NYU Animal Studies M.A. Program
ANST-GA 2500: Histories and Cultures of Animal Edibility (Fall 2019)
Mondays 2:00-4:30
Tisch Hall LC6

Instructor: Dr. Elan Abrell
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Office Hours: Mondays 9-9:30 AM, 12:15 to 1:45, or by appointment
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Course Description
For many people, animal flesh and excretions form a significant and cherished part of their diet. Indeed, humans have used other animals as sources of nutrients for hundreds of thousands of years. What can these animal-based dietary practices tell us about humans and their relationships with other animals? Of course, these interspecies relationships have varied as radically across time and cultures as the dietary practices that have shaped them. To better understand some of these practices and the relationships they generate, this course will explore the following questions: How did animal-based food practices develop from pre-domestication to the contemporary era of industrialized animal agriculture? How have cultural categories of “edibility” developed in different cultural contexts? What is meat, and how does it differ from un-edible flesh? How has gender, class, race, sexuality, and other categories of difference intersected with and shaped animal consumption practices in different times and contexts? How has animal consumption shaped and been shaped by animal ethics, philosophy, and scientific knowledge production? How has large-scale animal consumption contributed to the ecological crises of the Anthropocene, and how has these in turn affected animal consumption practices? What is the future of animal-based food?

This course will use ethnographies, historical and legal analyses, and philosophical inquiries to examine the histories and cultures of animal edibility. Specifically, it will focus on topics including human evolution, animal domestication, slaughter practices, industrialized animal agriculture, indigenous ecological ontologies, hunting, dairy and egg consumption, cannibalism, cultural conflicts over the edibility of specific species, and recent technological innovations that can produce animal products without animals. The course will be primarily discussion-based.

Course Policies
Required Reading
You do not need to purchase any required readings for this class as they will be made available as PDF’s or web links on Classes.

Absences, Late Assignments, and Participation
Because this course requires participation, attendance is mandatory and you are expected to be in class on time and prepared. Unexcused absences will affect your participation
grade. If you have obligations that will prevent you from attending class, please communicate this to the instructor prior to your absence. Late assignments are automatically deducted a portion of a letter grade per day (an A becomes an A-, a B- a C+, and so forth). Extensions will be granted only in exceptional circumstances and should be requested in advance. If you find you that you are either having problems with the material or that other circumstances are affecting your class performance, please speak with the instructor as early as possible.

Electronic Equipment
You are permitted to use your laptops, tablets, or handheld computers in class, but only for purposes that are directly relevant to what is going on in class. This means texting your friends is not permitted, but Googling the names of the number of animals killed for food each year is. Please do not violate this policy. You may think that no one will notice if you IM your friends from your computer in the back of class, but people will notice, especially me. So if you do use electronic equipment, please do so in a way that is not distracting to your fellow classmates or to your instructor. If your device use causes a distraction, you will be asked to turn off or put away your device.

Alternative Learning Accommodations
Your experience in this class is important to me, and it is the policy and practice of New York University to provide equal educational opportunity and participation for students with disabilities. If you would like to request academic accommodation due to alternative learning styles/needs, please contact the Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980.

NYU Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities
726 Broadway, 2nd Floor New York, NY 10003-6675
Voice/TTY Fax: 212-995-4114
Web site: http://www.nyu.edu/csd

If you have already established accommodations, you are welcome to communicate your approved accommodations to me at your earliest convenience so we can discuss your needs in this course.

Preferred Gender Pronouns
This course affirms people of all gender expressions and gender identities. If you prefer to be called a different name than what is indicated on the class roster, please let me know. Feel free to correct me on your preferred gender pronoun. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Immigration Status
As an educator, I fully support the rights of undocumented students to an education and to live free from the fear of deportation. If you have any concerns in that regard, feel free to discuss them with me, and I will respect your wishes concerning confidentiality.
**Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct**
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 the CAS guidelines on plagiarism:
http://cas.nyu.edu/content/nyu-as/cas/academic-integrity.html

**Class Participation**
The course will function as a seminar in which we will spend most of the class time discussing the reading topics as a group. Through our discussions we will identify and explore the issues raised in the readings. Because the seminar format treats learning as a collaborative process in which we all participate equally, it is essential that students come to class prepared and actively participate in class discussions.

**Class Conduct**
This course covers a number of issues about which some people may hold strong feelings. Part of the goal of the class is to enable students to learn from each other and communicate their thoughts on contemporary issues in articulate and compelling ways. While everyone is entitled to their thoughts and encouraged to share them, please do so in a constructive way. Treat everyone in the classroom with respect, regardless of whether you disagree with their opinions.

**Grading**
Your grades will be determined as follows:

- **Papers (50%)**: You will write either two 4,000-word papers or one 8,000-word paper and submit them on Classes. Each paper should explore an issue related to the consumption of animals or animal products. The papers can more deeply explore issues covered in class or related issues that we were not able to cover. They should engage with multiple course readings and discussions as well as outside sources. If you write one paper, your paper is due at the end of the day on December 13 (but I want you to inform me of your topic by October 21). If you write two papers, paper 1 is due at the end of the day on October 21 and paper 2 is due at the end of the day on December 13. Please meet with me to discuss potential topics. Also, if you choose to do two papers, and would like to use a more creative format for one of them (film, creative writing, photo series, etc.), please discuss this option with me as well.

- **Weekly Reading Responses (20%)**: Prior to each session, you will submit a short response paper (300-500 words) that briefly discusses your reaction to the readings. This assignment is due no later than 1:30 pm on the day of class and will be graded Pass/Fail. You should also have access to your response in class so you can draw on it during the discussion that day.
• **Discussion Leaders (10%)**: For each class, students will be responsible for leading our discussion about the topics addressed in the readings. Leaders should come to class prepared with several discussion questions for the class based on issues raised by the readings that they found interesting or provocative. Students are expected to coordinate with partners outside of class.

• **Attendance and Participation (20%)**: I expect regular attendance and thoughtful participation from all students. My assessment of the quality of your performance on these items will account for 20% of your grade in this class.

**Course Schedule**
Readings on the syllabus are subject to change, but students will be advised of any changes in advance. The reading assignments listed under each day must be completed by the beginning of class that day.

**Week 1: Introductions**
**Monday, September 9**
Introductions
Creating our Classroom Community

**Week 2: What Does it Mean to Eat Animals?**
**Monday, September 16**

**Week 3: Domestication**
**Monday, September 23**

**Week 4: (Pre-)Industrialization of Meat I**
**Monday, September 30**
Week 5: (Pre-)Industrialization of Meat II  
**Monday, October 7**  

Week 6: The Slaughterhouse  
**Tuesday, October 15** (classes meet according to a Monday schedule)  

Week 7: Dairy I  
**Monday, October 21**  
**Paper 1 is due on Classes (if you chose to write only one paper, than the topic is due)**

Week 8: Dairy II  
**Monday, October 28**  

Week 9: Indigenous Perspectives  
**Monday, November 4**  

Week 10: The Sexual and Racial Politics of Meat  
**Monday, November 11**  

Week 11: Disabilities
Monday, November 18

Week 12: We’re Edible Too
Monday, November 25

Week 13: No Free Lunch?: Costs of the Industrial Food System
Monday, December 2
• Podcast: Radiolab, Episode: Alpha Gal (October 27, 2016).
Week 14: The Future of Meat

Monday, December 9


Friday, December 13: Paper #2 due on Classes