

# Meat or Murder?: Animal Rights, Food, and Vegetarianism in Contemporary America

First Year Seminar, St. Lawrence University, Spring Semester 2005

- Meeting Times: Tuesday and Thursday 10:10-11:40, Richardson 202; Tuesday 12:40-2:10, Valentine 106
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- *Office hours*: TBA
- Writing Mentor: Jennifer Murray, jlmurr03@stlawu.edu (office hours TBA)

*In addition to what is covered here, you are also responsible for adhering to the guidelines in "Professor Torres: A User's Guide" which is attached to this syllabus.*

## Course Description

Where some people see tasty, succulent meat, others see bloody murder. The question is, how can two people raised in the same culture see the same thing in such disparate terms? In this class, we will examine ethical theories of animal rights, with an emphasis on understanding the politics of meat, animal experimentation, animal agriculture, and factory farming. We will work to situate these theories within their social and cultural contexts, drawing connections between global food systems, hunger, fast food, and factory farming. We will also consider contemporary vegetarian/vegan movements, their philosophical and cultural roots, and their political implications.

## Required Texts

Adams, C. J. (2003). *The pornography of meat*. New York: Continuum.

Cook, C. D. (2004). *Diet for a Dead Planet*. New York: The New Press.

Lyman, H. & Merzer, G. (1998). *Mad cowboy.: plain truth from the cattle rancher who won't eat meat*. New York: Scribner.

Marcus, E. (2005). *Meat Market: animals, ethics, and money*. Ithaca, NY: Brio Press.

Patterson, C. (2002). *Eternal Treblinka: Our Treatment of Animals and the Holocaust*. New York: Lantern Books.

*plus a small number of readings on the t-drive*

## **Assignments**

You will have to complete five essays, two formal presentations, two informal presentations, a final research paper, and a portfolio for this class. The assignments are as follows. You can find due dates for these in the tentative schedule. Please keep in mind that I reserve the right to delete or revise assignments as I see fit given the pace and context of our class. More details will follow on most of these assignments.

### **Essay 1: How do you view animal rights?**

In this first essay, you'll be informally exploring your own thoughts and feelings on the question of animals and animal rights. Right now, how do you view the question of animal rights? What do you understand "animal rights" to mean? If you're so inclined, you might also briefly discuss your own experience with animals throughout your life. This essay should be approximately 2 double-spaced pages long, and written for an audience of your peers. During the next class, you should come prepared to speak informally about what you've written to the rest of the class.

### **Essay 2: Examining arguments on animal rights**

(this essay will be preceded by in-class writing based on the texts that we consider)

Francione and Singer both argue that we need to rethink our notions of the status of animals in our culture. For this essay, you should consider how both authors view animals and humans and the status of animals in that relationship. First, you should consider each author's basic argument, detailing it for the reader. After you've done that, you should examine the basic assumptions of each of these authors. What kinds of evidence do they use to explain their positions? Do you find one or the other more persuasive? If so, why? Ultimately, do you see a difference in the way that both of these authors approach the question of animal rights?

Please write 3-4 pages on the above questions. For this essay, you should think of your audience as people who are familiar with the readings in question, but who would welcome additional discussion along these lines. Be aware that this essay will be peer-reviewed in class using a peer-review guide.

### **Essay 3: You're the Expert!**

Imagine the following hypothetical situation:

One day, you leave seminar and you head over to Dana. Sitting at the table, talking about classes over lunch (veggie burgers, of course ;) ...), one of your friends asks you what you're taking. You mention this class and our discussions, and your friend politely asks you why some people wouldn't want to eat animals – they're tasty after all! They also ask you what your opinion is on this complicated set of issues. Unfortunately, you have to run to your next class, but on your way up from the table, you tell your friend that you'll send her an email tonight when you get back to your room letting her know what's up.

For this assignment, you should write that hypothetical email to your friend. Please limit your email to 3 double-spaced pages. The audience for this is clearly your friend, but remember that this is for class, so please avoid "email speak" (e.g. "u" instead of "you," etc.) in your essay. Please also come prepared to briefly and informally discuss what you've said in your letter.

### **Essay 4 and Formal Presentation 1: Your Stand on "Standing"**

For this essay, you will have to come to your own understanding on the question of standing for animals. Working from the tradition of Francione and the other authors that we've read thus far, what kind of 'standing' do you think that animals should have in our society, law, and culture? In order to answer this question you will have to draw not only on your own expertise, but also on the expertise of other authors. As such, you must include at least five different sources

in this paper (we will discuss what constitutes an "appropriate" source and how to find those sources). The sources that you use must help you build your argument and/or provide evidence for your basic theoretical propositions, and must be integrated into your paper appropriately (again, we'll discuss this). Please format all papers, sources, and bibliographies using the guidelines from the American Psychological Association. This paper should be at least 5 pages long and written for an academic audience.

This paper will go through several drafts:

1. For the first draft, please turn in to me your first 3 pages and a bibliography of your sources. I will comment on these and return them to you.
2. Your second draft should be a complete version of your paper. In addition to your paper, please also come with a one-page letter detailing where you think you need the most help with your paper. This draft and letter will then be used for in-class peer review, which will be guided by a worksheet which you must fill out for a peer.
3. Turn in to me all drafts, letters, and everything else that comes out of this process along with your final draft.

Grading:

final draft: 60%

revisions: 20%

your work as a peer editor: 20%

Presentation:

Finally, once you have developed your final draft, you must present your position to the class using a persuasive speech which incorporates the sources and evidence that you used. We will discuss the particulars of this speech in class.

## **Final Research Paper**

The final research paper will be done in parts. The parts are as follows:

### **Essay 5: Representations of Animals**

Adams uses images of animals in advertising and popular culture to argue for a particular kind of sexualization that operates through consumption. Bringing very specific visual evidence to the table, Adams uses that evidence to advance her main argument about exploitation.

As a foundation piece for your final paper, this assignment asks you to do something similar. Using Adams as an example, your assignment here is to find a visual representation of an animal in the media, pop culture, films, or art. Working from this visual representation, you should analyze what kinds of messages are conveyed through this representation. Your paper should discuss particular attributes of the image that you analyze, as well as the context in which the image was found. You may draw on any of the readings that we've done during the semester to help you make your case, but you will likely find Adams to be the most useful for this assignment.

This paper should be at least two pages long, written for people who are familiar with the theoretical and substantive foci of this class.

Informal presentation:

Please come to class with a copy of your image (on your P-drive or hard copy) and be prepared to briefly discuss your analysis of the image.

## **Thesis, Bibliography and Outline**

The overall goal of the final paper is an analysis of visual representations of animals and what these visual representations say about our sometimes complicated relationship with the animal kingdom. Like the last assignment, this assignment is a step towards that final goal. (more detail here forthcoming)

For this assignment, you should build upon the kind of work that you did in the last assignment. In the last paper, you began to analyze images of animals and how they convey more complicated themes than are apparent on the face of things. You can work from that analysis to begin to develop it into a more thorough argument, and the first step of doing that is in developing a more rigorous thesis. As such, you'll be required to turn in a working thesis, outline, and working bibliography for your final paper.

Your thesis should have the characteristics that we discussed earlier: it should be interesting, specific, and manageable. It should provide a sense of where your work is heading, what your basic argument is, and how you'll set about addressing the issues that you raise. This should no more than about one page long, but this single page should show evidence of your thoughtful consideration of the question at hand.

You'll also be required to turn in a basic outline of your paper, which we will discuss in more depth in class. This should be two pages long or so.

Please also include an annotated bibliography of five sources that you will be using in your final paper.

## **Rough Draft of Final Research Paper**

Your rough draft should draw from at least 10 references, incorporate sources accurately, and present your argument in a cogent manner, as we discussed in class.

## **Final Draft of Final Research Paper**

## **Formal Presentation of Final Research Paper and visual analysis**

## **Portfolio**

In your portfolio, you will gather together all of the work that you've done for this class and reflect back on it. Guidelines will be forthcoming, though you will also be asked to reflect back on your original statement about animal rights that you wrote during the first week of class.

## **Grading**

No late work will be accepted

Grades will be assessed as follows:

| assignment            | percentage |
|-----------------------|------------|
| Essay 1               | 5%         |
| Essay 2               | 10%        |
| Essay 3               | 10%        |
| Essay 4               | 15%        |
| Essay 5               | 10%        |
| Formal Presentation 1 | 10%        |
| Formal Presentation 2 | 10%        |
| Final rough draft     | 5%         |
| Final thesis/bib      | 5%         |
| Final paper           | 15%        |
| Portfolio             | 5%         |

## Tentative Schedule

*This schedule is subject to change.*

### Week 1

- Tuesday 18 January – overview and introduction to the course; discussion of film “The Witness”
- Thursday 20 January – Essay #1 due; informal presentations in class.

### Week 2

- Tuesday 25 January – read Francione Chapters 1 and 2 (t-drive); in-class writing on ethics/Francione
- Thursday 27 January – read Francione Chapter 4 (t-drive)

### Week 3

- Tuesday 1 February - read Francione Chapter 7 and Appendix (t-drive); in-class writing on Francione
- Thursday 3 February – read Singer excerpts from *Animal Liberation* (up to and including “A Vegetarian Philosophy” (t-drive)

### Week 4

- Tuesday 8 February – Essay #2 due at start of class – in-class work on peer editing (handout)
- Thursday 10 February – Lyman, *Mad Cowboy*, Chapters 1, 2, 3

### Week 5

- Tuesday 15 February – Lyman, *Mad Cowboy*, Chapters 4 - 8; discussion of style and audience
- Thursday 17 February – Lyman, *Mad Cowboy*, Chapter 8 – Essay #3 due.

### Week 6

- Tuesday 22 February – Library workshop; Patterson, *The Eternal Treblinka*, Chapters 1 and 2
- Thursday 24 February – Patterson, *The Eternal Treblinka*, Chapter 3

### Week 7

- Tuesday 1 March – Patterson, *The Eternal Treblinka*, Chapters 4 and 5; essay #4 draft 1 due
- Thursday 3 March – Patterson, *The Eternal Treblinka*, Part 3; draft returned

### Week 8

- Tuesday 8 March – Essay #4 draft 2 due, in-class workshop.
- Thursday 10 March – Essay #4 final draft due; essay #4 speeches

### **Week 9**

- Tuesday 22 March – essay #4 speeches continued; Adams, *Pornography of Meat*, page range TBA
- Thursday 24 March – Adams, *Pornography of Meat*, page range TBA

### **Week 10**

- Tuesday 29 March – Adams, *Pornography of Meat*, TBA discussion of assignment #5 and final paper
- Thursday 31 March – read Marcus, *Animal Market*, Chapters 1-3

### **Week 11**

- Tuesday 5 April – read Marcus, *Animal Market*, 4 -7
- Wednesday 6 April: Erik Marcus speaks to the University and community; room and time TBA
- Thursday 7 April – Erik Marcus joins us in class. Please come prepared with questions or issues that you would like to raise with Erik. Reading: Marcus, *Animal Market*, 8-10 and epilogue

### **Week 12**

- Tuesday 12 April – Presentations based on essay #5; essay #5 due.
- Thursday 14 April – selections from Fudge, *Animal*, t-drive

### **Week 13**

- Tuesday 19 April – Thesis, bibliography, and outline due for final paper; in-class workshop on these
- Thursday 21 April – individual appointments to discuss final papers

### **Week 14**

- Tuesday 26 April – Final presentations
- Thursday 28 April – first draft of final paper due; portfolio and final paper due during finals week

## **Statement of Philosophy and Goals - FYP**

FYP Communication Skills Component

2004-05

Statement of Philosophy

First-Year colleges provide ideal environments for fostering the complex intellectual and social skills that are at the heart of a liberal education. The First-Year Program (FYP)/ First-Year Seminars (FYS) play a significant part in the development of students abilities to communicate effectively and to use writing and speaking to help them to become critical readers of a variety of texts.

Improving student abilities in reading, writing, speaking and research requires serious, sustained practice and overt, in-class reflection upon that practice. A critical feature of this sustained practice is that students receive detailed, constructive response to their work from instructors, from peers, and from mentors and/or Writing Center tutors.

Underlying the teaching of communication skills in the FYP and the FYS is the assumption that these courses are components of a university-wide, four-year commitment to teaching communication skills across the undergraduate curriculum.

Goals Though the goals for speaking, writing, and research are discussed in separate sections below, they are related activities. Instruction in these skills is most effective when grounded in a holistic view of communication. Students should be made aware of the differences and similarities between oral and written modes of discourse.

### 1. Oral Communication

By the end of the FYP/FYS students should demonstrate an increased ability:

- a) to develop an oral presentation through a series of drafts, demonstrating substantial conceptual and performative revision.
- b) to produce a speech with a clearly defined rhetorical purpose that is appropriately and adequately fulfilled given the audience being addressed.
- c) to use informal conversation, in class or out, to facilitate close reading and promote critical thinking.
- d) to speak from notes or outline, rather than from a manuscript or in an impromptu fashion.

### 2. Written Communication

By the end of the FYP/FYS, students should demonstrate an increased ability:

- a) to develop a piece of writing through a series of drafts, demonstrating substantial revision at both the conceptual and the sentence level.
- b) to produce an essay with a clearly defined rhetorical purpose that is appropriately and adequately fulfilled given the audience being addressed.
- c) to use informal writing, done in class or out, in journals, reader-response papers, or exploratory essays, to facilitate close reading and promote critical thinking.
- d) to produce writing that is characterized by a mature prose style and that conforms to the conventions of standard written English.

### 3. Research

By the end of the FYP/FYS, students should be better able to conduct productive, imaginative research. Specifically, they should demonstrate an increased ability:

- a) to assess the research requirements of a particular assignment and to meet those requirements by using library collections, electronic databases, and Web-based sources.
- b) to be able to choose amongst the sources to determine which are most appropriate for a particular assignment.
- c) to assess and represent the complexity of a particular line of inquiry and to enter responsibly into the conversation about the issues it raises.

### Policies

#### I. FYP courses

An FYP course will be approved if students:

- a) are given diverse and repeated opportunities to write and speak, including the opportunity to write and speak in response to readings, discussions, lectures, films, etc. These responses may occur in class or out, and they may take many forms: freewriting, open or directed journals, graded or ungraded exploratory essays, essay exams, small group discussion, impromptu discussion, oral exams
- b) are required to engage in at least three formal, graded writing projects. A “project” requires that students develop a piece of writing over time on the basis of appropriate feedback at a number of stages in the process
- c) are required to engage in at least two oral communication projects, one of which undergoes a process of revision. A “project” requires that students develop a speech over time on the basis of appropriate feedback at a number of stages in the process. At least one speech must be extemporaneous, by which we mean that students should deliver a prepared speech from an outline or minimal notes
- d) are required to conduct library research and use the sources as an integral part of at least one written and/or oral project

e) are instructed in and held responsible for the ethical use of sources

f) are required to keep all of their written work in a course portfolio, to reflect in writing upon their work, and to submit the completed portfolio to their faculty for review

II. First-Year Seminars A First-Year Seminar will be approved if students:

a) are given diverse and repeated opportunities to write and speak, including opportunities to benefit from detailed formative feedback from instructors and peers

b) are asked to assess adequately the research requirements of a particular assignment and to seek out efficiently the means of meeting those requirements

c) are given diverse opportunities to incorporate appropriate illustrative or persuasive detail in oral and written communication

d) are required to complete at least one and no more than two projects comprising some combination of formal and informal oral, written, and research activities that demonstrate a satisfactory grasp of the program's communication goals

e) are instructed in and held responsible for the ethical use of sources

f) are required to assemble all their work in a portfolio that includes a written assessment of that work, and to submit the completed portfolio to their faculty for review

Recommendations

In addition, it is strongly recommended:

1. that students engage in oral and written assignments that address a variety of audiences, ranging from instructors and peers to other imagined or real audiences.

2. that students write and speak for a variety of purposes: to explore, to express, to inform, and to persuade

3. that students be encouraged to respond to texts via creative projects

4. that students engage in a variety of research tasks that encourage critical use of sources

5. that colleges include assignments that require the production and analysis of visual images, so as to improve visual literacy