The Literature of Environmental Justice

Term/Hours  Spring 2017 / R 5:00T  7:30PM
Professor    Yanoula Athanassakis, ya28@nyu.edu

Course Description
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” and 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:

1. What relationship – if any – is there between what we eat and who we are?
2. How are the intimate spaces of both human and nonhuman bodies – and their cultivation – related to notions of ecological violence? Of late veganism, or “going vegan,” is offered as the antidote to a variety of issues.

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: Sharkwater, 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)"