

ACR 891:3 Special Topics in Food Ethics SPRING SEMESTER 2014

Thursdays 6-8:50pm 171 Comm Arts

Instructor: Paul B. Thompson <http://kelloggchair.anr.msu.edu/> Phone: 517 432 0316 e-mail: thomp649@msu.edu

Office: 330 Natural Resources Building; 528 South Kedzie Hall Schedule Appointments through Julie Eckinger: jeckinr@msu.edu

OVERVIEW: The course will be a high-level introduction to food ethics, covering a range of topics central to food production, distribution and consumption. I have organized the course around a book manuscript that is currently under contract and being read by reviewers for Oxford University Press. Each chapter of the book will be the focus of one or two class sessions, along with a few supporting materials from other authors. A course plan is included below. At this juncture I am open to additions and substitutions, so the actual content of the course may evolve as we learn what topics are of most interest to enrolled students.

COURSE METHODS: This is essentially a classic “read and discuss” seminar. You should expect to read about 100 pages a week, and slightly more in a few cases. I prefer to have students kick off the discussion of the primary reading by having one student do a brief (e.g. 5-10 minute) précis along with some critical comments or questions for discussion. A précis is a short summary of the topic being addressed by the week’s readings that picks out four to six key points that are worth discussing. A point may be worth discussing because it is particularly important for the week’s readings, because it is unclear or because it is particularly controversial. The précis should either incorporate some opportunities for others in the class to voice opinions and reactions, or should conclude with some “questions for discussion”. The mark of a good précis is that it gets the discussion going and keeps it on track for an hour or so.

When things go well I am able to interject a few points as the discussion progresses. Generally, I find that my most useful contribution is to provide some additional context to the readings or to supplement them with discussion of key terms and concepts, though given the fact that we will be reading a lot of stuff I wrote, that may be different in this class. Ideally I would do this with a brief presentation at the midpoint of the session, and discussion would continue. In addition to the “read and talk” component of the weekly meeting, I will meet independently with each student to develop and support a semester project.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: 1. Participation: Students should attend and participate in at least 14 of 16 sessions. If you anticipate a problem here, please see me ASAP, as there will be little flexibility after the fact. 2. Précis. Each student will present one *graded* oral précis of an assigned reading during the semester. I will assign a grade to this presentation on a 10 point scale. [Note that due to the structure of the course each student will probably wind up doing at least three précis during the semester. I am happy to allow your “best” effort to be the one that is graded for course content. 3. Two Short Essays I will assign two essays to be written out of class on assigned materials. These essays will also be graded on a 10 point scale. 4. Each student should design and complete a class project in consultation with the

instructor. In most cases this will be a conventional term paper of between 15 and 30 pages in length. Students who wish to undertake a more applied project may do so, but this should be developed in consultation with the instructor. In either case, each student should prepare a proposal of approximately 2 pages with a few bibliography items, and every student should schedule a time to discuss the project with me individually.

COURSE GRADES: Items 1 through 3 are "pass/fail". Each must be completed by the respective due date in order to be eligible for a grade above 0.0. Students "pass" this component of the class if they receive a at least 21 out of the 30 points possible. Papers (or projects) will be graded based on the 4.0; 3.5; 3.0; 2.5; 2.0 MSU scale. Students satisfactorily completing items 1-3 will receive a course grade based on the paper grade. Students who have completed only two items from 1-3 *and* who complete a course project will receive a grade of 2.0; students who have failed to complete even 2 items from 1-3 will receive a 0.0.

CRITICAL DATES:

1. Writing Assignment #1: Assigned on Jan. 16, Due on Jan. 23.
2. Writing Assignment #2: Assigned on Feb. 20, Due on Feb. 27.
3. Project Proposal: Due on March 13.
4. Individual Project Meetings: Please schedule with Julie Eckinger to meet not later than April 10.

OPTIONS:

REQUIRED TEXTS (1/8/13):

Food Ethics, by Paul B. Thompson Manuscript will be supplied by the instructor.

The Philosophy of Food, D. Kaplan, Ed. Berkeley: 2012, University of California Press

CALENDAR (I will be adding just a few additional things as the semester moves on).

- 1/9 First class session; How philosophers understand ethics
- 1/16 Introduction, *Food Ethics*; John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* Chapters 3 and 4; David Kaplan, "Introduction," *Philosophy of Food*.
- 1/23 Chapter 1, *Food Ethics*; Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence and Morality," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*; Volkert Beekman, "You are what you eat: Meat, novel protein foods, and consumptive freedom." *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 12, no. 2 (2000): 185-196; Hub Zwart, "A short history of food ethics." *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 12, no. 2 (2000): 113-126; Carolyn Korsmeyer, "Ethical Gourmandism" *Philosophy of Food* .
- 1/30 Chapter 2, *Food Ethics*; Patricia Allen, 2008, "Mining for Justice in the Food System," *Agriculture and Human Values* 25: 157-161. Michael Pollan, "The Food Movement" *New York Review of Books*; Selections from *The Food Police* by Jason Lusk

- 2/6 Chapter 3, *Food Ethics*; Grigory Scrinis, "Nutritionism and Functional Food," from *Philosophy and Food*
- 2/13 Chapter 4, *Food Ethics*; Korthals, "Two Evils in Food Country," and Castle, Culver and Hannah, "Scenarios for Food Security," both In *Philosophy of Food*.
- 2/18 Chapter 5, *Food Ethics*; Haynes, "The Myth of Happy Meat," Francione, "Welfare, Happy Meat and Veganism as the Moral Baseline," and Fraser, "Animal Ethics and Food Production in the 21st Century," all in *Philosophy of Food*
- 2/25 More on animals: To be determined
- 3/6 SPRING BREAK
- 3/13 Chapter 6, *Food Ethics*; Thompson, "Nature Politics and the Philosophy of Agriculture," Kaiser, "Ethics and Sustainability of Aquaculture," and Comstock, "Ethics and Genetically Modified Food," all in *Philosophy of Food*
- 3/20 Norman Wirzba at Michigan State; Class will attend Wirzba's lecture and meet afterwards for discussion.
- 3/27 Chapter 7, *Food Ethics*; Heldke, "Down Home Global Cooking," in *Philosophy of Food*, Ron Sandler, Selection from *Character and the Environment*
- 4/3 Chapter 8, *Food Ethics*; Other readings to be determined.
- 4/10 Clark Wolf at Michigan State, readings to be determined.
- 4/17 TBD
- 4/24 TBD
- 5/1 EXAM WEEK