

INSTRUCTOR: Colin McLearn
COURSE: PHIL 105
TIME: T/R 11:00-11:50 a.m.
LOCATION: HAH-102
OFFICE: 1003 Oldfather Hall
OFFICE HOURS: T/R 1-2 p.m. or by appointment

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THE PHILOSOPHY OF FOOD

First we eat, then we do everything else

The Art of Eating
M.F.K. FISCHER

Course Overview

Food is a central part of human life, both in its production and consumption. Food is closely tied to the values that we hold, and the cultural identities that we endorse (e.g. the sorts of things that we eat vs. the sorts of things that they eat). Our choices about food, both as individuals and as a society raise a variety of moral, political, and economic questions. Some of the questions we shall pursue include:

- What *is* food? Not everything we eat we can digest. Moreover, some of the things we could eat and digest (such as other people), we don't. Why not?
- What are the major economic and political structures governing food production and consumption in the United States and other western countries? How do these structures impact developing countries?
- What are the environmental and social consequences of various sorts of eating habits? For example, do food choices contribute to environmental degradation and social injustice?
- How should we treat the animals we eat? Do we have ethical obligations to treat them in particular ways?
- In what ways does food connect to religious and cultural identities? To what extent can a society legislate for or against food practices that impinge on such identities?

Course Objectives

- This course satisfies ACE requirement 5, that students use knowledge, historical perspectives, analysis, interpretation, critical evaluation, and the standards of evidence appropriate to the humanities to address problems and issues. Students will be evaluated with respect to these outcomes by taking regular quizzes, and more comprehensively, by two exams and a final paper.

- PHIL 105 also satisfies ACE requirement 8, that students use knowledge, theories, and analysis to explain ethical principles and their importance in society. Students will be evaluated with respect to these outcomes by answering essay questions in the two exams and by writing a paper.
- In completing this course students satisfy these outcomes by being able to (i) find the argument of a text and restate it clearly in their own words; (ii) explain viewpoints clearly that are not their own; (iii) think critically about the ideas discussed in this course, including the moral and political significance of our food choices; (iv) explain the practical significance of difference courses of action regarding our food choices, both as individuals and as a society; (v) write papers using theses, organization, arguments, evidence, and language suitable to analytical writing in general and the discipline of philosophy in particular.

Course Materials

Readings will be posted on the course website (at <http://phil105.colinmclear.net> under 'Assignments'). There are three required books.

- Pollan. *The Omnivore's Dilemma*. The Penguin Press, 2007. ISBN: 9780143038580.
- Foer. *Eating Animals*. Back Bay Books, 2010. ISBN: 0316069884.
- Nestle. *Food Politics*. University of California Press, 2013. ISBN: 0520275969.

Course Requirements

- **Preparation:** You are expected to attend every class meeting fully prepared to discuss each assigned reading, to submit written work punctually, and to offer thoughtful and constructive responses to the remarks of your instructor and your classmates. Make sure that you bring the relevant readings with you to every lecture class. I further expect you to treat both the texts at hand and your classmates' ideas with openness and respect.
- **Attendance:** Attendance is required. You are also expected to attend every section meeting. 1/2 a letter grade will be deducted from your final course grade for every absence from section after your fifth.
- **Website:** We will use a course website for all materials. The site address is: phil105.colinmclear.net. Upcoming assignments and readings will be posted there. Please let me know if you have any problems. Technical glitches, computer malfunctions and crashing hard drives are not excuses for failing to complete work in this class.
- **Format for Papers:** Please submit work as a .docx, .odt, or .rtf file. All work must be typed. I will not accept any handwritten work aside from that we do in class. Your papers should be in 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced with margins set to one inch on all sides. Your name, my name, the date and assignment should appear in the top left hand corner of the first page. Your last name and page number must appear in the top right hand corner on each subsequent page. Please staple or paperclip hard copies of papers and drafts. You are responsible for the presentation of your papers.

- **Late Work:** Late papers and assignments will standardly be marked down by $\frac{1}{3}$ of a letter grade for each day the work is late (for example, from A- to B+, from B+ to B, and so on).

Evaluation

Two Exams: 45%

- The exams will involve a combination of short answer and short essay questions.

One Essay: 25%

- Explain and critically assess a philosophical argument. Topics will be provided. Approximately 3-4 pages.

Quizzes: 20%

- Brief review quizzes. They will be given roughly once a week, in section. Your two lowest grades will be dropped and your highest counted twice.

Participation: 10%

- The participation grade takes into account your attendance in class and section as well as the quantity and quality of your participation.

Policies

- **Academic Integrity:** All the work you turn in (including papers, drafts, and discussion board posts) must be written by you specifically for this course. It must originate with you in form and content with all contributory sources fully and specifically acknowledged. Make yourself familiar with UNL's Student Code of Conduct and Academic Integrity Code, available online. **In this course, the normal penalty for any violation of the code is an "F" for the semester.** Violations may have additional consequences including expulsion from the university. Don't plagiarize – It just isn't worth it.
- **University Policies:** This instructor respects and upholds University policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance available to physically handicapped, visually and/or hearing impaired students; plagiarism; sexual harassment; and racial or ethnic discrimination. All students are advised to become familiar with the respective University regulations and are encouraged to bring any questions or concerns to the attention of the instructor.
- **ADA:** In compliance with University policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for students with disabilities. Students are encouraged to register with Student Disability Services to verify their eligibility for appropriate accommodations.
- **Miscellaneous:** Please turn off cell phones, beeping watches, and other gadgets that make noise before entering our classroom. Absolutely no texting is permitted during class. I will subtract up to five points from your participation grade each and every time your phone rings or I see you texting during class.

Further Resources

- **Jargon:** It's important to be on top of the technical terms used by philosophers. Please ask for clarification of terms in class. You can also consult Jim Pryor's online "[Philosophical Terms and Methods](http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/vocab/)." at <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/vocab/>.
- **Help with writing:** Papers should adhere to some consistent practice of footnoting and citation (Chicago, MLA, etc.). I don't really mind which one you use as long as you are consistent. On writing a philosophy paper, there is no better on-line guide than Jim Pryor's. Please consult it. Hacker's A Writer's Reference is also extremely helpful. Useful online writing help may be found at the Purdue Online Writing Lab at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln Writing Center can provide you with meaningful support as you write for this class as well as for every course in which you enroll. Trained peer consultants are available to talk with you as you plan, draft, and revise your writing. Please check the Writing Center website for locations, hours, and information about scheduling appointments.

- **Reference:** The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy at <http://plato.stanford.edu> is an excellent online resource.