

# Philosophy of Food (PHIL 105)

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## Bulletin

A wide-ranging examination of the philosophical, political, social, and economic aspects of food, its production and consumption. Topics include the ethical treatment of animals, factory farming, food justice, the relation of food to social and religious identity, and climate change.

## Ace Requirements & Outcomes

### SLO5 Proposal

Use knowledge, historical perspectives, analysis, interpretation, critical evaluation, and the standards of evidence appropriate to the humanities to address problems and issues.

1. Describe opportunities students should have to learn the outcome. How is the learning objective embedded in the course?

The purpose of this class is to focus on a topic of central interest—food—and the philosophical, political, and economic questions that arise from its consideration. In every case, students will be engaged in the use of analysis, interpretation, and critical evaluation to address philosophical problems and issues. The class will focus on reasons for and against adopting various conclusions on a wide range of issues, and will explore the cogency of the reasons offered. Another goal of this course is that students will work out their own positions and come to better understand opposing views. In the course of examining these reasons, they

will become familiar with various philosophical approaches, and they will explore how various positions are amenable to justification.

2. Describe student work that will be used to assess student achievement of the outcome and explain how the students demonstrate the knowledge and skills specified by the outcome.

Students will be asked to interpret, analyze, and critically evaluate philosophical views and arguments through a variety of instruments, but largely through two examinations and a paper assignment.

For example, students will be required to write an analytical essay, on a suggested topic, defending a thesis. One such topic would be whether eating meat is morally permissible. The student might argue that the fact that an animal feels pain counts as a reason for not eating it, and defend this by means of appeal to a utilitarian moral framework that the student would then explain. The paper would assess the student's ability to critically reason, their grasp of philosophical theory (in the explication of a particular moral theory), and their comprehension of specific material read in class (e.g. Peter Singer's utilitarian argument for vegetarianism).

The exams are a combination of argument extraction (the student reads a short text and indicates what, if any argument is given), multiple choice, definition, and short essay. The multiple choice and definition parts of the exam assess the student's grasp of material discussed in class and readings assigned. The short essay prompts concern the student's ability to explicate a complex concept (e.g. the concept of welfare and its significance for evaluating the industrial food system), or require the explication of a particular dialectic as discussed in class (e.g. summarizing arguments for and against the moral permissibility of eating meat).

3. As part of the ACE certification process, the department/unit agrees to collect and assess a reasonable sample of students' work and provide reflections on students' achievement of the Learning Outcomes for its respective ACE-certified courses. Please comment on your plans to

develop a process to collect and evaluate student work over time for the purpose of assessing student success for this ACE outcome.

For purposes of assessment, the department commits to collection and analyzing a reasonable sample of student work. The material will be reviewed by the appropriate department subcommittee, which will assess student achievement, and, when necessary, make recommendations for enhancing achievement. The department will archive the samples along with the results of the review and any recommendations.

### **SLO8 Proposal**

Explain ethical principles, civics, and stewardship, and their importance to society.

1. Describe opportunities students should have to learn the outcome. How is the learning objective embedded in the course?

The purpose of this class is to focus on a topic of central interest—food—and the philosophical, political, and economic questions that arise from its consideration. In every case, students will be engaged in the use of analysis, interpretation, and critical evaluation to address philosophical problems and issues. Stewardship, i.e., managing or guiding something, is implicit in any discussion of ethics, for it is by our ethical principles that we manage and guide our own behavior and try to influence the world around us. Stewardship will more explicitly be discussed in the context of animal rights, climate change, and the consideration of how best to moral, religious, and cultural commitments. The class will examine the social importance of ethics, civic responsibility, and stewardship, including reasons for and against adopting various courses of action, and will explore the cogency of the reasons offered. Students will work out their own positions and come to better understand opposing views. In the course of examining these reasons, they will become familiar with various philosophical approaches, and they will explore how various positions are amenable to justification.

2. Describe student work that will be used to assess student achievement of the outcome and explain how the students demonstrate the knowledge and skills specified by the outcome.

The ability to reason critically and knowledgably and to apply ethical principles to ethical issues regarding socially important civic responsibilities and to ethical issues regarding stewardship of socially important values will be assessed through a variety of instruments, but largely through examinations or paper assignments.

Students are required to write one analytical essay, on a suggested topic, in which they defend a particular thesis. Topics include the moral permissibility of eating meat and the significance of animal welfare in the assessment of the industrial food system. Students will have to explain and defend their views on such topics by appeal to moral frameworks that we have discussed in class, such as consequentialism and deontology. Students will be expected to take a particular position on the issue (at least for the purposes of the paper exercise) and defend using one or more of the moral frameworks.

Students will also be assessed by means of regular quizzes. Such quizzes are short and will typically take the form of true/false or multiple choice formats. They are aimed at assessing and enforcing reading comprehension and basic uptake of concepts introduced in the course of the term. For example, sample questions might be the following:

1. According to utilitarianism, a morally required action is one which
  - A. maximizes the utility of all concerned
  - B. everyone agrees is correct
  - C. maximizes the utility of the weakest
  - D. avoids harming anyone
2. True or False: According to Pollan, the most important element of the industrial food chain is corn.

3. As part of the ACE certification process, the department/unit agrees to collect and assess a reasonable sample of students' work and provide reflections on students' achievement of the Learning Outcomes for its respective ACE-certified courses. Please comment on your plans to

develop a process to collect and evaluate student work over time for the purpose of assessing student success for this ACE outcome.

For purposes of assessment, the department commits to collection and analyzing a reasonable sample of student work. The material will be reviewed by the appropriate department subcommittee, which will assess student achievement, and, when necessary, make recommendations for enhancing achievement. The department will archive the samples along with the results of the review and any recommendations.