

## TUSCANY: SUSTAINABILITY IN CITY AND COUNTRY

Summer 2009

Geography 407/507 or USP 407/507

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### Course Description

The focus of this course is urban and rural sustainability in Tuscany. The topics we will explore include:

- Hilltowns as models of sustainable urban form
- Agritourism and sustainable agriculture
- Connections between city and country
- Cultural landscapes
- Slow Food and Slow Cities movements

After starting with two days in Siena, we will be based at Spannocchia, a 12th century rural estate located southwest of Siena that is now an organic farm and forest and part of the Alto Merse nature reserve. Students and faculty will live in historic farm buildings and dine together on meals that are prepared mainly from food grown on the estate.

At Spannocchia you will explore sustainable agriculture and agritourism in self-defined, individual projects that may become part of an interpretive plan for the cultural landscapes of the estate and its surroundings. As a group, we will explore the estate and surrounding landscape on hikes and tours, and may contribute to service and mapping projects.

On day trips we will examine urban design and social life in Italian hill towns. In addition to our stay in Siena, we will visit hill towns varying in size from 10,000 residents to less than 2,000 residents. Places visited by past programs include: The Etruscan and Roman town of Volterra; the World Heritage site of San Gimignano; Massa Marittima, a designated CittàSlow – part of the Slow City movement; the small villages of Chiusdino and Montieri; the 13th century Abbey of San Galgano; and Lardarello, location of the world's first geothermal power plant. This year we plan to visit several new towns, including the World Heritage site of Pienza, and Montalcino, home of the renowned wine Brunello di Montalcino.

This course will employ a group website for posting/sharing of course assignments.

## **Learning Outcomes**

1. Understand why Italian hill towns are considered models of sustainable urban form
2. Understand agritourism and sustainable agriculture and how these approaches are applied at both Spannocchia and in the Tuscan countryside
3. Understand the historic and current links between cities and the surrounding countryside
4. Describe the Slow Food and Slow Cities movements and their contributions to sustaining the cultural landscape of Tuscany.
5. Evaluate whether the sustainability practices of Tuscan hill towns and Spannocchia can be applied in Oregon.

## **Readings**

A course reader of articles and book chapters will be provided on CD-ROM.

## **Assignments and Grading**

PRE-TRIP (20% of grade): Due no later than August 15

### **1. Annotated Readings (10%)**

The more you read prior to your arrival in Tuscany, the more you will get out of your experience. For the 6 readings noted below, plus two others of your choosing from the required list, summarize the key discussion points for each article- a few paragraphs for each. Post these to the group website.

- Agnoletti, Mauro 2006. The development of a historical and cultural evaluation approach in landscape assessment: The dynamic of Tuscan landscape 1832-2004
- Antrop, Marc 2005. “Why landscapes of the past are important for the future”
- Knox, Paul L. 2005. “Creating ordinary places: Slow cities in a fast world”
- McQuillen, D. Aidan. 1996. “Siena: Social identity and the urban fabric of a Tuscan hill town”
- Morgan, Kevin, Marsden, Terry, and Jonathan Murdoch. 2006. “Localized quality in Tuscany” in Worlds of Food: Place Power, and Provenance in the Food Chain
- Pietrykowski, Bruce. 2004. “You are what you eat: The political economy of the Slow Food Movement”

### **2. Short essay on your Tuscan expectations (10%)**

Write a two-page essay that describes what you expect to see in Tuscany based on the readings and any prior knowledge you might have.

### **3. Discussion Topics**

Identify one of the four topics for which you will help lead a discussion while we are in Italy: Sienese and Tuscan history, Landscape, Slow Cities and Slow Food, Sustainability-tying it all together.

#### **4. Hill Town Visits**

Identify a hill town for which you will help provide information: Volterra, San Gimignano, Montalcino, Pienza, Abbey of San Galgano. Prior to departure, you should research that town (use websites, guidebooks, and any other sources) and find out about its history, its contemporary social and economic conditions, and what places might be of interest to visit. Preparing a one-page handout would be a good way to approach this.

WHILE IN TUSCANY (45% of grade):

##### **1. Participation (25%)**

Since our time spent in Tuscany is predominantly an experiential learning experience, attendance is mandatory. You will be expected to be an engaged participant in all tours, hill town trips, and discussion sessions in Italy, as well as being a cooperative group member. That means listening and asking questions, and participating in discussions, both formal and informal. Observe and evaluate how your pre-trip expectations match the reality of your environment. Draw on the readings to provide context to what you see.

##### **2. Discussion lead (10%)**

Along with two or three other students, you will lead the group in a discussion of one of four topics. You will be expected to read and be conversant in all the reading material for that particular topic. Although as a group, you can organize the discussion as you choose, you should draw heavily on the readings.

##### **3. Hill town tour lead (10%)**

When we visit hill towns, you will be expected to discuss the history and sites of interest for the place you have identified.

POST-TRIP (35% of grade)

##### **1. Short essay on sustainability (10%)**

Write a two-page essay that explores the viability of both Spannocchia and Italian hill town as models of sustainability. Post this essay to the group website no later than October 15.

##### **2. Web page for Spannocchia (15%)**

Create a web page that could be used on the Spannocchia website. Focus on a particular topic that you think is important to the experience of staying at Spannocchia and try to relate that topic to their sustainability mission. Images and/or simple maps and sketches should be used. No web authoring skills are needed- you can create the web page as a Word document. You will share this web page at our final group meeting (TBD).

### 3. Vignette about a hill town (10%)

Compose a vignette (a tightly focused description of a particular topic) related to a hill town you visited. Compose your vignette as if it were a two-page spread in a guidebook. Use your impressions as well as researched data. Include relevant images. You will briefly share your vignette at our final group meeting (TBD).

#### Tentative Schedule

Monday Sept 7	Meet in Siena 3pm
Tuesday Sept 8	Siena guided tour Contrada walks Slow Food restaurant (optional)
Wednesday Sept 9	Free day in Siena Leave for Spannocchia 3pm
Thursday Sept 10	Historical tour Gil Latz visit/talk Evening discussion
Friday Sept 11	Mauro Agnoletti visit/talk Museo del Bosco
Saturday Sept 12	Group 1- Volterra/San Gimignano Group 2- Help with project at estate Cook dinner
Sunday Sept 13	Group 2- Volterra/San Gimignano Group 1- Help with project at estate Evening discussion
Monday Sept 14	All-day hike from Orgia to Spannocchia
Tuesday Sept 15	Cinta Senese tour Meet with Spannocchia staff
Wednesday Sept 16	Group 1- Pienza/Montalcino/Mezzadria Museum Group 2- Free time at Spannocchia
Thursday Sept 17	Group 2- Pienza/Montalcino/Mezzadria Museum Group 1- Free time at Spannocchia Evening Discussion
Friday Sept 18	Cooking Class (possible) Garden tour
Saturday Sept 19	Hike to/visit San Galgano/Chiusdino Cook dinner
Sunday Sept 20	Free time at Spannocchia Evening Discussion
Monday Sept 21	Leave Spannocchia 8 am