

# FOOD ETHICS

TREX 1001, FALL 2018

## SECTION 35

T/Th, 1:30–2:45, Burgett 115

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Dr. Jonathan Spelman  
Burgett 129, (419) 772-3091  
[j-selman@onu.edu](mailto:j-selman@onu.edu)

## COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

*What should we eat?* In this course, we will take a closer look at the U.S. food system in hopes of answering that question. In particular, we will investigate how our eating habits affect us, food workers, the international community, animals, and the environment. Along the way, we will develop the habits of mind and critical thinking skills necessary for succeeding in college. We will learn to read academic papers, take positions on controversial issues, and defend those positions in writing. We will also identify moral principles that we can apply not only to moral questions that arise within our fields of study but also to moral questions that arise in everyday life.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, we will be able to:

1. read and summarize academic articles
2. explain how the U.S. food system affects people, animals, and the environment
3. defend our views on a number of debates within food ethics by:
  - a. constructing valid arguments for our views (*introspection, intellectual courage*)
  - b. providing support for the premises of those arguments (*creativity*)
  - c. raising *strong* objections to those arguments (*intellectual courage and empathy*)
  - d. providing *compelling* responses to those objections (*creativity and intellectual humility*)
4. identify the moral principles underlying our views
5. apply those moral principles to moral issues that arise within our fields of study (and beyond!)

## OFFICE HOURS

- I am available to meet on a first-come, first-served basis on Mondays and Wednesdays from 2:00-4:00 and Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:00-4:00 pm.
- I am also available by appointment.

## REQUIRED TEXT

- All of the assigned readings/movies/podcasts are available in Moodle.

## OPTIONAL TEXTS

- Barnhill, Anne, Mark Budolfson, and Tyler Doggett, editors. *Food, Ethics, and Society: An Introductory Text with Readings*. Oxford University Press, 2016.
  - ISBN: 978-0199321742
- Singer, Peter and Jim Mason. *The Ethics of What We Eat: Why Our Food Choices Matter*. Rodale Books, 2007.
  - ISBN: 978-1594866876

## **TECHNOLOGY POLICY**

Studies show that those who take handwritten notes retain more information than those type out their notes (see, for example, <http://www.npr.org/2016/04/17/474525392/attention-students-put-your-laptops-away>). In light of that, I ask that students do not use laptops (or tablets) during class (unless I specify otherwise). As is the case with all of my policies, however, if you think that this is a bad policy or that I should make an exception in your case, I'd encourage you to let me know. You may convince me that I should make an exception for you or that this is a bad policy.

## **GRADES**

Grades will ultimately depend on the degree to which students engage with the course material, meet the course objectives, and successfully transition to college life.

## **GRADED ELEMENTS**

### *ATTENDANCE*

Students should attend class regularly. After a student's second unexcused absence, each additional absence will result in a 2.5% reduction in his/her final grade.

### *CLASS PREPARATION AND PARTICIPATION*

Students should prepare for most class periods by reading (and flagging!) the assigned text and completing the related reading quiz (3 points/reading). During class, students should be active participants in small and large group activities and discussions (1 point/class). If students do these things, they will accumulate eight (8) points/week for a total of one hundred twenty (120) points.

### *FOUR-SENTENCE PAPERS*

Most weeks, we will be addressing a particular philosophical question. At the end of those weeks, students can write a four-sentence paper addressing that question. To write a successful four-sentence paper, students need to find an interlocutor who disagrees with their answer to the question. Then, in four sentences, the student needs to present his/her interlocutor's position, his/her position, his/her interlocutor's objection to his/her position, and his/her response to his/her interlocutor's objection. A well-written four-sentence paper can make up for up to four (4) preparation/participation points/week. *This is also a great opportunity for feedback.*

### *SHORT PAPERS*

Students will write three short, persuasive papers. Each paper aims to convince a real person (e.g., him or herself, his/her family member, friend, teacher, grocer, restaurateur, or policymaker) to change the way that that person eats/buys/regulates food. In each paper, students will have to give a valid argument for their positions, consider at least one strong objection to their arguments, and provide a compelling response to those objections. Each paper is worth 30 points for a total of 90 points.

### *FINAL PAPER*

Students will be required to revise one of their earlier papers in light of feedback not only from Dr. Spelman but also from the person he/she was trying to convince. This might involve reworking part of the student's original paper and/or addressing additional objections raised by Dr. Spelman and/or the person he/she was trying to convince. The final paper is worth 60 points.

## FINAL PROJECT

The final project requires students to identify some of the content, skills, and habits of mind that they have learned/developed over the course of the semester and discuss how that learning/development will benefit them in their major and/or life. (This could involve a meal analysis.) It also requires them to identify some of the moral principles they've come to accept and to predict how those moral principles are relevant to their major and/or life. The final project is worth 80 points.

<i>GRADED ELEMENT</i>	points
Class Preparation and Participation	120
Short Papers	90
Final Paper	60
Final Project	80
Total	350

## ASSIGNED READINGS

### ***Week 1 – What’s wrong with the U.S. food system?***

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8/21 **Incoming Assessment**

8/23 *Howard Lyman and Glen Merzer, “Mad Cowboy: The Cattle Rancher Who Won’t Eat Meat”*

### ***Week 2 – Is it wrong to buy and eat factory-farmed meat?***

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8/28 *Alastair Norcross, excerpt from “Puppies, Pigs, and People: Eating Meat and Marginal Cases”*

8/30 *Matthew C. Halteman, “Compassionate Eating as Care of Creation”*

### ***Week 3 – Is it wrong to buy and eat humanely-raised meat?***

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9/4 *Joel Salatin, excerpt from Everything I Want to Do Is Illegal*

9/6 *Dan Lowe, “Common Arguments for Eating Meat”*

### ***Week 4 – Are slaughterhouses morally defensible?***

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9/11 *Jonathan Safran Foer, excerpt from Chapter 4 of Eating Animals*

9/13 *Eric Schlosser, excerpt from Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*

### ***Week 5 – Writing Workshop #1***

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9/18 **Short Paper #1 Handout**

9/20 **Short Paper #1 Draft**

### ***Week 6 – Are we obligated to feed the world (and therefore obligated to eat GMOs)?***

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9/25 **Short Paper #1**

*Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”*

9/27 *Gary Comstock, “Ethics and Genetically Modified Foods”*

### ***Week 7 – Should we eat organic?***

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10/2 *Joshua Colt Gambrel, “Virtue Theory and Genetically Modified Crops”*

10/4 *Joan Gussow, “The Real Story of ‘O’”*

*Fred Kirschenmann, “Can Organic Agriculture Feed the World? And Is That the Right Question?”*

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**Week 8 – Are we obligated to eat local?**

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10/9 NO CLASS (Fall Break)

10/11 Barry Estabrook, “The Price of Tomatoes”

Peter Singer and Jim Mason, “Trade, Fair Trade, and Workers’ Rights” from *The Ethics of What We Eat*

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**Week 9 – Is it wrong to eat local?**

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10/16 Helena de Bres, “Local Food: The Moral Case”

10/18 **Sam Quinones, *Dreamland***

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**Week 10 – Writing Workshop #2**

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10/23 **Short Paper #2 Draft**

10/25 **Short Paper #2**

Michael Pollan, excerpt from *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*

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**Week 11 – Why do we eat so much?**

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10/30 Eric A. Finkelstein and Laurie Zuckerman, “How the Economy Makes Us Fat”

11/1 *Movie: Soul Food Junkies*

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**Week 12 – Should we restrict portion sizes?**

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11/6 Sarah Conly, “Coercive Paternalism”

11/8 Alva Noë, “Commentary: Ban On Big Sodas A Big Mistake”

Alva Noë, “The Value in Sweet Drinks”

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**Week 13 – Writing Workshop #3**

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11/13 **Short Paper #3 Draft**

11/15 **Short Paper #3**

Peter Singer, “Thoughts for Thanksgiving: Consider the Turkey”

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**Thanksgiving Break**

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11/20



11/22

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**Week 14 – Is it wrong to eat out (in Ada)?**

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11/26 Peter Singer and Jim Mason, “Eating Out and Eating In, Ethically” from *The Ethics of What We Eat*

11/28 Saru Jayaraman, “Restaurant Workers”

Bite, “The Tipping Point”

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**Week 15 – TBD**

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12/4

12/6

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**Final Exam**

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Thursday, December 13, from 11:45-1:45

## **POLICY STATEMENTS**

### *ACADEMIC HONESTY*

[http://www.onu.edu/student\\_life/student\\_conduct/student\\_handbook](http://www.onu.edu/student_life/student_conduct/student_handbook)

The University expects its students to conduct themselves in a dignified and honorable manner as mature members of the academic community and assumes that individually and collectively they will discourage acts of academic dishonesty. The University also expects cooperation among administrators, faculty, staff, and students in preventing acts of academic dishonesty, in detecting such acts, reporting them, and identifying those who commit them, and in providing appropriate punishment for offenders. The University Code of Academic Student Conduct is found in Appendix C of the Student Handbook, which you can find at the website listed above.

### *CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR POLICY*

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, color, culture, religion, creed, politics, veteran's status, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, gender expression, age, disability, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

### *SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS POLICY*

[http://www.onu.edu/student\\_life/disability\\_services](http://www.onu.edu/student_life/disability_services)

Students requiring particular accommodations because of physical and/or learning disabilities should contact their Dean's office prior to or during the first week of classes. For additional information, see the website listed above.

I should also note that I will make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments, or required attendance. Please let me know sometime during the first two weeks of class if one of your religious obligations prohibits you from attending class on a particular day or completing a particular assignment.

### *TITLE IX POLICY*

Ohio Northern University does not discriminate or tolerate discrimination on the basis of sex, gender, transgender status, gender identity, or gender expression in its educational, extracurricular, or athletic programs, or in any admission or employment decisions. ONU is committed to promptly and equitably responding to all reports of sexual discrimination with the goal of eliminating the misconduct and/or harassment, preventing its recurrence, and addressing its effects on any individual or the community.

#### **To report sexual misconduct (violence) or sexual harassment, students may contact:**

- Title IX Coordinator, Nancy Sabol, (419) 772-2219, [n-sabol@onu.edu](mailto:n-sabol@onu.edu)
- Deputy Title IX Coordinator, LaShonda Gurley, (419) 772-3145, [l-gurley@onu.edu](mailto:l-gurley@onu.edu)
- Deputy Title IX Coordinator, Brian Hofman, (419) 772-1878, [b-hofman@onu.edu](mailto:b-hofman@onu.edu)

#### **To confidentially discuss sexual misconduct (violence) or sexual harassment, students may contact University Confidential Resources:**

- Counseling Center, (419) 772-2190
- Health Center, (419) 772-2086
- Chaplain, (419) 772-2200

#### **For more information, the University's Sexual Discrimination Policy is available at:**

- [https://www.onu.edu/files/sex\\_discrimination\\_policy\\_1.pdf](https://www.onu.edu/files/sex_discrimination_policy_1.pdf)