

<p>Food, Animals, and the Environment</p> <p>ENVST-UA 440 (Environmental Studies) ANST-UA 440 (Animal Studies) New York University Zoom (password = food)</p>		<p>Spring 2021, Mondays 5-7:30pm Professor Chris Schlottmann (cps236@nyu.edu) Office hours: goo.gl/mXYvp Course Assistant</p>
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Description: The purpose of Food, Animals, and the Environment is to critically analyze the place of animals in our food system and in the environment, with an emphasis on the intersection between them. Food, Animals, and the Environment examines some of the main impacts that agriculture has on humans, nonhumans, and the environment, as well as some of the main questions that these impacts raise for the ethics of food production, consumption, and activism. Agriculture is having a lasting effect on this planet. Some forms of agriculture are especially harmful. For example, industrial animal agriculture kills 100+ billion animals per year; consumes vast amounts of land, water, and energy; and produces vast amounts of waste, greenhouse gas emissions, and other pollution. Other forms of agriculture, such as local, organic, and plant-based food, have many benefits, but they also have costs, especially at scale. These impacts raise difficult ethical questions.

What do we owe animals, plants, species, and ecosystems? What do we owe people in other nations and future generations? What are the ethics of risk, uncertainty, and collective harm? What is the meaning and value of natural food in a world reshaped by human activity? What are the ethics of supporting harmful industries when less harmful alternatives are available? What are the ethics of resisting harmful industries through activism, advocacy, and philanthropy? How can we best account for - empirically, evaluatively - food, animals, and the environment in a modern, high-population, high-technology, climate-changed world? This seminar is designed to reflect the rich overlap between the fields of Environmental Studies and Animal Studies.

Reading and Assignment Schedule: *Food, Animals, and the Environment: An Ethical Approach*, Schlottmann and Sebo, is available at the NYU Bookstore under this course number and via the NYU Library (including as an e-book). All proceeds from this book will be used to support educational initiatives related to food, animals, and the environment. Chapters from *Food, Animals, and the Environment* are marked in boldface below. Supplemental readings are available on Brightspace (not NYU Classes). Please note that readings are subject to change. Any changes to the syllabus will be announced in class, on the class listserv, and in an updated syllabus.

Schedule (*pls note that two sessions are rescheduled from Mondays to Thursdays)

2/1 - **Introduction.**

2/8 - **Facts, values, and naturalness**, “The Scientist who Loves Fish” [podcast](#).

*2/18 - **Moral theory.** *Reading notes assigned. Intros. Start, stop, keep.*

2/22 - **Moral status**, Nussbaum "Beyond Compassion," Wallace "Consider the Lobster," Jacquet, Franks, et al, “Octopus Farming,” “Human Beings and Being Human (feat. Syl Ko)” [podcast](#)

3/1 - **Agriculture and the environment.**

3/8 - **Industrial agriculture**, Carson, *Silent Spring* 8, 10, Berry "Twelve Paragraphs on Biotechnology," Radiolab on Haber. *Quiz 1.*

3/15 - **Alternatives to industrial agriculture** (local, organic), Berry, "Family Farm," McWilliams, *Just Food* 1-2, “Grazed & confused?” *Exam 1 distributed; due Thursday 3/18 at 7pm.*

3/22 - **Alternatives to industrial agriculture** (alt. animal ag.), Sustainable Proteins talk, McWilliams, “Omnivore’s Contradiction,” “Soil: The Dirty Climate Solution” [podcast](#).

3/29 - **The ethics of food production and consumption.**

4/5 - **The ethics of food production and consumption**, Jacquet and Pauly, “Seafood stewardship in crisis,” Maniates, “Individualization.” *Collaborative projects assigned.*

4/12 - **The ethics of legal and illegal food activism.** *Exam 2 distributed; due 4/15 at 7pm.*

4/26 - **The ethics of legal and illegal food activism**, “When doing the right thing” [podcast](#).

5/3 - Stories, covid, transitions, divestment, GMOs, markets (readings TBD), *Quiz 2.*

*5/6 - *Collaborative project presentations and papers due.*

5/10 - **Conclusion**, Foley, “Can we feed the world and save the planet?,” Foley et al, “Solutions for a Cultivated Planet,” “The Green Pill” [podcast](#).

Methods: In this course, we will analyze applied, interdisciplinary subject matter through an ethical lens. All content is to be approached critically. Many claims that are empirical in nature arise in these texts. If you find discrepancies, please bring them into class conversation and research them independently in order to understand the nature of the claim. The central analytical questions for each class are:

- How do we determine what is morally considerable?
- What criteria do and should go into our food choices?
- What values should we consider? Direct environmental impacts? Indirect human impacts? Animal interests? Justice?
- How should we balance multiple (ethical, cultural, social and aesthetic) values?
- What is the relationship between individual action (e.g., food choices) and solving environmental problems?

<p><i>Grading and Assignments:</i> This course, including the list of central questions above, is designed to foster close reading and conceptual analysis of complex, interdisciplinary subjects. Active class conversation is required in order to develop and unpack the assumptions, arguments and implications of the topics we discuss. The grading criteria are: comprehension, clarity of presentation, and coherence. In the interest of fairness to other students, extensions and incompletes are only given in <i>exceptional</i> circumstances. Please discuss a request with me in advance. Grade percentages are to the right. Final grading is on a 4.0-point scale.</p>	<p>4.0 = A = 95+ 3.7 = A- = 91-94 3.3 = B+ = 88-90 3.0 = B = 84-87 2.7 = B- = 81-83 2.3 = C+ = 78-80 2.0 = C = 74-77 1.9 = C- = 71-73...</p>
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Participation: (1) Your active participation in class discussion is required. Since the success of the course depends heavily upon class participation, you are expected to attend all sessions and participate actively (5%). Missing more than one class without permission will negatively impact your grade. If you cannot make a class, please email me in advance and get notes from your peers. I will not be able to re-teach you the material. Teaching via Zoom is challenging for all of us, so I ask that you keep your cameras on *if reasonable*, to make our interactions a bit easier. (2) Closely analyze one week's readings, and prepare a 1-page outline and 3 questions to be posted on Brightspace at least 1 day before class (5%). (3) Post case studies that illuminate the topic for the classes on 4/5, 4/12, 4/26, or 5/3 (5%). (4) Prepare and post one critical or analytical question, or comment, from the weekly readings on the designated 'Discussions' folder in Brightspace by Monday at noon, for five of class sessions (5%).

Events: Please attend one public event (below) and submit a 2-page analysis from the event to Brightspace, including three references from class (5%), by 5/5. If you cannot attend any of these events please contact me for an alternative option.

- 2/1, 9:30am, Seeing Octopuses ([link](#))
- 2/17, 12:15pm, Preventing future pandemics with Jonathan Epstein ([link](#))
- 2/19, 1pm, Maneesha Deckha, Animals as Legal Beings ([link](#))
- 3/3, 12:15pm, Racism, land loss, and the creation of modern agriculture ([link](#))
- 4/8, 6pm, Blackness and Biodiversity Conservation
- Plant-Based Diet: Impact for Health, the Environment and Social Justice ([recording](#))

Exams and Quizzes: Exams 1 & 2 (20% each) are both take-home short essay responses to prompts. The content you will be asked to analyze is from the entire course up until the exam. Two in-class quizzes (10% each) cover class content. You will *not* have an exam during finals period.

Project Presentations and Papers: Collaborative projects (groups of 5) will be assigned on 4/5. We will discuss the projects, requirements, and presentations in class that day, as well as in subsequent classes. The 8-page written component of the project is due 5/6 by 5pm via Brightspace, and 10-minute presentations will take place on the same date. The project can be a policy proposal, advertisement, campaign, product, adaptation, and/or solution (15%).

Class Administration: Students who require accommodation for a disability should consult with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at www.nyu.edu/life/safety-health-wellness/students-with-disabilities. Plagiarism results in failure in the class and referral to an academic dean. Plagiarism includes: copying sentences or fragments from any source without quotes or references; not citing every source used in your papers; citing internet information without proper citation; presenting someone else's work as your own; or copying verbatim from any source. You are subject to CAS's guidelines on plagiarism: cas.nyu.edu/page/ug.academicintegrity. Video recordings of our seminar and slides will be posted on Brightspace.