

INSTRUCTOR: Colin McLearn  
COURSE: PHIL 105  
TIME: T/R 9:30-10:20 a.m.  
LOCATION: Hamilton 102  
OFFICE: 1003 Oldfather Hall  
OFFICE HOURS: T 1-3:20 p.m. or by appointment

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# THE PHILOSOPHY OF FOOD

First we eat, then we do everything else

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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? Are some aspects of what we consider "food" dependent on our social practices?
- 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 different 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 <https://canvas.unl.edu/courses/49195> under 'Assignments'). There are two required books.

- Pollan. *The Omnivore's Dilemma*. The Penguin Press, 2007. ISBN: 9780143038580.
- Foer. *Eating Animals*. Back Bay Books, 2010. ISBN: 0316069884.

## 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. Because the topics in this course may be emotionally charged or challenging for class members, I hope we can create an environment that is both intellectually productive and supportive for all. I realize there might be days when class members may choose to be silent. Beyond verbal participation, your active and supportive listening is also an important and valuable form of participation. I hope that we will continuously reflect upon our class processes so that we can build an inclusive intellectual community where all feel valued and supported in their learning.
- **Attendance:** Attendance is required. You are also expected to attend every section meeting. Up to 1/2 a letter grade could 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: <https://canvas.unl.edu/courses/49195>. 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.

- **Grading:** UNL uses an A through F system where a student's grade point average (GPA) is computed based on point values assigned to each grade. Passing grades are A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, D-, and P. Students registered Pass/No Pass must earn a grade of "C" or better for a "P" grade. A grade of "F" represents that the student did not pass the course. The "F" is factored into the Grade Point Average. There is no university-wide grading scale. Unless there are existing departmental guidelines, instructors define the numerical value for each letter grade that they assign. Check with your department regarding grading scale policies and practices. A grade of "I" or incomplete signifies that the student was unable to complete the course. Incomplete grades should only be used when illness, military service, hardship, or death in the immediate family prevents a student from completing a course in which *requirements have already been substantially completed*. The student **should** complete assignments and/or exams **WITHOUT** re-registering or attending the course in a subsequent term. All "I" grades issued for *undergraduate* courses automatically expire and are replaced with a failing grade one year after the end of the current term, unless a grade change form is received from the instructor prior to that time.
- **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).

## EVALUATION

### Midterm: 25%

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

### Two Essays: 40%

- Explain and critically assess a philosophical argument.
  - **Essay One:** Take home. Topics will be provided. Approximately 3 pages.
  - **Essay Two:** In-class essay. Topics will be provided. Approximately 3 pages.

### Quizzes: 15%

- 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.

### Critical Questions: 5%

- Weekly short answer questions **on canvas** concerning the content of the readings or lectures. These must be completed by **Friday, 8am** every week.

### Participation: 15%

- 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:** The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can discuss options privately. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). If you are eligible for services and register with their office, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so they can be implemented in a timely manner. SSD contact information: 232 Canfield Admin. Bldg.; 402-472-3787; [acontreras3@unl.edu](mailto:acontreras3@unl.edu).
- **Miscellaneous:** There will be no use of electronic devices in the classroom unless explicitly permitted by me. Please turn off laptops, cell phones, beeping watches, and any other gadgets that distract or make noise before entering our classroom. Absolutely no texting is permitted during class. I will confiscate your device for the duration of the class and possibly 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. The Writing Center, located in 102 Andrews Hall and satellite locations from 5-7 pm in Adele Hall, is a free service for all UNL students, faculty, and staff. You can work with an individual writing consultant on any type

of writing at any stage in your writing process. For an appointment, call 472-8803 or schedule on-line at <https://www.unl.edu/writing/home>.

You can schedule free appointments for individual academic coaching with First-Year Experience and Transition Program staff through MyPLAN. You can also take advantage of study stops—which provide individual and group study with learning consultants in a variety of disciplines—and free group workshops on topics such as time management, goal setting, test preparation, and reading strategies. See <https://success.unl.edu> for schedules and more information.

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