



Food, Animals, and the Environment¹

Prof. Nicolas Delon - ndelon@ncf.edu

Spring 2019, Tues & Thurs, 9:00-10:20am, ACE 218

Office hours Thursdays, 1-3pm, or by appointment, ACE 303

Course description and Objectives

This course explores how different food systems affect animals and the environment. We will first examine general questions in ethics: do we have moral obligations to animals, plants, species, ecosystems, and nature; are our obligations directly owed to nonhumans or only a function of what we owe each other as humans; are these individual or collective obligations? We will then survey the structure of industrial animal agriculture and its impacts on humans, nonhumans, health, and the environment. We will next consider alternatives to the industrial food system (local food, organic food, GMOs, synthetic food) and ask whether they are truly consistent with our obligations to humans and nonhumans, especially in the context of global hunger and climate change. Throughout the course, we will address issues in the ethics of eating meat, culture, environmental impact, and food justice.

The **goals of the course** are to provide students with 1) the intellectual tools to make, grasp and evaluate ethical arguments across a variety of domains and practical contexts and to foster their critical reflection on pressing environmental and ethical issues; 2) a solid and comprehensive theoretical and empirical background on these issues; and 3) an overview of both classical and recent essential readings. There are **no prior requirements** in philosophy or environmental studies, but students are expected to be willing to confront with a variety of views, concepts, arguments, and controversies. Debates around the issues covered in this course demand rigor, clarity, and critical self-reflection on both conceptual and empirical matters. Class will alternate between lectures, discussion, group exercises and workshops. It is intended to be as interactive as can be reasonably done while providing comprehensive content. Active participation is therefore required, based on careful analysis and respectful appre-

¹ This syllabus is subject to change. Please refer to the latest version on Canvas and check your emails regularly.

ciation of others' views. The course will also feature guest speakers, one field trip, and oral presentations.

Readings

Required book (available at the campus bookstore)

Christopher Schlotmann and Jeff Sebo, *Food, Animals, and the Environment: An Ethical Approach*, Routledge, 2018

All other readings will be made available through Canvas or can be found through the online USF libraries system.

Further suggested reading

- Anne Barnhill, Mark Budolfson and Tyler Doggett, eds., *Food, Ethics, and Society*
- Anne Barnhill, Mark Budolfson and Tyler Doggett, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Food Ethics*
- Peter Singer and Jim Mason, *The Ethics of What We Eat*
- James McWilliams, *Just Food*
- Lori Gruen, *Ethics and Animals*

Course requirements and Evaluation

The primary listing for this class is **Environmental Studies** but it is **Philosophy eligible** (pending early declaration of interest and satisfactory completion of a paper focused on a philosophical issue – discuss details with me at the start of the semester).

Evaluation criteria: a balance of structure and coherence, understanding of references and course-related materials, critical skills and originality, and rigor and clarity. Tests are graded on a numerical basis. Papers and presentations are graded on a qualitative (SAT) scale.

- **Tests: 3 short quizzes** (multiple-choice and short answer questions) (5% each) and **1 take-home midterm exam** (essay questions) (15%). Tests cover all materials up until test day. Satisfactory $\geq 70\%$ avg on tests.
- **Paper: A term paper** (around 2-3,000 words). You can choose your own topic but you must have it approved first, or you can choose from suggested prompts. A **preliminary outline** will be required. All students will peer-review two anonymous classmates' outlines. *Recommended*: Jim Pryor's guides to philosophical terms and methods, reading philosophy, and writing a philosophy paper, available at www.jimpryor.net/teaching/
- **Collaborative project**: on a specific issue of public concern — students will give a group oral presentation at the end of term. Creative, innovative, multimedia-based, field-based projects are welcome.
- **Discussion**: Readings are mandatory for all. You will lead ONE discussion in the semester (I will circulate a sign up sheet): this consists in posting a 1-page summary/commentary with questions online (at least 24 hours before class) and initiating the discussion in class. ALL students are ex-

pected to post responses to the readings and to the discussion leader online (until 8pm) the day before class.

- **Attendance and participation:**

- Ideally, email me **before missing class**, and consult with me promptly to make up for missed assignments. You are solely responsible for catching up with missed materials and information. Ask your classmates for notes and pertinent information.
- **Active participation** (online and in class). I will assess your demonstrated capacity to engage with arguments, verify assertions, research facts, unpack implicit assumptions, and critically examine your positions. Come prepared with copies of the weekly readings and textbook, personal notes and questions. I generally don't call on students but I may kindly ask the most talkative to enable the less talkative to participate. Shy students need not be, but if you truly are, do not hesitate to compensate for it in the online forum.

Policies

- **Laptop** use is strongly discouraged and tolerated for note taking and readings only. Please disable your internet connection during class time. **Cell phones** must be silenced and left in your bag.
- **Academic integrity:** New College of Florida values academic honesty and integrity, as you should. Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are easily detectable, will not be tolerated, and may result in failure for the class and other sanctions. Please refer to NCF's standards of academic conduct.
- **Lateness/Extensions:** Out of fairness to other students, I can only grant extensions in exceptional circumstances AND if requested with a minimum week's notice. As a rule, do not count on extensions as they will only be granted on a case-by-case basis. Do not assume I have received your assignment until you receive confirmation or unless you posted it online.
- **Accommodations:** New College of Florida is committed to creating a learning environment that meets the needs of its diverse student body. Students are welcome to privately discuss any concerns related to barriers to both fully participating and learning in this course. I encourage students with accommodations to meet with me as soon as possible and to contact the office of Student Disability Services (SDS) in order to request official accommodation(s): SDS in-person (HCL3), at 941-487-4496 OR disabilityservices@ncf.edu. Additional information at <https://www.ncf.edu/student-disability-services/> SDS will establish the need for specific accommodations and communicate them to the instructor.
- **Religious observance:** No student shall be compelled to attend class or sit for an examination at a day or time when s/he would normally be engaged in a religious observance or on a day or time prohibited by his or her religious belief. Students are expected to notify their instructors if they intend to be absent for a class or announced examination, in accordance with this policy, prior to the scheduled meeting.

Outline of topics²

UNIT 1: BACKGROUND

1. **Introduction: Welcome to class!**
 - Food, animals, the environment and ethics: what, how, why.
 - *Recommended reading*: FAE, 1-3
2. **Ethics and Food I**
 - Catch up on FAE, 1-3
3. **Ethics and Food II**
 - FAE, 4
 - Singer, All animals are equal
4. **The psychology of eating animals**
 - Herzog, interview
 - Loughnan and Haslam, The psychology of eating animals
 - Piazza et al., Rationalizing meat consumption: The 4 Ns

UNIT 2: ANIMAL AGRICULTURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

5. **Empirical impacts: General and Industrial**
 - FAE, 5-6
6. **Animal agriculture and climate change**
 - Skim through FAO and Worldwatch reports
 - Lappé, The climate crisis at the end of our fork
 - Niman The climate change case against cattle: sorting fact from fiction
7. **Empirical impacts: Alternatives**
 - FAE, 7
 - Singer and Mason, chapters 6-7
 - Berry, The ecological crisis as a crisis of agriculture

² I refer to the textbook by the 'FAE' abbreviation followed by the chapter number and page numbers where applicable. Topic numbers correspond roughly to week numbers, unless otherwise indicated in class. Consult Canvas for an up-to-date schedule.

8. Food and technology

- Sandler, chapter 4
- Selections on plant-based and cultured meat

9. Ethical questions: Production

- FAE, 8
- McMahan, Eating animals the nice way
- Delon, The replaceability argument in the ethics of animal husbandry
- Jacquet, Sebo & Elder, Bivalves are better

10. Ethical questions: Consumption I

- FAE, 9
- Pollan, The ethics of eating meat
- Barnhill, Does locavorism keep it too simple?

11. Ethical questions: Consumption II

- Nefsky, Consumer choice and collective impact
- Fischer, Arguments for consuming animal products
- Singer and Mason, Freeganism and food waste

UNIT 3: FOOD AND SOCIETY

12. Labor issues

- Pachirat, 'Kill floor' and 'Politics of Sight'
- Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation* (excerpts)
- Estabrook, Slavery in the tomato fields
- Singer and Mason, chapter 11

13. Activism and politics

- FAE, 10-11
- Kheel, Vegetarianism and ecofeminism
- Sullivan and Wolfson, Foxes in the Henhouse
- Shiva, Women and the gendered politics of food

14. Food justice

- Harper, Food deserts 101
- Budolfson, Food, the environment, and global justice
- Whyte, Food justice and collective food relations