

PHIL 220: Food Ethics
M/W 10:00-11:50
GER 303

Dr. McKenna
237 Susan Campbell Hall

Office Hours: Monday 12:00-1:00
Wednesday 12:00-1:00
and by appointment.

Course Description and Objectives:

This is a class in ethics. It is not the role of ethical theory to give answers to particular problems, but to provide frameworks which challenge individuals to think critically and clearly about ethical issues and help them come to their own conclusions. Moral philosophy demands that one have reasons for moral decisions and explores possible principles one can apply in an attempt to arrive at a consistent and well thought out moral position. Most of the issues we face have no obvious or immediate answer, but much can be gained by struggling with what appears to be irresolvable.

Given this description of moral philosophy and ethics, one should not expect to sit passively in this class and receive answers. It is expected that each student will engage this material actively and thoughtfully. This means students must read carefully and critically, come to class prepared to discuss and ask questions, and be willing to engage alternative perspectives on many issues. This is not an easy thing to do and students should not be afraid to acknowledge the inevitable discomfort and fear that comes with encountering people who think differently. To grow, however, we must face this discomfort and stretch our thinking in new directions. At its best, this class will help students do just that.

Specifically, this course should empower students to:

- analyze and critically evaluate various positions presented in the readings
- raise thoughtful questions about the reading and their own experience in the journals and class discussion
- develop well thought out responses to the positions of others, as well as develop positions of their own, in writing for the tests and the reflection piece.

This particular class has a focus on ethical issues related to food. Who and what we eat reflects, and has consequences for, who we are as individuals and as a society. This course will examine some of the ethical concerns related to the conditions of human and other animal beings involved in the production of food and help students arrive at their own considered opinions regarding these issues. Animal welfare and environmental issues will be a central focus. Some specific issues will include: the environmental impacts of farming, livestock welfare, food waste, food safety, and food justice.

Students in this class should bring their own questions and concerns about food to shape the reading and discussion. Some questions might include: Does it make sense to love dogs and eat pigs? If I am concerned about the environment, should I eat packaged food? Should I buy food from companies that don't pay a fair wage? How should we grow, harvest, transport, and prepare food? How much should we eat? Who is responsible for our food habits? Are choices about food simply personal choices, or are there ethical, social, and political implications we must take into account?

Texts (found at the Duckstore):

McKenna, Erin, *Livestock: Food, fiber, and Friends* (Athens, GA: Georgia UP, 2018).

Pachirat, Timothy, *Every Twelve Seconds: Industrialized Slaughter and the Politics of Sight* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2011).

Singer, Peter, and Jim Mason, *The Ethics of What We Eat* (Rodale, 2006).

Readings on Canvas as assigned.

Experiential leaning site—at least eight hours.

Assignments:

Tests: There will be two essay tests and they will be completed on Canvas. The essay questions will be posted at least 5 days before the test is due (100 points). Grading rubric will be posted as well. Time to prepare for, and take, each exam should be about ten hours.

Journal: Each student will keep a food journal. In this journal you will keep track of some of what you eat, when you eat, where you eat, how you eat, with whom you eat,... It should also include other things you notice about food—how it is packaged, how it is advertised, how it is priced, how it is prepared, where it comes from.... Each entry must also include some reflection on the content of the journal entry using the class readings for that week to prompt and guide this reflection. At least three of the entries must also include some reflection on the experiential learning component. At least one entry per week (you may skip ONE week of your choosing), excluding the first and last week of class (7 entries total). These will be posted on Canvas by Tuesday of each week. An A grade will require all journal entries to be complete, done, and on time. A B grade will mean no more than 2 entries incomplete, missing, or late. A C grade will mean no more than three entries incomplete, missing, or late. A D grade will mean no more than 4 entries incomplete, missing, or late. An F grade will be received if 5 or more entries are incomplete, missing, or late. Time to complete the journal each week will probably vary, but 30 minutes would be an average.

Reflection Piece: Each student will write a final reflection at the end of the course (due **Tuesday, March 19th at noon**). This reflection will consist of selecting two journal entries for further development in light of reading other than the original reading for which the entries were written (one of those entries must include reflection on the experiential learning component). Then each student will write a personal statement of their ethics of eating and provide one example of how they now see that they eat ethics every time they eat. This piece will be graded on the understanding of the readings used (35 points), the ability to use these readings in the discussion of the food journals (35 points), and the support provided for the personal statement of ethics and eating (30 points). Time to write the reflection piece should be about eight hours. This piece will draw on writing completed in the journal and the tests.

Participation: Discussion is an important part of any philosophy class. Each student is expected to be in class, be prepared to discuss the material, and pay attention to the discussion. At a minimum this entails having done the reading before class and being ready to engage in discussion—including attentive listening.

A- Exceptional: To achieve an A the expectations are that student has perfect attendance near perfect attendance, he/she is recognized as a leader in discussion and consistently both contributes to and brings the conversation to a deeper level, without dominating the discussion to such an extent that it inhibits participation by other students.

B- Very Good. To achieve a B expectations are that the student will have very good attendance (present around 94% of the time). Takes a very active role in discussion and remarks are consistently helpful and on topic.

C- Good. To achieve a C expectations are that the student will have good attendance (present around 88% of the time). Participates in discussions, but not consistently.

D-Poor. To achieve a D expectations are that the student attends (around 80% of the time). Participates in discussions sporadically.

F-Failing. Student has poor attendance and/or is not a positive contributor to discussions.

To calculate grades for “participation” I will weigh all of these factors in a holistic manner at the end of the term.

Grading:

Test #1	20%
Test #2	20%
Reflection piece	25%
Journal	20%
Participation	15%

PLEASE NOTE: Failure to complete any assignment results in automatic failure of the class.

Academic Honesty

Students who engage in acts of academic dishonesty, which in this class would mean cheating on an exam or paper, will receive a failing grade for the assignment and may fail the class. For a full description of forms of academic dishonesty, please see:

<https://uodos.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/AcademicMisconduct.aspx>

Schedule: Plan on about five hours of reading per week

January:

Introduction

(M) 7 Ch. 1 from Livestock, “Respectful Relationships: A Pragmatist Ecofeminist Take on Living with Livestock” (1-24)

(W) 9 Ethics of What We Eat, Introduction and chs. 1-3, (3-41—chickens and eggs)

Food and Ethics

(M) 14 Ethics of What We Eat, chs. 4-5, “Standard American Diet (42-80—meat and milk) and Livestock, ch. 2, “Fish and Pragmatist Philosophy” (25-44)

(W) 16 Livestock, ch. 3, “Beef Cattle: Animal Welfare and Leopold’s Land Ethic” (45-75)

(M) 21 *NO CLASS*

(W) 23 Ethics of What We Eat, chs. 6-9 (83-132—bacon, eggs, seafood) and Livestock, ch. 4, “In Mixed Company: Deep Ecology, Meat Consumption, and Conservation” (76-97)

(M) 28 Ethics of What We Eat, chs. 10-12 (133-183—local, fair trade, eating out)

(W) 30 Ethics of What We Eat, chs. 13-14 (187-22-- eating organic) and Livestock, ch. 7, “Dairies: Animal Welfare and Val Plumwood” (137-158)

February

Food and Being Human

(M) 4 Ethics of What We Eat, chs.15-18 (223-284—organic, vegan, meat)

(W) 6 Test One due on Canvas

(M) 11 Livestock, chs. 8-9, “Pork Production: Pigs and Pragmatism” and “Poultry Production: Chickens, ‘Chicks’ and Carol Adams” (159-208)

Food and the Inhumane

(W) 13 *Every Twelve Seconds*, chs. 1-2, “Hidden in Plain Sight,” “The Place Where the Blood Flows” (1-37)

(M) 18 *Every Twelve Seconds*, ch. 3, “Kill Floor” (pp. 38-84)

(W) 20 *Every Twelve Seconds*, chs. 4-5 “Es todo por hoy,” “One Hundred Thousand Livers” (85-139)

(M) 25 *Every Twelve Seconds*, ch. 6, “Killing at Close Range” (pp. 140-161)

(W) 27 *Every Twelve Seconds*, ch. 7, “Control of Quality” (pp. 162-207)

March

(M) 4 *Every Twelve Seconds*, chs. 8-9, “Quality of Control” and “A Politics of Sight” (pp. 208-256)

(W) 6 Livestock, ch. 10, “Better Options Moving Forward: Examining Slaughter and Limiting Consumption,” (209-234)

(M) 11 Test 2

(W) 13 Conclusion

Refelction due on Tuesday, March 19th at noon On Canvas.

The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center (formerly Disability Services) in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu.