


<p><b>Food, Animals, and the Environment</b>  ENVST-UA 440 (Environmental Studies)  ANST-UA 440 (Animal Studies)  New York University  194 Mercer Street, 304</p>		<p>Spring 2023  Mondays 4:55-7:25pm  Professor Chris Schlottmann (cps236@nyu.edu)  Office hours: <a href="https://tinyurl.com/2p9ecr92">https://tinyurl.com/2p9ecr92</a></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. Readings are subject to change. Any changes to the syllabus will be announced in class, on Brightspace, and in an updated syllabus.

#### *Schedule*

1/23 - **Introduction.**

1/30 - **Facts, values, and naturalness**, "The Scientist who Loves Fish" [podcast](#).

2/6 - **Moral theory**, Nussbaum "Capabilities Approach." *Reading notes and case studies assigned. Introductions.*

2/13 - **Moral status**, Wallace "Consider the Lobster," Jacquet, Franks, et al, "Octopus Farming," "Human Beings and Being Human (feat. Syl Ko)" [podcast](#). *Start, stop, keep.*

2/20 - No class (holiday).

2/27 - **Agriculture and the environment.** *Quiz 1.*

3/6 - **Industrial agriculture**, Carson, *Silent Spring* 8, Berry "Twelve Paragraphs on Biotechnology," Radiolab on Haber. *Exam 1 distributed; due Thursday 3/9 at 7pm.*

3/13 - No class (spring break).

3/20 - **Alternatives to industrial agriculture** (local, organic), Berry, "Family Farm," McWilliams, *Just Food* 1-2.

3/27 - **Alternatives to industrial agriculture** (alt. animal ag.), McWilliams, "Omnivore's Contradiction," "Soil: The Dirty Climate Solution" [podcast](#), "Grazed & confused?" (skim the beginning and end). *Collaborative projects assigned.*

4/3 - **The ethics of food production & consumption.** *Quiz 2.*

4/10 - **The ethics of food production & consumption**, Jacquet/Pauly, "Seafood stewardship," Maniates, "Individualization."

4/17 - **The ethics of legal and illegal food activism**. *Exam 2 distributed; due 4/20 at 7pm.*

4/24 - **The ethics of legal and illegal food activism**, "When doing the right thing" [podcast](#).

5/1 - *Collaborative project presentations and papers due.*

5/8 - **Conclusion**, Foley, "Can we feed the world and save the planet?," Foley et al, "Solutions for a Cultivated Planet," "The Green Pill" [podcast](#), "The use of epic narratives in promoting 'natural agriculture?'"

*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 policies and 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 attendance and active participation in class discussion is required (5%). Active participation facilitates community building, knowledge sharing, and deeper engagement with course materials. 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. (2) Closely analyze one week's readings, and post a 1-page outline and 3 questions by Monday of that class at noon (5%). (3) Post one case study and 1-paragraph analysis that illuminates a class topic (2/27-4/24) (10%), due Monday of that class at noon. (4) Prepare and post one critical or analytical question, or comment, from the weekly readings on the designated 'Discussions' folder by Monday at noon, for five class sessions (5%). Participation assignments 2, 3, and 4 are on Brightspace.

*Events:* Please attend one event and submit a 2-page analysis (2-space, TNR font) to Brightspace, analyzing how the event is understood better in light of our class materials, including three references from class (5%), by 5/8 at 4pm. If you can't attend or find an event, please contact me for an alternative option.

*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 date. Two in-class quizzes (5% each) cover class content. You will *not* have an exam during finals period.

*Project Presentations and Papers:* Collaborative projects (groups of 4-5) will be assigned on 3/27. We will discuss the projects, requirements, and presentations in class that day, as well as in subsequent classes. The 10-page written component of the project is due 5/1 by 5pm via Brightspace, and 15-minute presentations will take place on the same date. The project can be a policy proposal, campaign, product, adaptation, and/or solution (20%).

*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](http://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; copying verbatim from any source; or using AI-facilitated writing. You are subject to CAS's guidelines on plagiarism: [cas.nyu.edu/page/ug.academicintegrity](http://cas.nyu.edu/page/ug.academicintegrity). All class content is copyrighted, and therefore cannot legally be distributed. We will follow NYU's policy on teaching modality, meeting in-person or remotely if needed. Should you be unable to attend in-person, please email the professor *and* course assistant to arrange accommodations. We look forward to working with you this semester to build a learning community, and to advance our understanding of food, animals, and the environment.