

# Philosophy of Food: Syllabus

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## Course Description

The central aim of the course is to explore philosophical questions surrounding the production, appreciation and consumption of food. In doing so it will give you an introduction, from an interesting perspective, to some core sub-disciplines and topics within philosophy (virtue ethics, our ethical relations to non-human animals, paternalism, feminism, aesthetics and international political philosophy).

In the first unit we will focus on ethical issues surrounding the consumption of animal products. Singer's seminal work on the topic will be covered as well as the more recent (and radical) rights based approach. We will also cover some criticisms of ethical vegetarianism and veganism.

In the second unit we will turn to feminist theorizing on food. In particular we will examine, first, whether the acceptance of feminism entails the acceptance of ethical vegetarianism and, second, the role that food plays in the construction of gender stereotypes. (For example why do men who "can't" cook insist on burning meat on the BBQ and how is the 1950s ideal of "the perfect housewife" connected to food preparation?). We will also consider the extent to which, if any, it is permissible to use soft or hard paternalism to improve public health.

In the third unit we will address the question of to what extent, if any, food can be appraised as an object of aesthetic appreciation. Are there objective standards when it comes to tasting food? Can food be art? If not, why?

The final unit will allow us to explore contemporary questions, such as the value of local food and whether the minimum drinking age should be lowered.

Instructor: Matthew Adams (please feel free to call me Matthew!)

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Office hours: 11am-12pm Monday and 11am-12pm Friday and by appointment (Greenberry's Café Alderman library).

## Required texts

1. D. Kaplan eds. *The Philosophy of Food* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012)
2. C. J. Adams. *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (New York: Continuum, 2010).

These texts are available on Amazon and at the University bookstore. All other readings will be posted on Collab.

## Overview of Material Covered

### *Unit 1: Ethics and Food*

1. P. Singer. *Practical Ethics* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2009), 55-82.

2. T. Regan "The Case for Animal Rights" in H. LaFollette eds. *Ethics in Practice: An Anthology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002).
3. L. Gruen, *Ethics and Animals: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 76-91.
4. G. L. Francione, "Animal Welfare, Happy Meat, and Veganism as the Moral Baseline" in Kaplan eds.
5. B. Bermond "The Myth of Animal Suffering" in S. Armstrong (eds.) *Animal Ethics Reader* (Oxford: Routledge, 2003).
6. S. L. Davis, "The Least Harm Principle May Require That Humans Consume a Diet Containing Large Herbivores, Not a Vegan Diet," *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 16.4 (2003), 387-94.
7. L. Lomasky. "Is it wrong to eat animals?," *Social Philosophy and Policy*, Volume 30, Issue 1-2 (2013), 177-200.
8. E. Tefle. *Food for Thought* (Routledge: London, 1996), 103-119.
9. R. Scruton. "Real Men Have Manners," in Kaplan eds.

### ***Unit 2: Political Philosophy and Food***

1. C. J. Adams. *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*. Bloomsbury Academic (New York: Continuum, 2010).
2. G. Dworkin. "Paternalism," Stanford Encyclopedia of philosophy.
3. M. Priest, "Paternalism, Autonomy, and Food Regulation," (forthcoming)
4. D. Resnik, "Food and Beverage Policies and Public Health Ethics," Health Care Annual.

### ***Unit 3: Aesthetics and Food***

1. E. Tefler, "Food as Art," in Neill eds. *Arguing About Art" Contemporary Philosophical Debates* (Oxford: Routledge, 2007).
2. C. Korsmeyer, "The meaning of taste and the taste of meaning," in Neill eds.
3. K. W. Sweeney. "Hunger is the Best Sauce: The Aesthetics of Food," in Kaplan eds.
4. E. Brady. "Smells, Tastes, and Everyday Aesthetics," in Kaplan eds.
5. C. Korsmeyer, "Ethical Gourmandism" in Kaplan eds.

### ***Unit 4: Contemporary Issues and Food***

1. Food inc. (Documentary Film available on Netflix etc.)
2. P. Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1 (1972): 229-43.
3. Kekes, John. "On the Supposed Obligation to Relieve Famine," *Philosophy* 77.302 (2002): 503-17.
4. P. B. Thompson, "Nature Politics and the Philosophy of Agriculture," in Kaplan eds.
- M. Kaiser, "The Ethics and Sustainability of Aquaculture," in Kaplan eds.
5. P. Singer and J. Mason "Eating Locally," in P. Singer and J. Mason, *The Ethics of What we Eat* (USA: Rodale, 2006).
6. M. Adams, "The Aesthetic Value of Eating local food," (manuscript).
7. D. Castle et al. "Scenarios for Food Security," in Kaplan eds.
8. G. Comstock, "Ethics and Genetically Modified Foods," in Kaplan eds.
9. C. Perry, "Some Ethical Concerns with the Minimum Drinking Age Law," *International Journal of Applied Philosophy* 2 (1985), 19-30.

## **Assessment**

**Participation (25%):** Merely attending the lectures will not be sufficient. Active and thoughtful participation (including active listening) will be expected and required. There will be a couple of “pop up quizzes” to insure that you are keeping up with the reading and a collaborative group project.

**Attending Office hours (5%):** During the semester drop by my office hours five times for a 5-10 minute discussion about the material.

**Short Writing Requirements (36%):** six very short papers (summarizing or commenting on an argument) to improve written work before the submission of the final paper. You will have one week to complete each of these papers after they have been assigned.

**Detailed Outline of Final paper (4%):** I will distribute recommended topics several weeks prior to the due date. (Due on Monday April 13).

**Final paper (30%):** A final paper 5-8 pages double-spaced. (Due on Monday April 27).

## **Policies**

1. No electronic devices (laptops or mobile phones) in class.
2. Please show respect for your fellow students during discussion.