



Phil. 306-01 – Environmental Philosophy

Winter semester 2011

Mon., Weds., 14:00-15:15, Wister

Instructor: Prof. John Hymers, PhD

Email: hymers@lasalle.edu

Office: Wister 235

Phone: 215 893 1321 (office)

Office hours: TBD

Course Description and Requirements

Description: The first world takes food for granted, and places convenience above all. Neither seasons nor locale determine our contemporary meal, whereas single-serving packages, pre-cut vegetables, drive-through restaurants, one-handed meals, and instant soups have turned eating into the last stage of a long industrial process. Meanwhile, synthetic packaging protects our food from natural processes, a protection made necessary by the very industrial procedures we have become enslaved to. And in removing us from nature, the convenient meal paradoxically also removes us from culture: the daily meal as a family or community ritual has become the exception rather than the rule, and in its place, the dinner table has become a drop-in centre which strives for no more than quorum. This course wants to investigate a deeper sense of convenience and community, seeking it in the Latin *conveniens* (fittingness, appropriateness). It will argue that nature itself is fittingness – that organisms depend on what is fitting to them, and that fittingness is essential for health – not just of humans, but also of the environment – and that eating should be seen as an act of appropriation. This second but more primal notion of convenience will then help us to explore the philosophical meaning of eating, and see it not as exploitation, but rather as symbiosis. The human being and nature are then not opposed to one another, but form a matrix.

Material Goals:

- To see the food chain as the crux of environmental philosophy, and to understand the philosophical implications in food choice

Formal Goals:

- To learn to question what seems obvious

Procedure: Lectures.

Grading:

- Class participation: Blog post(s) (20%)
- Pop quizzes (20%)
- Term Paper: Bibliography and abstract (10%)
- Term Paper: Peer review (10%)
- Term paper: Final version (20%)
- Final exam (20%)

Blog post: Choose two consecutive The point of the blog is to have a central resource of information for study purposes. You will be assigned a lecture, and expected to post your notes from that lecture on-line by the next lecture. You are encouraged to supplement the notes with your own observations, and any extra material you can provide (links, images, etc.) will help with your grade. Be thorough, but be creative! Follow the muse! The base grade for the posts will be a C+, which assumes accurate lecture notes and no elaboration or extra material. It is important that you indicate when you depart from the lectures, and add your own material. You are also encouraged to discuss other student's posts in the discussion threads. Doing so constructively will also help your grade.

Blog location: <http://phl306enironmentalphilosophy.wetpaint.com>

Pop quizzes: I will give 13 pop quizzes during the semester, each worth 2 points. You can miss three and still earn a full grade. On the other hand, if you miss none and get them all perfect, you can earn a 6 point bonus on your final grade.

Term Paper: The paper is a 10 pp. (max.) research paper, and will be based on a theme of your choosing in Modern Philosophy. You are encouraged to link the paper to your major, if possible. You are required to talk with me about your proposal in advance during my office hours. All deadlines are final, and admit of no extensions.

- Bibliography and abstract (10%) – Due Feb. 23. You will be graded on (a) acceptability of sources (5 pt); (b) Clarity of abstract (5 pt.)
- Peer review (10%) – You must bring a completed draft of your paper to class April 04 for peer review. I will distribute them at the end of class; each student has until the next class to read the paper they receive, peer-review it, and complete a form, due on April 6. You are graded on your review, not the paper you receive. If you do not submit a paper, you will not be able to peer-review a paper, and will lose that grade.

- Final version (20%) – Due April 11.

Final Exam: The final exam will be a take-home, and will be based on class notes; thus, good notes are essential. Although you are invited to make critical use of the notes posted on the blog, there is no substitute for your own notes.

Grading Scale: A: 100-90, B: 89-80, C: 79-70, D: 69-60, F: 59-0

Academic honesty policy: Plagiarism will not be tolerated, and I expect students to adhere to the academic honesty policy of La Salle University. Students caught plagiarizing or otherwise cheating will earn a zero (0) in that course component (i.e., paper or exam). To avoid misunderstandings as to the definition of plagiarism, I expect students to read the following Web site:

<http://www.kuleuven.be/plagiarism/>. I translated that site, and fully back its message. La Salle also has excellent resources regarding plagiarism:

<http://www.lasalle.edu/library/content.php?section=research&page=plagiarism>.

Required Texts:

Available in the book store:

1. Michael Pollan. "The Omnivore's Dilemma. A Natural History of Four Meals." (Penguin, 2006).
2. Gruen and Jamieson. "Reflecting on Nature. Readings in Environmental Philosophy." (Oxford, 1994.). [cited as RON below]

On Reserve at Connelly Library:

1. J.A. Brillat-Savarin. "The Physiology of Taste. Or, Meditations on Transcendental Gastronomy." Trans. M.F.K. Fisher (Counterpoint, 1949).
2. E. Schlosser. "Fast Food Nation. What the All-American Meal Is Doing to the World." (Penguin, 2001).

Internet:

1. Thomas Aquinas, "Summa Contra Gentiles." (<http://www.diafrica.org/kenny/CDtexts/ContraGentiles.htm>). Any printed version is also ok.
2. John Hymers, "In Defence of Feuerbach's Moleschott Reception. Feuerbach's Open Dialectic." (http://hymers.eu/pdf/feuerbach_moleschott_EN.pdf).

Important Dates:

Feb. 23: Abstract and preliminary bibliography due

April 4: Submit paper for peer review

April 6: Peer review due

April 11: Term paper due

May 2-6: Final exam (centrally scheduled)

Course Outline - Readings

- Jan. 19: Intro
24: Brillat-Savarin (from photocopies, and on reserve)
26: Aquinas and Feuerbach (*Conueniens* and health: Aquinas, SCG 3.3.2, 3.3.3; Hymers, 11 ff);
31: White (RON, 5-13)
- Feb. 02: Pollan (Ch. 1 & 2)
07: Pollan (Ch. 3)
09: Pollan (Ch. 4 & 5)
14: Leopold (RON 26-28); Thoreau (RON 28-29)
16: Pollan (Ch. 6)
21: Pollan (Ch. 7)
23: Schlosser (Final chapter and epilogue) – **Essay Abstract and Provisional Bibliography due**
28: Pollan (Ch. 8 & 9)
- March 02: Callicot (RON 252-265)
09-13: Midterm holiday
14: Pollan (Ch. 10)
16: Erlich and Erlich (RON 335-342)
21: Pollan (Ch. 11 & 12)
23: Sobers (RON 345-362)
28: Pollan (Ch. 13 & 14)
30: Rolston (65-84)
- April 04: Pollan (Ch. 15 & 16) **First drafts due for peer review**
06: Singer (RON 53-55) **Peer reviews due**
11: Gruen (RON 281-290) **Term papers due**
13: Pollan (Ch. 17 & 18)
18: Brillat-Savarin (80-85)
20: Pollan (Ch. 19 & 20)
25: Williams (RON 46-52)
27: Review

Help with writing and studies

The Writing Center:

All writers benefit from having an objective reader look at their work and offer feedback. In the Sheekey Writing Center, located in Olney 203, tutors are available, free of charge, to give this feedback and assist students in expanding their skills and sharpening their strengths. The tutors welcome work from all disciplines and across all college levels, including graduate, and deal with papers in all stages of development, including idea development. The Center also provides information on research and documentation styles as well as study skills when necessary to facilitate the writing process. While the Writing Center does not operate as a proofreading service, tutors do assist students in learning to identify and correct grammar as well as assist with the editing and proofreading process to help build these important skills. While drop-in service exists, such service depends on tutor availability. To guarantee seeing a tutor, the Writing Center recommends making an appointment through TutorTrac

General Subject Tutoring:

Tutoring for various subject areas is available free of charge for La Salle undergraduates. General Subject Tutors help students identify what to learn as well how to learn, clarify course content and assignments, assist in learning and practicing the concepts necessary for success in a course, and help students understand their strengths and weaknesses regarding the subject matter. Students should take advantage of tutoring at the first indication of experiencing difficulty in a course or whenever they wish to improve their performance or knowledge in a course, for example, to improve B grades to A grades or to maintain high grades. Students can schedule appointments with General Subject Tutors through TutorTrac, located on the Student Services page of La Salle's portal.

TutorTrac

Students can find TutorTrac in the MyLaSalle Portal at the top of the page. The process is easy, but should you have questions about the process, there is an animated demo that can be accessed through the TutorTrac link in mylasalle as well as a link to printable instructions.