Throughout the world, Italy is known for the pleasures of the table and its local agricultural traditions. Due to its geographic position and particular history, Italians have retained strong local and regional food customs that have helped to protect their cultures from the homogenized industrialization of the “western diet.” Although the Valley of the Sun also has a rich, diverse agricultural history of its own, it remains invisible to many of its current inhabitants due to the growth and fluidity of the area’s population. How do the strong local food identities in Italy influence its food networks? How can those of us who live in Maricopa County encourage identification with local farm networks despite a lack of marked food histories and identities? This course will help answer those questions by providing students with the opportunity to work on small-scale organic (“biologico”) farms in both Phoenix and San Severino, Italy. Through their experiential learning on the farms and research on the local networks and national food movements, as well as reflection through written logs and discussion, students will answer these important questions about cultural identities and local food production.

Students will take 3 credits of ITA/SOS 394 in Spring 2018. During that semester, they will work a total of 40 hours on Maya’s Farm in Phoenix, keep a digital log in which they reflect on their experiential learning and their research, and meet bimonthly as a class for discussion. At the same time, students will take either ITA 101 or ITA 110 (unless they already have an intermediate proficiency in the language) in preparation for their study abroad experience in June. Students will participate in the Italian Language and Culture San Severino, Italy program, where they will earn 3 credits of ITA/SOS 494/598 and 3 credits of Italian language (ITA 194 or ITA 294). As in the spring, students will work for a total of 40 hours on a small-scale local Italian farm, keep a digital log, and participate in regular class discussions. Students will work at one of two local Italian farms, Azienda Agricola Biologica Mariani or Fattoria Le Origini, which are certified organic, so students will also be able to compare the regulatory process in both localities for obtaining and maintaining that status. Additionally, Fattoria Le Origini is a zero emissions “agriturismo” farm, which could benefit students interested in sustainable tourism or the food-water-energy nexus in farming in an applied setting. Finally, at the end of the study abroad experience, students will give a short media presentation about their comparative experiences on both farms.

Program Objectives:

- Provide on-farm skills development (40 hours on each farm)
- Compare and analyze the cultural factors that affect small scale farming in two different cultures
• Compare and analyze the environmental factors that affect small scale farming in two different cultures
• Compare and analyze the role of the farms in two different food systems and communities (including the effects of local, national, and transnational policies)
• Compare and analyze two different systems for organic certification
• Compare and analyze the role of local farms in terms of the Slow Food movement’s goals of “good, clean, and fair”

Students will participate in a variety of on-farm experiences with the goal of comparing the cultural, environmental, and political/economic issues that affect the following areas:

• Crops produced
• Farming styles and technologies
• Food distribution
• Farmer’s position in the community and local food network
• Local, national, and transnational policies
• Organic certification
• The intersection of food, hospitality, and tourism
• Sustainable agriculture

As mentioned above, students will be expected to keep a digital log in which they describe their experiential education on the farms and analyze the two small-scale farms in terms of the subjects listed above. Logs will be reviewed by the professor on a bi-weekly basis during the semester and on a weekly basis during the summer program in Italy. During the second part of the program in San Severino, students will also compare and contrast the two farms according to each subject in preparation for the creation of a media presentation at the end of the program in which they will also offer suggestions about how we might develop stronger connections to local food traditions in our own communities.

Farm Websites:

*Maya’s Farm* in Phoenix  [http://mayasfarm.com/]
*Fattoria Le Origini*  [http://www.fattorialeorigini.it/]
*Azienda Agricola Biologica Mariani*  [http://www.biologicamariani.it/]
Syllabus
ITA/SOS 394
Spring 2018
Comparative Cultures of Sustainable Farming

Students will gain knowledge about local, sustainable, organic farming through 40 hours of experiential learning with a farmer and local food activist, Maya Dailey, at Maya’s Farm and at the Phoenix Farmers Market where products from the farm are sold. In addition, students will have weekly readings about sustainable, small-scale organic farming by food activists in both the U.S. and in Italy. In the first few weeks of the semester students will pick a topic for their own research on the cultural, social, and/or political factors that affect Maya’s farm and its role in the local food network. Students will then begin to create visual essays using the platform of Adobe Spark to collect texts, videos, images about their topic and combine those artifacts with their own analysis. Students will meet with Prof. Vitullo for Wednesday afternoon classes in which they discuss the readings, and give bimonthly updates about their research. During the last class of the semester they will present the visual essay to the class. Later in San Severino during the month of June, students will continue the visual essay, comparing their analysis of the local food network in Phoenix to the one they experience in Italy.

Evaluated Activities for ITA 394

- Responsible, Active Engagement in Farm Practicum: 50%
- Active Participation in Class Discussions about Readings: 15%
- Lead 30-Minute Class Discussion: 10%
- Creation and Presentation of Visual Essay: 25%

Separate grading criteria will be given to students for each of these categories.

Responsible, Active Engagement in Farm Practicum:

In order to get full credit for the practicum, students must sign up and complete 40 hours of experiential learning on the farm or at the Phoenix Farmers Market. They must be responsible about signing up for work sessions in advance, arriving on time, actively engaging in the on-farm tasks, and completing the necessary documentation of their hours and participation.

Students should plan on completing their practicum hours on Monday afternoons (4 hours), Wednesday mornings (4 hours), and Saturdays (8 hours). Hours will be available from January 22 until April 21.
Students also need to dress appropriately for participating in farm activities by wearing close-toed shoes, comfortable work clothes that allow them to move, and work gloves. Students should also consider wearing hats, and using sunscreen.

Students should immediately communicate with Maya Dailey and with Prof. Vitullo if they have any physical limitations. During the semester if any of the farm activities cause students discomfort or pain, they should also communicate that to Maya and Prof. Vitullo as soon as possible. If that happens, alternative activities will be assigned.

**Active Participation in Class Discussion about Readings:**

Since this is a small class that meets only once a week, your attendance and participation is important. If you are not able to attend because of illness or a family emergency, please contact Prof. Vitullo before class begins. Students’ participation in class discussions will be assessed after each lesson; the assessment will be based on students’ ability to reference the text in class and to participate at least 3 times in the class discussion.

**Lead 30-Minute Class Discussion**

Each student will lead a 40-minute Class Presentation/Discussion about one of the assigned texts during the semester. Students should prepare a 5-10 minute Powerpoint Presentation reviewing the main points of the reading and discussion questions. They should also help the class make connections between the text and other class readings as well as their own experiences on Maya’s Farm.

**Creation and Presentation of Visual Essay:**

Students will need to include at least 6 different texts, images, or videos in their visual essay and a short analysis of each entry. During the third week of the semester students will be trained in the platform of Adobe Spark and will need to have chosen a topic for their research.
Calendar

1/10  Introduction

1/17  Discussion of Slow Food Movement/Sign-up for Practicum Hours/Sign-up for leading class discussions

1/24  Training in Platform for Visual Essay/Discussion of Research Topics

1/31  Class Discussion Led by a Student

2/7   Research Updates

2/14  Class Discussion Led by a Student

2/21  Research Updates

2/28  Class Discussion Led by a Student

3/7   Spring Break

3/14  Class Cancelled

3/21  Research Update

3/28  Class Discussion Led by a Student

4/4   Research Update

4/11  Class Discussion Led by a Student

4/18  Class Discussion Led by a Student

4/25  Presentations about Visual Essays/Final Practicum Logs Due