

SAR HS 408

Mediterranean Diet: Food, Culture and Health – HUB Version

Instructors: Drs. Quatromoni & Salge-Blake

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Office Hours: Daily, after class

Course Dates: June 2022

Course Time & Location: 9:00 – 12:30

Course Credits: 4 credits

There is no TA/TF/Learning Assistant for this course

Course Description

This course is a four-week, 4 credit summer study abroad course taught by Boston University faculty at the BU in Italy study abroad program in Padua, Italy. How does the Mediterranean region offer unique opportunities to introduce students to the Mediterranean lifestyle and its relationship to culture, society, promotion of health, and prevention of disease? Students will be exposed to food and eating patterns within the Italian way of life and aspects of Italian culture, agriculture, the food industry, and public health resources. The course will culminate with an immersion in the scientific evidence demonstrating the benefits of the Mediterranean eating pattern to prevent chronic health conditions including diabetes, heart disease, Alzheimer's disease and cancer. Classroom experiences will be combined with hands-on workshops and activities in the local community where students will explore local resources in and around the city of Padua along with immersion experiences in the homes of host families.

Course Objectives:

- To understand the characteristics, food/nutrient components, and regional/global variations of the Mediterranean Diet.
- To experience the Mediterranean diet and its associated lifestyle through cultural immersion in the city of Padua in the Veneto region of Italy; and to compare and contrast the lifestyle, environmental, and behavioral characteristics of a Mediterranean culture and its food industry to the U.S. experience.
- To apply critical thinking skills to reading published nutrition research evaluating the effects of the Mediterranean diet on selected health outcomes (specifically cardiovascular disease, metabolic disease, cancer and Alzheimer's disease).

Hub Learning Outcomes

Individual in the Community

Learning Outcome 1: Students will analyze the cultural dimensions of experience that inform their own worldviews and beliefs as well as those of other individuals and societies.

- Students will **articulate** their preconceived notion of the Mediterranean diet before taking this course, and **describe** how their understanding changes as they experience the lifestyle once immersed in a home stay with a host family in the community of Padua, as they learn about regional variations across Mediterranean countries, and as they travel throughout the region and

experience different kinds of communities (urban, suburban, farming, coastal, etc) during the program. This practice will begin in the first week of the course and will constitute the first entry in the reflections journal, a journal that students will continue to add to weekly throughout the course.

- Students will **compare and contrast** their personal belief systems and their own experiences of health, wellness, lifestyle, behavior, and food choices shaped by their own culture and personal up-bringing in relation to their new cultural context they experience and observe in the Mediterranean region. The reflections journal, Photo Voice and blog post assignments each provide opportunity for this learning to be demonstrated.

Learning Outcome 2: Students will participate respectfully in different communities during the study abroad experience and will recognize and reflect on the issues relevant to those communities.

- Students will **participate** in a wide variety of cultural activities (including family meals in their home stay, culinary workshops, food industry and agricultural/farming field trips, hikes in the mountains, etc) in this international setting and will have multiple opportunities to **reflect** on the issues relevant to health promotion outcomes for individuals in different communities. The reflections journal, Photo Voice and blog post assignments each provide opportunity for this learning to be demonstrated.
- Students will **observe, identify, capture** (via digital photographs) **and illustrate** factors in the Italian community that represent facilitators or obstacles to adherence to the health-promoting Mediterranean lifestyle. Narrative interpretations will accompany each digital photo. The series of six Photo Voice assignments collectively addresses factors at the level of the Individual, Family, Marketplace, Community, Organizations & Institutions, and Policy or Environment that students are prompted and required to respond to.

Global Citizenship and Intercultural Literacy

Learning Outcome 1: Students will demonstrate, through comparative analysis, an understanding of global diversity as expressed in at least two different cultures or societies (their home culture/society; their BU culture/society, and the Mediterranean culture/society).

- Students will demonstrate an understanding of global diversity by **comparing and contrasting** the U.S. way of life to the Mediterranean lifestyle in their weekly reflections journal.
- Students will **analyze and reflect** upon the cultural differences between their own personal lifestyle behaviors that influence health and wellness (specifically diet and physical activity) in the context of their home family environment where they were raised and also (if different) their experience as a college student living in a major U.S. city (Boston), in relation to the Mediterranean lifestyle.

Learning Outcome 2: Students will demonstrate a detailed understanding of at least two cultural contexts through this study abroad course. This course will involve reflection on the challenges and pleasures students discover in orienting themselves in new and unfamiliar cultures.

- Immersion in a home stay in Padua, Italy for a month-long study abroad experience presents students with both challenges and pleasures in a new and unfamiliar culture. This experience allows students to develop and demonstrate, through **reflective writing and guided in-class**

discussion activities, an understanding of cultural contexts of diet and other personal behaviors that influence health (namely physical activity, sustainable agriculture, zero kilometer procurement of food, conviviality, and religious influences on food traditions, as experienced in the Jewish ghettos of Padua and Venice).

Creativity/Innovation

Learning Outcome 1: Students will demonstrate understanding of creativity as a learnable, iterative process of imagining new possibilities that involves risk-taking, use of multiple strategies, and reconceiving in response to feedback, and will be able to identify individual and institutional factors that promote and inhibit creativity.

- Creativity will be expressed predominantly through food as students will **engage** in several hands-on culinary workshops where they prepare foods from scratch, like pasta and pizza, using whole food ingredients native to the Mediterranean region. Student will be guided by professional chefs and will have several mentored opportunities that build on themselves during the course to try different techniques, equipment, tools and ingredients. Learning will be assessed via participation, blog posts, and/or the reflections journal.
- Students will be **guided** through several sensory evaluation experiences, for example, evaluating a variety of cheeses, meats, ancient grains, olives, olive oils and wine from the Veneto region of Italy. Students will be encouraged to try foods that are unfamiliar to them and/or foods that may not be a part of their personal eating pattern. Guided sensory evaluation exercises will build new skills that support mindful eating by teaching students to be present in the food experience, to fully experience the color, texture, shape, form, aroma, flavor, mouthfeel and personal reaction to each food they experience. Learning will be assessed via participation, blog posts, and/or the reflections journal.
- Students will **learn** and **practice** new techniques for planning, selecting, preparing and enjoying foods that are staples in the Mediterranean diet. Collectively, these course activities will provide students with a creative learning experience as well as sustainable life skills that they will bring home with them for personal and/or professional use. Students will learn and practice new methods of food preparation during their time abroad, in class, through workshops and in the home stay. Students will document these experiences and creative ideas in their weekly reflections journal.

Learning Outcome 2: Students will be able to exercise their own potential for engaging in creative activity by conceiving and executing original work either alone or as part of a team.

- Students will **engage** in in-class discussions and will **document** ideas in their weekly reflections journal where they will be challenged to creatively envision how to bring key aspects of the Mediterranean lifestyle back to the U.S. to creatively imagine new strategies for sustaining the health-promoting aspects of the Mediterranean lifestyle outside of the Mediterranean region. Examples of strategies will relate to personal food choice, nutrition education/communication, food preparation, food access, marketing, affordability, sustainability, and/or lifestyle factors like daily physical activity and conviviality. These strategies may be promoted and applied at the personal level, or they may be applied to individuals, families, communities, organizations,

environments, or policies in the setting of health promotion interventions, programs, communications and campaigns.

Other Outcomes (e.g., School, Department, and/or Program Outcomes)

This course is approved as a Public Health elective for the Public Health minor at Boston University.

Instructional Format, Course Pedagogy, and Approach to Learning

This course uses a variety of instructional formats including lecture, in-class discussion, guest speakers, field trips, and experiential learning. Traditional assessment of knowledge gained is assessed using quizzes. A variety of course assignments build students' skills and are used to assess learning outcomes more comprehensively including the creation of digital media, written blog posts to practice mass communications, and student-led research critiques to enhance public speaking, teaching and presentation skills. The use of a weekly reflections journal will demonstrate social-emotional and cultural learning outcomes in addition to cognitive learning that has occurred over the course of the study abroad experience.

Books and Other Course Materials

There is no textbook for this course. A collection of articles will be assigned for Required Readings, posted to the Blackboard site.

Courseware

A course website is accessible on Blackboard Learn.

Assignments and Grading

The following assignments are required in this course: Quizzes (2), Photo Voice assignments in response to specific prompts (6); written critique of an assigned research article; assigned blog post; weekly reflections journal.

Quiz Average	25%
Photo Voice	25%
Research Critique	20%
Blog Post	15%
Reflections Journal	10%
Class Participation	5%

Resources/Support/How to Succeed in This Course

1. The Professor is available to meet with students daily, before and after class. There is no TA and no tutor available for this course. The program directors and staff of BU in Padua are also available to assist students, particularly with issues related to tech support, general information, travel, safety, home stays and other logistics of the study abroad experience.
2. **Accommodations for Students with Documented Disabilities:** If you are a student with a disability or believe you might have a disability that requires accommodations, please contact the Office for Disability Services (ODS) at (617) 353-3658 or access@bu.edu to coordinate any reasonable

accommodation requests. ODS is located at 25 Buick Street. For more information, please visit: <http://www.bu.edu/disability>

Community of Learning: Class and University Policies

1. Faculty, guest speakers, tour hosts and students are responsible for ensuring a **positive learning environment** through active and respectful participation in all class-related activities, lectures, discussions, field trips and events. Students are responsible for leading the in-class discussions in the final week of the course when they are assigned in small groups to critique a scientific research article and lead a case presentation following standardized guidelines. Class participation contributes to 5% of the final grade in this course.
2. **Attendance & Absences:** Boston University Padua students are expected to attend each and every class session, tutorial, and field trips required for the class. Students should note that attendance will be taken into account by faculty when determining final grades. Please notice that weekend trips and family visits are not acceptable reasons for either lateness or absence.
3. **Policy on Religious Observance:** Boston University's Office of the University Registrar states, 'The University, in scheduling classes on religious holidays and observances, intends that students observing those traditions be given ample opportunity to make up work. Faculty members who wish to observe religious holidays will arrange for another faculty member to meet their classes or for cancelled classes to be rescheduled.' See Chapter 151C of the General Laws, Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Assignment Completion & Late Work. Students will submit assignments through the Blackboard Learn site unless otherwise instructed. In the international setting, it is understood that some students do not have access to printers in their home stays and occasionally, technological issues arise. The faculty and staff in BU in Padua can assist when students respectfully make their needs known in a timely manner and ask for help. All assignments must be posted to the course Blackboard site on their due date or handed in in class. Late assignments will only be accepted with prior approval, and are due by 4:00 on their negotiated due date. All work is to be done independently. Unless otherwise specified, assignments are not group projects. Written assignments should be typed, well-organized, and professionally prepared.

Academic Conduct Statement: Simply stated, plagiarism is taking another's work and presenting it as you own. Dictionary definitions of plagiarism frequently include terms such as 'theft' or 'steal'. Plagiarism is, in fact, intellectual theft. It is one of the most serious forms of academic misconduct. Plagiarism committed by a student will certainly result in course failure and may result in suspension or dismissal.

For more details please see Boston University's Academic Conduct Code:

<https://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/>