

INSTRUCTOR: Colin McLearn
COURSE: PHIL 105
TIME: T/R 9:30-10:20
LOCATION: MORR 141
OFFICE: 1003 Oldfather Hall

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colinmclear.net/phil-101
UNL Philosophy
OFFICE HOURS: T/R 11-12

THE PHILOSOPHY OF FOOD

First we eat, then we do everything else

M.F.K. FISHER

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?

Learning Outcomes

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.

Evaluation

One Essay: 25%

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

Two Exams: 45%

- The exams will involve a combination of short answer and short essay questions.
 - Mid-Term: 20%
 - Final: 25%

Ten Quizzes: 20%

- Brief review quizzes held during section. They will not be announced ahead of time. Your two lowest grades will be dropped and your highest counted twice.

Participation Grade: 10%

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

Required Materials

Readings will be posted on the [course website](#) under “Assignments”. There is only one required book.

- Pollan, Michael. *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. The Penguin Press, 2007. ISBN: 9780143038580.
- iClicker: Instruction for registering and using your iClicker may be found on [the course website](#) or at <http://its.unl.edu/srs>

Students are expected to bring all relevant materials to class.

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 is available at: <http://colinmclear.net/phil105>. 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 .doc 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 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).

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.
- **Misc.:** 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.”](#)
- **Writing a Philosophy paper:** 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/>.
- **Help with writing:** 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](http://plato.stanford.edu) at <http://plato.stanford.edu> is an excellent online resource.

TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT CALENDAR: Please check the course assignments page online (<http://colinmclear.net/phil105-assignments.html>) for the definitive schedule.

TUESDAY	THURSDAY
<div>Jan 11th</div> Introduction What is food?	13th The metaphysics of food, continued
18th Choose your food carefully: Food & Cannibalism J. Wisniewski: "Murder, Cannibalism, and Indirect Suicide: A Philosophical Study of a Recent Case" J. Swift: "A Modest Proposal"	20th Overview of the food system, with a focus on corn Michael Pollan, <i>Omnivore's Dilemma</i> (MP 1-84)
25th Overview continued (MP 85-122)	27th Overview continued Jonathan Safran Foer, <i>Eating Animals</i> , "Storytelling" (JSF 3-16) & "All or Nothing or Something Else" (JSF 21-41)
<div>Feb 1st</div> "Big Food" <i>Food Inc</i> (film) Marion Nestle, <i>Food Politics</i> , Ch.4-6	3rd The Individual in Food Politics Nestle, <i>Food Politics</i> , Ch.7
8th Catch up	10th The Ethics of Eating Animals Jeff McMahan, " The Meat-Eaters ," NYT September 19, 2010 David Foster Wallace, " Consider the Lobster ," <i>Gourmet</i> , August 2004.

TUESDAY	THURSDAY
15th Consequentialism described James Rachels, <i>Elements of Moral Philosophy</i> , chs. 7-8	17th Consequentialism applied Alastair Norcross, "Puppies, Pigs and People: Eating Meat and Marginal Cases"
22nd Deontology described: Immanuel Kant Immanuel Kant, "Rational Beings Alone Have Moral Worth" Holly Wilson, "The Green Kant: Kant's Treatment of Animals"	24th Deontology applied Tom Regan, "The Radical Egalitarian Case for Animal Rights" Mary Anne Warren, "A Critique of Regan's Animal Rights Theory"
Mar 1st Catch up	3rd Moral vegetarianism: a debate James Rachels, "The Basic Argument for Vegetarianism" Michael Martin, "A Critique of Moral Vegetarianism"
8th Ethically-acceptable meat? Pollan, <i>The Omnivore's Dilemma</i> , Chapter 17 (MP 304-333)	10th Ethically acceptable meat, continued Singer/Mason: <i>The Ethics of What We Eat</i> , Chapter 17 (pp. 241-269)
15th Mid-term Review	17th Mid-Term Exam
22nd No Class — Spring Break!	24th No Class — Spring Break!
29th Food and Religious Identity Regan, "Christians are what Christians Eat" Gaffney, "Eastern Religions and the Eating of Meat" Preece, "Ask your Brother for Forgiveness: Animal respect in Native American traditions"	31st Religion, continued Regenstein et al., "The Kosher and Halal Food Laws" Regenstein, "The Politics of Religious Slaughter: How Science can be Misused"

TUESDAY	THURSDAY
<div>Apr 5th</div> Feminist Perspectives Carol J. Adams, "The Sexual Politics of Meat" Christina Van Dyke "Gendered Eating" from <i>Philosophy Comes to Dinner</i> , Chignell, Cuneo, Halteman (eds.)	7th Catch up
12th Food Justice Norgaard et. al. "A Continuing Legacy: institutional racism, hunger and nutritional justice on the Klamath"	14th Justice, continued Watch: Alan Savory TED talk: " How to fight desertification and fight climate change "
19th Environmental and Food Justice Mares & Peña, "Environmental and Food Justice: toward local, slow and deep food systems" Bill McKibben, "A Special Moment in History: the challenge of overpopulation and overconsumption"	21st Population and Justice Singer: "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"
26th Population and Justice, continued Hardin "Lifeboat Ethics" Murdoch and Oaten "Population and Food: a critique of life boat ethics"	28th Last Day of Class Exam Review

Final paper due by 4 p.m., Friday, April 29th
Final exam: 10:00 to 12:00 noon, Tuesday, May 5th