Supervisor's Name	Roberta Iannacito-Provenzano
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Supervisor's Department	DLLL
Project Title	Italian food, language and social media

Description of Research Project (1500 characters maximum)

In the editor's introduction to Representing Italy through Food, Peter Naccarato refers to Eric Auerbach's Mimesis: The representation of reality in Western Literature (1946) and states "the focus of theorists has been on the issue of representation of everyday life in different disciplines and contexts. How we represent ourselves, our lifestyles and habits (alimentary and otherwise) is intimately tied to our physical, political and social conventions." (1-2) In addition, Naccarato asserts that "mimeses related to food, in particular are key to understanding the cultural memory of a people." (2) Food and Social Media: You are what you Tweet by Signe Rousseau presents the notion that social media "have opened up new spaces to talk about food and virtual communities have blossomed in a very short space of time through sharing recipes and stories across traditional boundaries of place and profession" (x-xi) highlighting the fact "that everyone with access to the Internet can potentially contribute to the conversation (which she defines as the driving force of social media cf. x) and in that way be a producer and as well as a consumer of information." (xi)

This project continues my research on social media, ethnicity and language but examines, in new ways, specifically food-related pages and commentary on various sites. My aim is to explore Italian language and culture, especially online,through the food lens. This project also contributes to my investigation into the Italian-sounding phenomenon as it relates to Italian food and beverage items in North America. There are over 100 groups on Facebook alone that deal with Italian food, some with over 15,000 users. These public groups contain posts with dozens of comments that relate to such elements as food, language, culture, ethnicity, food memories, authenticity debates, recipes, traditions, etc. I have already collected over 2000 images in both real world (e.g. advertisements, store signs, etc.) and virtual spaces that relate to language and food.I am now in the process of organizing these images into a database that would track items in categories such as examples of code-switching, pseudo-Italian terms (esotismi), odd lexical items, compound words, terms with erroneous morphological agreements, terms with spelling errors, etc. This would help me establish a substantial corpus of items relating to food and language online. The assistance of a student would also help me delve into other social media sites such as Twitter (with over 328 million users worldwide) and Instagram (with over 700 million users worldwide).

Undergraduate Student Responsibilities (1500 characters maximum)

The student's main responsibilities would include: 1. organizing images and items into a database based on linguistic categories; 2. searching social media for further examples related to food and language including comments on posts in groups that have thousands of members; 3. labeling all images for bibliographic inclusion. The student would need access to a computer. The student would regularly communicate with professor on progress.

Qualifications Required (750 characters maximum)

1. Native or near-native fluency in Italian and English
2. Some background in Italian linguistics would be useful.
3. It would be preferable if student took course AP/IT 4170 3.0 The Language of Food in Italy
4. Access to and ability to use social media
5. Excellent organizational skills for database and file creation.