

PHIL 095: THE ETHICS OF EATING

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MW 8-9:20•Williams 301

Office hours: MW 9:30-10:30 in 208 70 S. Williams St

Unlike breathing or sleeping or most other things we have to do to stay alive, eating is ethically problematic. The course explains why. We will consider arguments for and against raising animals for food, for going vegetarian or vegan, for restricting oneself to humanely-raised and slaughtered meat, for growing and eating organic food, and for eating local.

What we buy and eat directly impacts much we don't eat: other eaters, farm and factory workers, retailers, beings who live near where our food is grown and future generations of all those folks. We will try to figure out which, if any duties, we have towards some of these things.

Requirements

There are three requirements.

1. Quizzes. Lots of short quizzes, almost entirely on-line on the course's blackboard site (see bb.uvm.edu). Your grade on quizzes is worth a third of your grade for the course.
2. Midterm. Another third.
3. Final. The other third.

Isn't attendance required?

This is tricky. For the first three weeks of class, I expect you to come and will take attendance every day. Attendance in those five classes will count towards a quiz grade. Miss one and get an 80%, miss two and get a 60%, etc.

After those first three weeks, I won't take attendance. I *want* you to come to class, but I also want you coming to class because you are interested in coming rather than because you feel compelled. If you don't come to class, no doubt you'll miss out on a lot. Much material I would like you to learn will come up only in class. Still, you don't have to come. If you aren't feeling like it or are sick or bored or ..., don't come.

However, *if* you come to class, you have to pay attention: no texting, no sleeping, no bathroom breaks, no emailing. No computers are allowed in class without some particularly good reason for having one. Wanting to take notes on your computer is not a good reason.

Finally, if you come to class, you have to come on time. Since the class starts at 8, I will be less of a jerk than usual about enforcing this. But if you're more than a few minutes late, don't bother.

Note that when I followed an even more lax version of this policy last year, no student who missed many classes got a grade in the A-range. The worst grades in the class all went to students who missed many classes.

Readings

A number of the readings for the course will be articles. These can be found on e-reserve or in your course packet. You need to buy a course packet. You also need to buy:

Samuel Fromartz, *Organic, Inc.*
Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma*
Russ Shafer-Landau, *The Fundamentals of Ethics*
Peter Singer and Jim Mason, *The Ethics of What We Eat: Why Our Food Choices Matter*

All are at the University Store and, except for the course packet, are available elsewhere.

Finally, I would like you to read a bunch of food blogs daily. Some recommendations are linked to on the course blackboard site (see bb.uvm.edu).

Schedule

Killing Animals to Eat Them: The basic argument(s)

- Colin McGinn, reviews of Singer and Frey
- Temple Grandin and Catherine Johnson, introduction to *Animals Make Us Human*

Further Reading: Peter Singer, "All Animals Are Equal;" Carl Cohen, "Do Animals Have Rights;" R.G. Frey, *Rights, Killing, and Suffering*; R.G. Frey, *Interests and Rights*

Meat: Overview of Positions and Issues

- *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, chapter 17
- *The Ethics of What We Eat*, chapter 17

Further Reading: UN FAO report, "Livestock's Long Shadow"

Moral Theory: Consequentialism and Deontology

- *Fundamentals of Ethics*, chapters chapters 9-10 and 15-16

Further Reading: Shelly Kagan, *Normative Ethics*

Factory Farming

- Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation*, chapters 6 and 8
- *The Ethics of What We Eat*, chapters 2-4
- Alice Levitt, "Guilt-Free Food"

Further Reading: Steve Striffler, *Chicken: The Dangerous Transformation of America's Favorite Food*, chapter 8; Jonathan Safran Foer, *Eating Animals*

Vegetarianism and Veganism

- *The Ethics of What We Eat*, chapters 2-4
- Colin McGinn, reviews of Singer and Frey

- Suzanne Podhaizer, “The Veal Deal”

Further Reading: Jonathan Safran Foer, *Eating Animals*; Natalie Angier *New York Times* op-ed (linked to on the Blackboard site)

Freerange Vegetarianism

- *The Ethics of What We Eat*, chapters 6-8
- R.M. Hare, “Why I am only a Demi-Vegetarian”

Further Reading: Matthew Haltemann, “Compassionate Eating as Care of Creation;” Nicolette Hahn Niman, *Righteous Porkchop*; Singer, “Reply to Hare”

Death and Why It’s Bad, Life and Why It’s Good

- Thomas Nagel, “Death”
- *Fundamentals of Ethics*, chapters 1-4

Further Reading: Shelly Kagan, *Normative Ethics*; Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*; Frances Kamm, *Morality, Mortality, volume 1*, section 1

Seafood

- *The Ethics of What We Eat*, chapter 9
- Taras Grescoe, *Bottomfeeder*, “An Economy of Scales”
- David Foster Wallace, “Consider the Lobster”
- Carol Trauner, “The Culture of Aquaculture”

Further Reading: *Bottomfeeder*, appendix; Rowan Jacobsen, *The Living Shore*

Conventional Agriculture

- *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*, Part 1
- *The Ethics of What We Eat*, Part 1

Further Reading: David Pimentel, et al., “Erosion Threatens World Food Production;” A.N. Shipley, et al., “Agricultural Phosphorous and Eutrophication;” State of VT report, “Vermont Clean and Clear Action Plan Executive Summary;” Julie Guthman, “Why Michael Pollan Makes Me Want to Eat Cheetos”

Organic Agriculture

- *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*, Part 2
- *The Ethics of What We Eat*, Chapter 14
- *The Economist*, “Good Food? Ethical Food” and “Voting with Your Trolley: Special Report Food Politics”
- Samuel Fromartz, *Organic Inc.*, most of it

Further Reading: Julie Guthman, *Agrarian Dreams*, chapters 1 and 6-8; Steven Stoll, *The Fruits of Natural Advantage*, chapters 1 and 4; Podhaizer, “The Organic Vote;” Heather Rogers, “Slowed Food Revolution”

Workers

- Alan Wertheimer, *Consent to Sexual Relations*, chapter 6
- A. John Simmons, *Moral Principles and Political Obligations*, chapters 3-4
- Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation*, chapter 8
- Sarah Newman, “The Ugly Truth Behind Organic Food” On-line at http://www.alternet.org/environment/140001/the_ugly_truth_behind_organic_food/?page=entire
- John Bowe, “Nobodies”

Further Reading: Striffler, *Chicken*, chapter 6; Arturo Rodriguez, Alexa Delwiche, and Sheheryar Kaoosji, “Cheap Food: Workers Pay the Price”; Thomas Arcury, et al., “Pesticide Safety Among Farmworkers”; Erbin Crowell and Michael Sligh, “Domestic Fair Trade;” Linda Levine, “Farm Labor Shortages and Immigration Policy;” Suzanne Stack, “Spanish-Speaking Dairy Workers in NY, PA, and VT;” Christine Ahn, Melissa Moore, and Nick Parker. “Migrant Farmworkers: America’s New Plantation Workers” On-line at <http://www.foodfirst.org/node/45>

“But I Don’t Do Any of This Bad Stuff to Animals or Workers or the Environment”

- Alastair Norcross, “Puppies, Pigs and People: Eating Meat and Marginal Cases”
- Ted Warfield, “Eating Dead Animals” handout

Further Reading: Hud Hudson, “Collective Responsibility and Moral Vegetarianism;” R.G. Frey, *Rights, Killing, and Suffering*; Philippa Foot, “The Doctrine of Double Effect and the Problem of Abortion;” Parfit, *Reasons and Persons*, chapter 3

Local Food

- *The Ethics of What We Eat*, chapter 10
- Bill McKibben, *Deep Economy*, chapter 2

Further Reading: Ben Hewitt, *The Town Food Saved*; Virginia Nickerson, *Understanding Vermont’s Local Food Landscape*; Rich Pirog and Patrick Schuh, “Checking the Food Odometer;” Rachel Schattman, *Sustainability Indicators in the Vermont-Regional Food System*; Jacobsen, *American Terroir*; Amy Trubek, *A Taste of Place*