

Title: Season 2, Episode #7: Slow It Down: Sustainable Food Practices Through Project-Based Learning

Mary Loder:

Welcome to Course Stories produced by the instructional design and new media team of EdPlus at Arizona State University. In this podcast, we tell an array of course design stories alongside other ASU online designers and faculty. On today's course story...

Chiara Dal Martello:

We have students in our in-person class of courses that they start having Slow Food Tuesday with their roommates-

Mary Loder:

Love that.

Chiara Dal Martello:

... so that they can have one meal every week that they're sitting down together, and maybe they take turns in cooking or providing.

Mary Loder:

It would be interesting to get some of those stories, and see how many of our online students were also doing that in their own space, right? Because so much of it is where you are and where you live and being connected to that space.

Chiara Dal Martello:

We hear more and more from our online students because they can also come with us for a week to Italy. And we have a GIE, a global intensive experience, that is open to all students, and we had at least maybe six or seven online students, also because some of them already lived in Europe.

Ricardo Leon:

Oh yes. Yes.

Mary Loder:

That's amazing.

Chiara Dal Martello:

To make it easier, we have one woman that just flew down from England, right?

Mary Loder:

Yeah.

London Skiles:

I know they're all adults, but do you guys need chaperones? Because I'm available.

Mary Loder:

You never know. You never...

Mary Loder:

Hi, I'm Mary Loder, an instructional designer from ASU Online.

Ricardo Leon:

I'm Ricardo Leon. I'm a media specialist at the same place.

Mary Loder:

Yeah, we work together.

Ricardo Leon:

Let's get on with the show.

Mary Loder:

Okay.

Mary Loder:

We'll have to clink in front of the mic, and use the wine opener in front of the mic, which someone else is going to have to do because I've got [inaudible 00:01:58].

Chiara Dal Martello:

[foreign language 00:01:59].

Ricardo Leon:

Grab this one, Ricardo

Chiara Dal Martello:

I guess I learned. You haven't had learned.

Mary Loder:

Are we recording right now?

Ricardo Leon:

Yeah.

Mary Loder:

So we can just-

Chiara Dal Martello:

So we can get-

Juliann Vitullo:

It's not going to pop. It's not going to pop if you use that.

Chiara Dal Martello:

You didn't have lunch? This is lunch.

Juliann Vitullo:

Oh, I need a...

Ricardo Leon:

One more.

Mary Loder:

No, but this stuff-

Chiara Dal Martello:

You opened up tuna pasta [foreign language 00:02:05].

Juliann Vitullo:

It's not going to pop with that.

Mary Loder:

Oh we don't want to pop it. Just the sound of that, but hold on, I got to...

London Skiles:

We had a little snack. I had a little, not a whole lunch.

Mary Loder:

Got it?

London Skiles:

Kind of just press-

Juliann Vitullo:

Wow!

London Skiles:

And then press-

Ricardo Leon:

Whoa!

Mary Loder:
Yes, yes. Keep going-

Juliann Vitullo:
I want that.

Mary Loder:
... and we'll stop when it's ready. Keep going down.

Chiara Dal Martello:
Go down. Go down. Yeah.

Mary Loder:
And stop. And then back up.

London Skiles:
Yeah, pull it out.

Mary Loder:
Pull out. Yep. And then we back up. Let's go forward.

Ricardo Leon:
Oh, so you don't even have to pull.

Mary Loder:
Get this guy to aerate it, cause I mean, if it's going to be bad wine, we might as well try, as much as we can, to make it good.

Juliann Vitullo:
That seems like a big cop out.

Mary Loder:
Yeah.

Ricardo Leon:
You guys want some stuff?

Juliann Vitullo:
Nah, I'm good.

Mary Loder:
Are you sure?

Chiara Dal Martello:
A little capresse?

Mary Loder:
Not even my capresse salad that I made?

Chiara Dal Martello:
It's beautiful.

Mary Loder:
I'm insulted.

Chiara Dal Martello:
You did so good.

Mary Loder:
Thank you.

Chiara Dal Martello:
It's funny because when we first started teaching this course, we would make this in class the first day with the students-

Mary Loder:
Oh, how fun!

Chiara Dal Martello:
... till we hear that we're not bringing food in class, right? But then at the end of the class, students could have a little mozzarella and tomatoes with basil.

Juliann Vitullo:
It's delicious.

Ricardo Leon:
Are we ready to begin?

Juliann Vitullo:
I'm already beginning-

Ricardo Leon:
All right.

Juliann Vitullo:

... it's delicious.

Ricardo Leon:
Hi Mary.

Mary Loder:
Hi Ricardo.

Ricardo Leon:
How are you today?

Mary Loder:
I'm good, how are you?

Ricardo Leon:
I'm great.

Mary Loder:
I'm awesome. I'm actually shoving food in my face.

Ricardo Leon:
Why are we shoving food in our face right now?

Mary Loder:
I'll talk with my mouth full, because it's the last season, and we had to feed our feelings because we're sad it's ending.

Ricardo Leon:
Last episode of the season.

Mary Loder:
Oh yeah, that's how you say it. I'm very much concentrating on the food and amazing opportunity to speak to some instructors from the School of International Letters and Cultures, also known as, acronym for it? Is there one?

Juliann Vitullo:
SILC.

Mary Loder:
SILC! 'Cause there's always an acronym.

Chiara Dal Martello:
It's a good one.

Mary Loder:

No, it's actually a really good one. We're very lucky. This is a course focused on food and the Italian culture.

Ricardo Leon:

Mediterranean Lifestyle. MCO. What is it? MCO?

Mary Loder:

No, it's not MCO.

Juliann Vitullo:

ITA.

Ricardo Leon:

ITA.

Mary Loder:

ITA. Italian.

Ricardo Leon:

[inaudible 00:04:11] MCO.

Mary Loder:

Come on, get with the program.

Chiara Dal Martello:

What it [inaudible 00:04:14]?

Mary Loder:

Just kidding.

London Skiles:

MTA380.

Mary Loder:

[inaudible 00:04:15] 350.

Ricardo Leon:

ITA-

London Skiles:

I met with you on [inaudible 00:04:21] years, so I'm still in 380 mode.

Mary Loder:

It's all confusing for us. There's only acronyms and then course codes, and there's thousands of them.

Ricardo Leon:

ITA350 is the course that we are focusing on today, and to make it a little special, we have incorporated a Mediterranean lifestyle meal to join us today in our conversation. I don't know how authentic it is, but we can talk about that. We have some olives, and we have some prosciutto and some, what's that? That's...

Mary Loder:

Artichokes?

Mary Loder:

And cheese.

Ricardo Leon:

A lot of stuff here. Chorizo. Chorizo is what I was going to say, so that's not-

Chiara Dal Martello:

No, salami.

Ricardo Leon:

... not authentic.

Chiara Dal Martello:

No [foreign language 00:05:04]. There's-

Mary Loder:

And herbs too. There's basil...

Chiara Dal Martello:

Si, Basil-

Mary Loder:

From my garden.

Chiara Dal Martello:

[foreign language 00:05:09].

Mary Loder:

From Mary's garden.

Mary Loder:
Yes.

Ricardo Leon:
Oh, fresh basil.

Chiara Dal Martello:
Basil, cold cuts, like soppressa, salami, pepperoni.

Mary Loder:
And a pesto also made with herbs. With basil.

Chiara Dal Martello:
And of course, some cheese!

Ricardo Leon:
Some cheese, yes. I don't know how Italian that cheese is, but there are cheese there. Listener, we're not just telling you to be jealous. We want you to actually join us. As you listen, go down to your local Italian eatery and enjoy this as we have this conversation. Mary, who is going to be running this conversation? Who's going to be the interviewer? I see [inaudible 00:05:45].

Mary Loder:
I had to get it all down. London Skiles.

Ricardo Leon:
London Skiles.

Mary Loder:
This is London Skiles.

Ricardo Leon:
This is London Skiles. How are you today, London?

London Skiles:
Hi Ricardo. I'm good. How are you?

Ricardo Leon:
Good, good. How about you tell us about yourself?

London Skiles:
About myself? Well, I am an instructional designer with EdPlus, and I am the instructional designer that works for the School of International Letters and Cultures. I did not have the

privilege of being the designer to work with Chiara and Juliann on this course, but I am the one that's going to be interviewing them today.

Ricardo Leon:

And ladies, would you please introduce yourselves?

Juliann Vitullo:

I'm Juliann Vitullo, and I'm an associate professor of Italian, and I'm also co-director of the Humanities lab.

Chiara Dal Martello:

And I'm Chiara Dal Martello, and I'm a principal lecturer in SILC, in the School of International Letters and Cultures. And I've been teaching Italian language and culture with Juliann since 1996. I'm excited to put all our courses online.

London Skiles:

That's awesome that you're excited to put all your courses online. First of all, let's start there, 'cause not everybody is. Not everybody is.

Chiara Dal Martello:

Yeah. We're going to apply for a minor.

Mary Loder:

Awesome.

Ricardo Leon:

Oh, great.

Chiara Dal Martello:

We're going to put a minor-

Mary Loder:

A lot of great stuff in the works.

Mary Loder:

Very cool.

London Skiles:

So let's talk a little bit about the ITA350 course. It's part of the Science and Society group of courses and requirements. Tell us a little bit about the course itself.

Juliann Vitullo:

We decided to design this course as a science and society course because those courses take

on a social challenge and look at it from both a scientific perspective and also a cultural perspective. We were both interested in the rich and deep history of local food cultures in Italy, and we decided that learning from these local food cultures and how to preserve them would be a great topic for a science and society course.

It also connects to my other role as the co-director of the humanities labs, which are also online now, some of them, because the humanities labs are all based on social challenges and stressing that the humanities are important part of solving them. That when we're looking at social challenges, we really have to think of questions of culture, questions of ethics, historical questions. Those are all the kinds of questions we also ask in this course.

We also started talking to other people on campus, who are working on the Mediterranean diet, and we got in touch with Dr. Tina Shepard, in the School of Health Solutions, and collaborated with her on the science part of the course. She suggested the materials. We needed materials that, for instance, that didn't require a background in chemistry because we don't have a background in chemistry, and also it's not a requirement for this course. We also asked her if she'd agree to work with us in terms of developing the videos for that section of the course. So the way the course is divided is, we initially start out by talking about the history of local Italian food cultures, how they've changed, and also how they've been challenged by the globalized industrialized food system and how they've responded to those challenges. Then there's the scientific aspect, the nutritional aspect, of the course, where we talk about what nutritionists, dietitians, tell us are the benefits of the Mediterranean diet. Then at the end of the course, we go back to looking at the social significance of these local varieties of the Mediterranean diet throughout Italy, but more in the south than the north, and also the environmental advantages of this kind of lifestyle.

London Skiles:

You've mentioned a few times these courses are about the social issues and the challenges. What is the challenge that this course is specifically focused on?

Juliann Vitullo:

The challenge is to create a healthier, more sustainable local food system. We're looking at the local food systems in Italy to see why, for instance, talking about the Southern Italian towns that have been studied because of their local food systems, are considered varieties of the Mediterranean diet or examples of the Mediterranean diet, what makes those healthier? What makes those eating patterns healthier and more sustainable?

It's a little bit tricky because the studies of the Mediterranean diet began in the post-World War II period when Italy was just starting its economic boom, becoming more industrialized. So it was a much more of an agricultural society. We also have to be cognizant of that when we're trying to translate what a Mediterranean diet is in Italy, in a small Italian town, to what principles, what concepts, can we learn from those examples and then translate them to where we live here, which is a very different social context in many different ways. Challenging.

London Skiles:

Very much so. It might be too early to ask this question, but I'm going to jump right in. How did

you present that to your students? What did you think about when you were trying to explain to your students this is the Mediterranean diet and what it means for you here?

Juliann Vitullo:

What we really tried to emphasize is that, first of all, it's a concept. It was a concept created by an American physiologist, Ancel Keys, in the post-World War II period, because he was studying, and he actually lived for a long time, for over 30 years, in a small, southern Italian town. Through his research he discovered that there was many fewer people suffering from cardiovascular disease. He did epidemiological studies about why this was happening, and then he wrote two books that became very popular. His research started to be published in the 1950s, but his big, popular manual came out in the 1970s, and that started this whole branding of the Mediterranean diet. Still today, US News and World Report ranked, the last four years I believe, US News and World Report has branded as the top diet, and we want our students to understand that concept, the scientific concept, the benefits of the diet, but we also want them to understand how it's been branded.

Chiara Dal Martello:

It's not the only one available, it's the only one being studied.

Juliann Vitullo:

Right, and there are a number of things we have to look at, why it has been studied more than other traditional diets, and we have to think about that also in terms of racism and in terms of eurocentrism. So there are a number of factors, but what we really want them to come away with is that, these examples of the Mediterranean diet from Southern Italy, are examples of traditional diets that exist all over the world. And what makes these diets healthy and sustainable is that you have hundreds of years, if not millennia, of knowledge that has built up, by the people working the land or fishing-

Chiara Dal Martello:

Surviving.

Juliann Vitullo:

... or foraging, and they have deep relationships with that land, with the sea, with the plants, with other animals, and it's those relationships that make it healthy and sustainable. The examples we're talking about in Southern Italy are well studied and we have lots of scientific data about them and they're great examples, but they're also examples right here in Arizona where we live.

Mary Loder:

I like that. Eat local, right? Because it's what's made for you.

Juliann Vitullo:

And also really listen to the people who have this traditional or indigenous knowledge, really respect that and seek it out and honor it.

Ricardo Leon:

Do you mind me asking, what are both of yours connections to Italy? To the Mediterranean lifestyle? Just before starting the course?

Chiara Dal Martello:

Do you want me to go first?

Juliann Vitullo:

Yeah.

Chiara Dal Martello:

Okay. Well, I was born in Italy and raised, and actually I come from probably a generation that is dying in Italy, part of a big family of six children, and I'm the youngest. My brothers and sister are older than me, and we were raised in a farm. Both my paternal family and my maternal family are agriculture people, so growing up, we would eat only 90% of what we have was what was grown or raised in the farm. So coming to this country, I've been here 30 years, I was really eager to share my experience, my knowledge, as a child and a teenager, I mean I was almost 30 when I came, so with the young people here and educate them that you don't need to eat fast food. It's not cheaper. It's not healthy.

So that's my take on why I wanted to share the Mediterranean lifestyle, more than just the diet. Because like Juliann said, it's the connection of the people with the territory and where the products come from or from what they come from, the animals and the respect that they have for the land, but also it's a lifestyle. I tell my students that in my family, when I go home, what is the main topic of conversation is food. I'm overwhelmed when I go back now because here we don't talk about food the way we do there. During breakfast, at the end of breakfast, what are you talking about? What are we eating for lunch? What are we doing for dinner? We're all planning ahead in our head. It is something that is really important, and it doesn't necessarily have to be complicated. It's very simple. That's one of the key quality of Italian food. You can have a capresse, a little bit of mozzarella and tomatoes and basil and olive oil, and-

Ricardo Leon:

That's my cue to have one right now.

London Skiles:

Yeah, absolutely. And Juliann?

Juliann Vitullo:

Well I grew up in an Italian-American family, and my family is from a southern region, and we ate a lot of vegetables. I've always loved vegetables, and I was eating a plant-based diet even though I would never have used that term. I was always interested, when I saw the Mediterranean diet advertised, I always was interested in how that connected to my own experience, but also to what I've learned as a scholar of Italian culture. This course was a lot of

fun to put together just to see how the scientific concepts connect to the social patterns. For instance, we've learned that it takes a little time for students to really understand the whole notion of seasonality, in eating seasonally, because we're so far away from it in our industrialized food culture.

Ricardo Leon:
Everything's on demand as well.

Juliann Vitullo:
Everything's on demand.

London Skiles:
We're too lucky.

Chiara Dal Martello:
And available all year round. I wasn't raised like that. We only ate apples in the winter and you only ate grapes in the summer. They weren't available any other time of the year.

Juliann Vitullo:
But from a nutritional point of view, if you're eating according to the season, it's a nutritional advantage, because the foods you're eating contain a variety of phytochemical, of antioxidants, of vitamins, and it's something that happens naturally, just by following the seasons wherever you live. The seasons here in Arizona are going to be very different than, and even in Italy itself-

Chiara Dal Martello:
Yes, in between north and south and the central Italy. I was raised in the north, so still is different than the Mediterranean diet in the South. Another thing I want to add to what Juliann said about, students many time when they read the reading and everything, they understand the concepts but then it's really hard to put to in practice. It's hard to really get them to create a meal that is not an American meal, that is not even an Italian American, it's more a Mediterranean diet like what we're teaching them.

London Skiles:
Yeah, and I think this is a perfect opportunity to talk about the project-based nature of this course, because you guys do a phenomenal project at the end with your students that taps into the sociocultural aspect of food that you talked about and how families talk about food. They engage with each other over food. Talk about that project. Let's first hear a little bit about what the project is and then we'll transition into what that experience was like for students and what they learned from it.

Juliann Vitullo:
We have two projects in which we ask the students to...

Chiara Dal Martello:
Reflect on-

Juliann Vitullo:

To reflect on their own eating patterns and their community's eating patterns and try to connect what they're learning in the course to those patterns. The first one is, we ask students to keep a log for a week of what they're eating, but it's not really detailed in the sense that we're not asking them to measure the food they're eating or calories, we're just, in general-

Chiara Dal Martello:
No, just pay attention-

Juliann Vitullo:

... describe what they're eating, and this is in the section of the course in which they're reading about the nutritional benefits of the Mediterranean diet.

Ricardo Leon:

So is this to get a baseline of what they're currently eating?

Juliann Vitullo:

Yes, and also we ask them to reflect on it in terms of the principles of the Mediterranean diet that they're studying, and I think it's-

Chiara Dal Martello:

Many times they didn't think about it, but they noticed that they eat some kind of animal protein in every meal. "Oh, I noticed that. I didn't think I did that." Or they didn't drink enough water because it is the forgotten nutrient. Or they skip breakfast every day or maybe they have only one meal a day-

London Skiles:

Or they never eat with other people-

Juliann Vitullo:

Right, they're always eating going from class to class.

Chiara Dal Martello:

Forget to walk to school, that that's part of the Mediterranean diet, exercising, which is just walking. It doesn't have to be go to the gym.

Juliann Vitullo:

So we ask them to reflect about it in terms of their own lives, but also to talk about the challenges that they have following these principles. Not only them but other people in their community, to think about it also in larger social and structural terms. But that leads to the next

assignment, the final assignment, when we ask them, in several stages, to develop a meal and prepare it and serve it, that includes the principles of the Mediterranean diet that they're learning about. So they have a chance to develop their own menu, to share that menu with the professors, and with their peers, to get feedback on it. We, once again, ask them to reflect on every aspect of the meal, where they're shopping and why they're shopping there, and we're not evaluating anyone's habits. We really just want people to reflect on their own patterns and also, once again, the social and structural challenges that help shape those patterns. Then finally, they prepare a meal and get the feedback of their friends and family, so it's a whole process.

Mary Loder:

I love how connective the entire class is, connective to other people, connective to culture, connective to the food that you eat, where it comes from, connection to the earth. It's just heartwarming to hear about this class.

Juliann Vitullo:

That's what we really hope students come away, that at a healthy and sustainable food patterns, habits, and systems are relational-

Chiara Dal Martello:

And how important the social aspect is, that you should put your phone down, that you should talk to another person and meditate. It's not always possible, but at least once a day or two or three times a week. We have students in our in-person class, of course, that they start having Slow Food Tuesday with their roommates-

Mary Loder:

I love that.

Chiara Dal Martello:

... so that they can have one meal every week that they're sitting down together, and maybe they take turns in cooking or providing, so I thought that was very, very nice.

Mary Loder:

That's beautiful.

London Skiles:

It would be interesting to get some of those stories and see how many of our online students were also doing that in their own space, because so much of it is where you are and where you live and being connected to that space.

Chiara Dal Martello:

And we hear more and more from our online students because they can also come with us for a week to Italy, and we have a GIE, a global intensive experience, that is open to all students, and we had at least maybe six or seven online students, also because some of them already lived in

Europe.

Ricardo Leon:

Oh yes, yes.

Mary Loder:

That's amazing.

Chiara Dal Martello:

And make it easier, we have one woman that just flew down from England, right?

Mary Loder:

I know they're all adults, but do you guys need chaperones? Because I'm available.

London Skiles:

Same. Same. I also volunteer as tribute if we need that. You just did that this past summer, correct?

Juliann Vitullo:

We did. We did.

Ricardo Leon:

If we need a podcast documenting the whole process, then...

Mary Loder:

Oh we're there. We're going to support you.

Juliann Vitullo:

One EdPlus student, who lives outside of London, she just finished her degree. It was her last course, and so coming to Sicily was the last part of her last course. She had worked and raised two children on a military base while finishing her degree, so her husband had really encouraged her to do this, to come to Sicily with us, and she brought her cap and gown with her, and everywhere we went.

The volcanic soil there is so rich because of Mount Etna. We had a hike on Mount Etna. We had a picture of her and her cap and gown on Mount Etna. We went to a festival in Molto, a small town, and it was just packed with people. She wore a cap and gown, and all these Italians, because they recognized the cap and gown, came up and congratulated her and hugged her. So for her, that was her graduation ceremony.

Mary Loder:

So special.

London Skiles:

Beautiful.

Mary Loder:

That's amazing. That's better than any graduation ceremony I ever had.

London Skiles:

Entire town celebrating you.

Mary Loder:

100%.

London Skiles:

Well, I have to confess, I actually did creep on the course and see some of the student projects. I had to. It was really lovely.

Chiara Dal Martello:

It's really good.

London Skiles:

So let's share a little bit some of the feedback that you got for students and what you learned, because they do present, they have a presentation with slides and photos and it's a way for them to even share that experience with their classmates and with you as the instructors. Talk about the feedback that you've received from students, either through the assignment itself or emails, however they've communicated it to you, on that project at the end.

Juliann Vitullo:

The feedback that really comes to mind is students telling us, both in course evaluations, but also through those projects, that it was a chance for them to share what they've learned about healthier, more sustainable, food communities with their family and friends-

London Skiles:

I love that.

Juliann Vitullo:

... it gave that them a chance to-

Chiara Dal Martello:

To teach other people.

Mary Loder:

Yeah, to pass it on.

Juliann Vitullo:

... to share what they're learning with part of their community, which I think is wonderful.

Chiara Dal Martello:

Yeah, many times they're so excited. They're like, "I can't wait to cook this with my mom or to tell her about what to do," or their best friend or their partner. They're really excited about sharing, not just their experience, but their knowledge.

Juliann Vitullo:

And I've also gotten feedback that they've shared videos from the course. That they've watched a video and then shown it to a family member or a friend, which, it amazes me.

London Skiles:

Well that speaks to the quality and to the engagement.

Mary Loder:

Exactly.

London Skiles:

Which is what we're going for online.

Ricardo Leon:

How are they submitting these? Are these videos that they're putting together or...

Chiara Dal Martello:

It's a video. Right now, in the current course, they do it on Zoom, and they share their slides and they have to speak and tell their stories through the slides. Yes. But the slides need to include all the steps of the project, like the shopping, the preparation, the recipes, the nutrition behind the recipes, so they have to cite from the course reading, and then the experience, the social part, and then the experience of it.

Juliann Vitullo:

We really feel like it brings it all together, 'cause they are citing the readings and documenting the whole experience. We do it in stages. We start halfway through the course and build up to it, so that it's not overwhelming at the end. Especially during Covid-

Chiara Dal Martello:

That was challenging.

Juliann Vitullo:

... and now with inflation. We're also very aware that students are in very different positions, so we are always communicating to them that you don't have to buy special ingredients, you don't have to spend a lot of money or buy certain products. It's not a matter of buying an olive oil from Sicily or buying a-

Chiara Dal Martello:

And after all, the Mediterranean diet from southern Italy was born from poor communities, so we try to explain this to the students. You don't have to make complicated meals. That it can be very simple, and most of the times you can use whatever you have in the house already.

Mary Loder:

In your course, do you have them do a local survey of the seasonal availability of their food? Or is it primarily only focused on Mediterranean?

Juliann Vitullo:

Well, we use those as-

Chiara Dal Martello:

Oh, the native ingredient.

Juliann Vitullo:

Yeah. Yeah. We use the local food systems of southern Italy as examples, but we really want them to check out their own local food systems, so we build that into the assignments. For instance, the first assignment is an assignment where, the third module, that's where we really talk about the concept of the Mediterranean diet and how it developed. We also talk about the concept of Slow Food, which is another concept that came out of a local food community.

Ricardo Leon:

Can you share what that concept is?

Juliann Vitullo:

Sure. The Slow Food movement developed in Italy in the 1980s, and it developed in a small town in northern Italy, Barra, but it was resistance to fast food coming into Italy, in particular to a McDonald's opening in Casa de Espana in Rome. But it took off and, because of Italy's own historical and its own history and geography, local food systems have survived and resisted the influx of fast food. Not completely, but they did resist it. The Slow Food movement came out of this resistance, and it's a movement to preserve our biocultural diversity, especially biocultural agricultural diversity. So when we are talking about Slow Food in the course, we urge students to find out what's going on where they're living, in terms of preserving, maintaining, and helping to evolve, their local agricultural traditions. And one way we do that is in the-

Chiara Dal Martello:

Last project, they have to include a local ingredient, a local native ingredient. It can be a dish, but usually they pick a product.

Juliann Vitullo:

It's interesting because then it also brings up questions about what is a native ingredient? And

we-

Chiara Dal Martello:
It's very interesting.

Juliann Vitullo:
... we really allow students to define it in different ways and to define it for themselves, so it could be an ingredient that's really important for their family, ethnically for-

Chiara Dal Martello:
Ethnically from their heritage.

Juliann Vitullo:
... or they can do research about indigenous traditions where they live, and it could be something that's special to that indigenous community. I think that also brings up important conversations.

Chiara Dal Martello:
We do this in assignment one, too, when we ask them to do a research on an Italian product or dish and the connection of the product or dish with the people and the territory. But then part of the assignment is also a reflection on their own traditions. Do you have a product or a dish that are important to you and why? So it is really interesting.

Juliann Vitullo:
And do those traditions connect to a certain place or a certain community?

Chiara Dal Martello:
We have students nowadays too, from all over the world, especially online, but also in class. And then I had students that put together a meal that was also Mediterranean but from another region of the Mediterranean. So that happens, not very often, but sometimes.

Mary Loder:
I will say though, the best fast food I've ever had, not ever had, McDonald's hamburger I ever had, was in Florence.

Mary Loder:
Oh, isn't that strange?

Mary Loder:
But truly, it was like-

Mary Loder:
I believe it.

Mary Loder:

... wow, this is the best McDonald's I've ever had.

Juliann Vitullo:

Fast food in Europe is very different than fast food in the US.

Chiara Dal Martello:

Well, also because the Italians, there's a law for the fast food companies, that they must use local ingredients.

Mary Loder:

Oh! That makes sense.

Ricardo Leon:

Oh, yeah.

Chiara Dal Martello:

Cause I went to Agrigento in Sicily one time with my husband, we were traveling, so we stopped at a McDonald, but he still talks about it. They had a coffee place inside McDonald's, and that was really good.

Mary Loder:

I mean that was 25 years ago-

Mary Loder:

Oh wow.

Mary Loder:

... and I still remember how good that hamburger was. That was a good hamburger.

London Skiles:

But I do love the idea that you're connecting students to that local food community. Again, in my moments of creeping on their assignments, a lot of them were sharing about how they went to the local farmer's market. I remember seeing quite a few students talking about heading to markets like that and saying where they got some of the items that they were presenting in their meal or preparing in their meal.

Juliann Vitullo:

We encourage them, because we also have readings about farmer's markets in Italy, and we give them examples of our patterns. We have short videos about our patterns for shopping and going to farmer's markets, for example. We also really want to communicate to students that we understand that they have time restrictions and they have financial restrictions. But the students

who are able to go to the farmer's market often find out that, if they buy seasonal produce, that it's cheaper than they thought it was going to be.

Chiara Dal Martello:
Yeah, they always think it's expensive.

Ricardo Leon:
That's logical though, right?

Chiara Dal Martello:
And then it's so fresh, it lasts longer too than what you buy from the store. So we do include sustainability and do include how not to waste.

London Skiles:
Yeah, and also if you go to, especially towards the end of a season, farmers, they want to sell right now. I'm sure they're trying to get rid of eggplant and peaches.

Mary Loder:
Eggplant's not really in high demand right now.

London Skiles:
No, no. It's just the end of the summer season.

Mary Loder:
No, I know. Yeah.

Chiara Dal Martello:
Make eggplant parmesan.

Mary Loder:
Yes.

Chiara Dal Martello:
But the other thing I wanted to say, that we also discussed justice in the last module.

Juliann Vitullo:
Yeah, there are questions of social justice-

Chiara Dal Martello:
Especially during Covid.

Juliann Vitullo:
Also, just what we talked about a few minutes ago, in terms of the challenges that students face,

and that a lot of people face, in terms of time, having the time to prepare your own food, having the time to shop, and also affordability. Once again, it's important for students to think structurally about these issues, or all of us think structurally about these issues, and then also in terms of environmental concerns and how a diet that's healthier for us is also healthier for the planet. Food waste is another part of that last module.

London Skiles:

You have, Chiara, another class that also falls within the Science and society-

Chiara Dal Martello:

It's ITA380.

London Skiles:

Yes, and it is also a course about Italian culture and sustainability that falls into that. It's not food-focused-

Chiara Dal Martello:

No.

London Skiles:

... but tell us a little bit about what it is focused. It's fascinating. Well, and the name-

Juliann Vitullo:

It's amazing.

London Skiles:

... you said ITA380, but what is the name of the course?

Chiara Dal Martello:

It's the Natural Disasters, Environmental and Cultural Resilience. We talked about food and how Italians developed practically in hundreds of years, this special diet, but it was really developed by a need of survival. A kind of resilience, because you use anything that was available for you in your environment.

Juliann Vitullo:

And you also have to use it very carefully, because you know that your children also are going to depend on these same resources. So there's always this future-oriented connection to the land and resources that sometimes disappears in our culture.

Chiara Dal Martello:

From there, we talk about geological hazards in my class, in my 380 class, because Italy is such a seismic country, but also is the only European country besides Iceland that has volcanoes, so there's a long history of survival and resilience from natural disasters and earthquakes, but also

landslides, and this love and hate with nature, especially water, because not many years ago there was big cases of malaria and we needed to clean up and reform the land to allow people to live there.

It's another very interesting course because it's a science and society, so I have the science, I worked with a volcanologist and earthquake specialist here at ASU. Then there's a lot of lectures from different guests, anthropology, and actually an art specialist too. Because another cultural aspect of living in the place where there are a lot of natural disasters is called [foreign language 00:36:42] and it's what people give to their favorite church saint or God as a thank you for surviving a disaster. It can be an accident, it can be a sickness or illness, but in this case we look at paintings and art that depicts disaster.

Juliann Vitullo:

But then sometimes they're monuments. Sometimes [foreign language 00:37:11] can take all kinds of-

Chiara Dal Martello:

They're obelisks.

Juliann Vitullo:

Yeah, they're obelisks or churches-

Chiara Dal Martello:

Because there's a [foreign language 00:37:16] there now. We also read Pliny the Younger, the recount of the 79 AD Vesuvius eruption. But the last project is similar because it's a group project, only that the students do what is called by the experts, like FEMA experts, it's called a tabletop simulation, where students actually pretend that they are one of the stakeholders, like a mayor, a scientist, an architect, a restaurant owner, a normal citizen, a tourist, a volunteer, and then there's a disaster happening, a geological disaster, and I give them a place, and they have to figure out all the risk and all the possible solution and what to do. Then they have to talk about the resilience of the people and the place and the environment where this disaster happens. So it's exciting.

London Skiles:

It is. I got to tell you what I love about the courses that you're offering in this Science and Society is that, as evidenced, like you said before, the students were taking videos and they were sharing them with people. They were talking about how they're now having Slow Food Tuesday or all these things. What you're doing in these courses is influencing the students and where they are, and it's making that impact of how you want them to be connected to each other and to their environment. We just really appreciate you coming and sharing your stories about these courses and especially the 350 class, because without it, we wouldn't have had this wonderful conversation and the wonderful food.

Ricardo Leon:

We need a critique, so this is-

Mary Loder:

We don't need a critique.

Mary Loder:

Well, first of all, I did get the good job on capresse and I'm going to take that to my mom.
[inaudible 00:39:08].

Mary Loder:

I saw it. I did. I saw the-

Mary Loder:

Did you see that?

Mary Loder:

I did.

Juliann Vitullo:

It was really good, Donna.

Mary Loder:

Yep. I am here to vouch for you.

Mary Loder:

Thank you.

Juliann Vitullo:

Well I love also the herb, because it's one of the special sections of the part of the course that focuses on the nutrition of the Mediterranean diet. Because we learn from Dr. Shepard that this is a real focus of dieticians right now, because they've learned that the way that a lot of Mediterranean cultures eat herbs is that they have a little every day, but herbs are just packed with antioxidants and vitamins-

Chiara Dal Martello:

Good stuff for you.

Juliann Vitullo:

... and so the daily habit of adding a little to every meal, adding a little basil, a little rosemary, parsley, Dr. Shepherd said in the past, nutritionists, dieticians, had just overlooked it, because they're talking about small amounts, but they now realize it that the cumulative effect is really powerful. That was the first thing that came to mind when I saw the fresh basil herb from your garden, that it's part of your space, it's part of your daily life. It's great.

Mary Loder:
It gets blessed all the time.

Chiara Dal Martello:
This is wonderful. Thank you for having us, and having all these wonderful...

Mary Loder:
Thank you for coming. Thank you for creating a space where our students can model our mission at ASU. Because the charter's built into what they do, then go and share, and affect their communities and affect the way that people then talk about how they want to participate in their community and society, and I just think that's amazing. So heartwarming. Good job, Ricardo. This was a good last episode.

Ricardo Leon:
I didn't do it all on my own. Everybody was here.

Mary Loder:
I know, but the choice that this would be the last one. This is a good one for the last one.

Ricardo Leon:
So I think that we need to-

Mary Loder:
Oh, cheers.

Ricardo Leon:
... toast.

Mary Loder:
For sure.

London Skiles:
I also wanted to say that we also talk about alcohol and wine and we talk about Mediterranean lifestyle. It's one glass of wine-

Chiara Dal Martello:
The key is moderation.

Ricardo Leon:
You're going to need to fill this glass up tomorrow.

Chiara Dal Martello:

And we also tell them is not necessary to start drinking if you don't. If you're not drinking. But if you are, the key is moderation.

Mary Loder:

Don't drink bad stuff. Drink the good stuff.

Chiara Dal Martello:

Exactly.

Mary Loder:

If you're going to have just one glass, drink a good glass.

Ricardo Leon:

What's a good...

Mary Loder:

I only know the German prost so I don't-

Chiara Dal Martello:

[foreign language 00:41:41]

Mary Loder:

[foreign language 00:41:41]

Chiara Dal Martello:

[foreign language 00:41:41]

Mary Loder:

It's so great to have you guys on.

Ricardo Leon:

Okay, well we want to thank you folks for listening this season to Course Stories. Mary, what can we have people do to prepare themselves for the next season of Course Stories?

Mary Loder:

Like, listen, subscribe to all your friends, send our Instagram link @CourseStories to everyone you know. Go to Twitter @CourseStories and follow us. We might get kicked off eventually, like so many others, but who knows? Follow us there for the time being. Elon Jokes, they're fun. But what else? Let's see. We have the SoundCloud. We have Spotify. Just like and listen and subscribe there.

Ricardo Leon:

And what about what's coming up next season, Mary?

Mary Loder:

Next season we're talking to some really interesting groups throughout EdPlus. There are ASU online courses within each of these areas, but we get a little deeper on the really interesting and unique things that our university is doing as the New American University for, let's see, YouTube stuff, immersive design, international design. That's going to be a good one. I think that's our first one for the season. We'll see.

Ricardo Leon:

Yeah, yeah. Well, listeners, we look forward to having you listen to us again in 2023.

Mary Loder:

Happy New Year!

Ricardo Leon:

Happy New Year.

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