Veganism & Environmental Justice Literature

“And the word environment. Such a bloodless word. A flat-footed word with a shrunk heart. A word increasingly disengaged from its association with the natural world. Urban planners, industrialists, economists, developers use it. It’s a lost word, really. A cold word, mechanistic, suited strangely to the coldness generally felt toward nature.”

– Joy Williams, Ill Nature

Can vegans save the world? Is it more ethical to eat beans, not beef? This class explores the role of literature in creating empathy – how can it help us imagine the lives of “others” & that of animals? By querying the politics of meat mainly through contemporary literature, we put three similar (yet often disconnected) disciplines in conversation with each other: food studies, environmental studies, and animal studies. Two key questions we will address are:

Readings will include fiction and nonfiction (Jonathan Safran Foer, Peter Mayle, Michael Pollan, Ruth L. Ozeki, Eric Schlosser), excerpted critical theory centering on the connection of flesh to environment (The Sexual Politics of Meat, Bodily Natures, Bodies That Matter), essays on environmental justice and climate change, and films including: Death on a Factory Farm and Blackfish. Assignments will include presentations, in-class writing, take-home writing, two in-class exams, and a final essay. This is not purely a lecture course. You are expected to come to class having done the reading and you will be asked to lead discussions and support other students when they do the same.

Books (must purchase in hard copy)
Sue Coe, Dead Meat (1996)
EM Lewis, Song of Extinction (2010)
Ruth L. Ozeki, My Year of Meats (1998)