



FACULTY-LED
STUDY ABROAD

KIIS Italy Program, Summer 2027

IDST 350 Study Abroad: Food and Identity in Italy

Instructor: Dr. Alyssa Granacki

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Instructor's office hours: on site and by appointment

Syllabus subject to change

1. Course Description:

What does it mean for a dish to be "authentically" Italian? Who gets to decide? This course uses food as a lens to explore Italian national and regional identity, immigration and diaspora, colonialism, tourism, and the changing landscape of Italy today. Through stories, movies, street markets, local foods, cooking techniques, and museums, we will investigate how Italian cuisine became one of the world's most recognized and mythologized cuisines. Our class combines on-site experiences in Rome and Florence with Italian literature, food history, cultural theory, and film to deepen our understanding of Italy's cuisine and the people who have shaped it across time and space.

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:

Students will:

- Describe how geography, regional history, and migration shape Italian food cultures.
- Analyze how Italy, and especially Italian food, has been imagined by foreign visitors, travelers, and media as well as how Italians have embraced or resisted that image.
- Analyze literary and cultural texts, situating them in their historical and social context.
- Conduct close, original observation of food environments (markets, restaurants, sites of production) and express those observations into analytical writing.
- Reflect critically on their own positionality as visitors in Italy and evaluate how travel shapes perceptions of authenticity, culture, and identity.

4. Major Topics covered in the Course:

This course uses the lens of food and food culture to explore the following topics as they relate to Italy:

- **Authenticity and National Identity**
What does it mean for a food to be “authentically” Italian? How have ideas about Italian cuisine been shaped by tourism, migration, media, and popular culture? Students examine how food contributes to national identity while reflecting on their own assumptions and expectations as visitors to Italy.
- **Geography, History, and Regional Identity**
How have geography, history, and local traditions shaped the diversity of Italian regional cuisines? Students explore the relationship between regional and national identities through topics including the Columbian Exchange and the incorporation of New World ingredients, the historical development of regional food cultures, and the contributions of minority communities, such as Roman Jews and Afro-Italians, to Italian culinary traditions.
- **Migration and Belonging**
How do the movement of people, ingredients, and ideas reshape food cultures over time? Through literary texts, films, markets, museums, and experiential learning, students examine *cucina povera*, internal migration within Italy, immigration and cultural exchange, the Italian diaspora, and the ways food expresses memory, belonging, and evolving regional and national identities.

6. Required Readings and Materials:

Materials:

- Physical notebook (can be any size as long as it is portable and convenient for student) and writing utensil to take notes while on site visits.
- A smart phone (or similar) for taking photos, videos, and audio while out in the city. You will also need a device that can access Google Classroom.
- Required readings come from various sources and will be available via Google classroom either via hyperlinks or posted as PDFs. All materials will be available to download before departure since WiFi abroad may be unreliable. See Tentative Schedule for more specifics.

Core Texts:

Massimo Montanari, *Food is Culture* (2006), excerpts

John Dickie, *Delizia: The Epic History of Italians and Their Food* (2008), excerpts.

David Gentilcore, *Pomodoro! A History of the Tomato in Italy* (2010), excerpts.

Excerpts from these materials will be provided by the instructor under Fair Use terms according to Copyright law. Students are not required to purchase these books.

Film and Media:

Stanley Tucci: Searching for Italy (2021) and *Tucci in Italy* (2025), selected episodes.

Mid-august Lunch (2008)

From Scratch (2022), selected episodes.

Additional readings and media will be available online or via Google Classroom.

7. Graded Assignments:

- **Participation (20%)**

Participation is a key part of our course! You will learn the most if you are engaging with your surroundings, following instructions, actively listening to lectures or discussion, and actively participating. Electronic devices can be used briefly and thoughtfully to capture images, sounds, or videos when on site, but should not distract you from the local environment or inhibit your interactions with your instructor and classmates.

- **Weekly Food Field Notes (20%)**

Each week, students write a 500-750 word field note that connects one course reading or piece of media with observations from an on-site activity. Weekly field notes include observations and reflections, and students are welcome (and encouraged!) to include photos and/or short video clips. While each note will have specific guiding questions based on place and site visits, each weekly note will ask students to:

- Describe what you see. Use your senses and be specific.
- Interpret what you see. Ask yourself what historical, cultural, or social meanings be behind your observations? Draw on course materials. If you don't have or know an answer, you can ask it in your note!
- Reflect on what you see and what you learned. How did your experience challenge, complicate, or reinforce your understanding of Italian food and identity? Resist stereotypes and be open-minded!

- **Rome Assignment: Photo Essay (15%)**

Using original photographs taken during your time in Rome, create a photo essay that examines how food reflects the city's history, culture, and identity. Select 6–8 photographs from markets, neighborhoods, restaurants, cafés, food shops, museums, or other food-related spaces. For each image, write a brief analytical caption (approximately 100-150 words) that explains what is in the photo and why you found it important for Roman food culture.

- **Florence Assignment: Walking Tour/Digital Map (15%)**

Envision how you would share Florence's food culture with someone who was visiting the city for the first time. Select five locations that together tell a story about Florentine or Tuscan food culture. Your tour may include markets, cafés, bakeries, restaurants, public spaces, museums, specialty food shops, or other significant sites. For each stop, provide a brief description of the location, explain why it is significant to the themes of the course. Your goal is not to recommend the "best" places to eat, but to curate an experience that helps visitors understand how geography, history, migration, and cultural traditions have shaped food and identity in Florence. You can write this out as

a guide, create your own Google Map, record a series of short form videos for social media, or use any other instructor-approved format.

- **Final Project: (30%)**

Throughout the semester, you've collected photos, videos, and observations from markets, neighborhoods, and food sites across Rome and Florence. For your final project, you'll curate this material into a comparative exhibit that puts the two cities in conversation with each other. Choose one course theme to focus your comparison (ex. migration and diaspora, religious or ethnic foodways, commerce and markets, tourism and authenticity, or another theme we've discussed that resonates with you). If this theme connects to something in your own background or home food culture, you're welcome to say so briefly in your through-line statement, but this is not required, and the exhibit itself should stay focused on Rome and Florence. Build an exhibit that does the following:

- Select 6–10 artifacts, split across both cities, that speak to your chosen theme. These can be photos, short video clips, audio you recorded on-site, or a quotation from an interview or a text.
- Annotate each artifact (75–100 words). For each one, explain what it shows and why it matters to your theme. Draw on course readings, lectures, and site visits to ground your interpretation.
- Write a comparative through-line statement (one paragraph). What does putting Rome and Florence side-by-side reveal about your theme that looking at either city alone wouldn't? Don't just summarize! Make an argument about what you've seen.
- Present your exhibit in a live gallery talk (5 minutes). Walk us through your theme and a few key artifacts, then take 1–2 questions from your classmates.

Work will be graded on this scale:

90 – 100 A

80 – 89 B

70 – 79 C

60 – 69 D

Below 60 E (F)

This course will be graded on this basis, without regard to other scales (i.e., plus-and-minus) which may apply at your college or university. Note KIS/WKU does not award +/- grades, only full letter grades.

8. Generative AI Policy:

Generative AI is permitted/encouraged in some ways, with proper attribution, but prohibited in other ways.

Students are allowed, encouraged, and even required to use Generative AI in some ways but are prohibited from using it in other ways. Keep in mind that any content produced by generative AI can “hallucinate” (produce false information), so students are responsible for ensuring the accuracy of any AI-generated content. Examples of citing AI are available at: <https://libguides.wku.edu/stylewrite/ai>.

Students are permitted and encouraged to use generative AI in the following ways:

- Brainstorming: You may use generative AI to stimulate creativity, generate ideas, or brainstorm topics for papers, presentations, and discussions. The generated content must serve as a steppingstone, not a final product.

- Citation Assistance: AI tools can be used to manage, format, and organize citations and references, promoting adherence to academic writing standards and specific style guides required for individual assignments.
- Grammar and Style Checking: AI-powered writing enhancement tools may be used to help with spelling, grammar, syntax, and stylistic errors.
- Concept Understanding: Generative AI can be used to explain or simulate concepts taught in class, aiding in a deeper understanding.
- Research Assistance: AI can be used to conduct initial research, compile data, and summarize articles, books, or papers. It should not replace traditional research methods but rather enhance them.

You may not use generative AI in coursework in the following ways:

- Plagiarism: Using AI-generated content as your original work without attribution. This includes essays, papers, presentations, and exam answers.
- Data Manipulation: Using AI tools to alter data or create misleading information.
- Misrepresentation of Skills: Using generative AI to complete tasks that are meant to assess your knowledge and skills.
- Confidentiality Breach: Using AI tools that might violate KIIS/university policies or laws related to data privacy and confidentiality.

Metacognitive Reflection. In addition to a proper citation, the student should include the following statement with any assignment where generative AI is used for assistance.

"I used generative AI [INSERT NAME OF PLATFORM] for assistance in the following ways on this assignment: [INSERT WAYS USED, such as brainstorming, citation assistance, grammar and style checking, concept understanding, and research assistance, etc.]."

9. 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.

10. 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, 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, 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.

11. 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) or WKU's Title IX Investigator, Michael Crowe (270-745-5429 / 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/>.

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.

12. Tentative Schedule

Week 1: Imagining Italian Food

Read:

- Montanari, "Introduction" to *Food is Culture* (2004)
- Gina Pace, "UNESCO Just Awarded Italian One of the World's Most Prestigious Cultural Honors," (2025) in [Food and Wine](#).
- Emiko Davies, "What does Italian cooking's UNESCO status really mean?" (2026) on [Substack](#).

Watch:

- *Mid-august Lunch* (2008) available on Kanpoy.
- Trailers for *Searching for Italy* (2021) and *Tucci in Italy* (2025)

Visit:

- Trastevere neighborhood and market
- Campo de' Fiori market
- Trajan's Market
- GARUM Museo di Cucina

Week 2: Regional Identities, Histories, Geographies

Read:

- Dickie, "Rome: Mussolini's Rustic Village" and "Rome, 1954: Miracle Food" in *Delizia*
- Katie Parla, "Gricia, Amatriciana, Carbonara: The Origins of Rome's Pasta Classics" (2018) in [serious eats](#).
- Igiaba Scego, "[Sausages](#)" (trans. Bellesia and Poletto, 2005)
- Sean Wyer, "[Peeling back the artichoke leaves: symbolism and origin stories in Jewish-Roman culture](#)" (2024) in *Food, Culture, and Society*.

Watch:

- S.1 Ep. 2 "Rome" from *Searching for Italy* and/or S. 1 Ep. 5 "Lazio" from *Tucci in Italy*

Visit:

- Testaccio / Porta Portese market
- Esquiline Market
- Jewish Ghetto / Jewish Museum
- FAO Museum

Week 3: Commerce and Exchange in Tuscany and Beyond

Read:

- Gentilcore, Ch. 1 and 4 in *Pomodoro!*
- Dickie, "Florence. 1891: Pellegrino Artusi" in *Delizia*
- Carlo Petrini, *Slow Food Nation* (2007), excerpt
- Giovanni Boccaccio, Day 6, novella 4 from *Decameron* (ca. 1350)

Watch:

- Selected episodes, *The Medici*, available on Netflix.
- S.1 Ep. 1, "Tuscany" from *Tucci in Italy* available on [YouTube](#)

Visit:

- Mercato Centrale
- Street food sites
- Palazzo Pitti / Uffizi Gallery
- Day trip to *agriturismo* or cooking class

Week 4: Migration, Identity, and Belonging**Read:**

- Montanari, "Food, Language, Identity" in *Food is Culture*
- Gentilcore, Ch. 7 in *Pomodoro!*
- Dante, *Paradiso*, excerpt

Watch:

- Selected Episodes, *From Scratch*, available on Netflix.

Visit:

- Sant'Ambrogio market
- Santa Croce

Present

- Final Projects