will meet in the hotel and walk over**  
2 PM Contrada della Lupa tour

4 June 9 AM Depart for Rome

Visit the Monster Garden! (It's very cool and weird)

8 PM Night hike! Don't get the gelato next to the Pantheon, it's stupid expensive. Hit another place on the way.

5 June 9-12 Class – Intro to Rome!

- Read Rome in the Pocket Guide to Italian Cities, Lazio and Rome in the Oxford Companion to Italian Food

6 June Free Day

Week 4

7 June Free Day

8 June Free Day

9 June Vatican Museums

➤ 2<sup>nd</sup> Travel Lit Reflection due

- Cool weird thing to see: the garage with all the Popemobiles.
- Hot tip that I learned through an unfortunate experience: they are going to try to get you to leave the Sistine Chapel through one set of doors, you will be out of the museum then. Find the other doors out
- I am terrified of heights but thought the view of Rome from the dome was worth the fright as well as the 551 steps.

10 June      Optional Papal Audience  
Forum Fun Day

11 June      TWO OPTIONS THAT WILL BE DECIDED IN ITALY  
*IF Class 9-12*

**9-12 Class: Campo de Fiori**

- **CLASS WILL MEET AT THE CAMPO DE FIORI** which is a 15 minute walk from our hotel
- Read Pasta, history of; pasta sauces; pasta shapes in the Oxford Companion to Italian Food

*IF A DAY*

- **Class will meet at the Mercato Trionfale on Via Andrea Doria, 00192**, which is very close to the Vatican. We'll discuss your travel lit reflections, spend time at the market, then you will have an opportunity to meet with your two groups and divvy up the work for our final class day presentations on Friday.
  - The Mercato Trionfale is real close to a great pizza al taglio place, Pizzarium (I'll be going to the one on Via della Meloria, 43, 00136 Roma, not the one in Chicago). I will likely be going to Angry Pig, my favorite porchetta place in Italy. The address is Via Tunisi, 38, 00192 Roma. Feel free to tag along.

12 June      Class TBA or B Day

- If we have class, we will do a broad discussion about your food journals

➤ Final Food Journal due

13 June      Free Day

*The Final Countdown*

14 June      **Summative wrapup, presentations**

- Investigation project due
- Date project due

15 June      Home!