

INSTRUCTOR: YANOULA ATHANASSAKIS  
COURSE: ES 675.001, ASI 465.001, ENG 252.006  
CLASS LOCATION: 60 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, #261

EMAIL: YA28@NYU.EDU  
OFFICE HOURS: AFTER CLASS (& BY APPT.) BOBST 1219  
CLASS TIMES: THURSDAY, 5:05-7:30PM

# Veganism & Environmental Justice Literature



"And the word *environment*. Such a bloodless word. A flat-footed word with a shrunken heart. A word increasingly disengaged from its association with the natural world. Urban planners, industrialists, economists, developers use it. It's a lost word, really. A cold word, mechanistic, suited strangely to the coldness generally felt toward nature."  
- Joy Williams, *Ill Nature*

Can vegans save the world? Is it more ethical to eat beans, not beef? This class explores the role of literature and other forms of media in creating empathy – how can it help us imagine the lives of “others” & 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. But what does it mean to “go vegan” and what are the implications for our consumption practices as a whole?

Readings will include fiction and nonfiction (Jonathan Safran Foer, 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: *Death on a Factory Farm* and *Blackfish*. Assignments will include presentations, in-class writing, two in-class exams, and a final essay. 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.

*\*image used with permission of artist, Marina Zurkow*

### **Books (must purchase in hard copy)**

Sue Coe, *Dead Meat* (1996)  
Bich Minh Nguyen, *Stealing Buddha's Dinner* (2007)  
Ruth L. Ozeki, *My Year of Meats* (1998)

### **\*E-texts below\* please print and bring them to lecture:**

Carol J. Adams, "The Rape of Animals, the Butchering of Women" (1990)  
Stacy Alaimo, "Bodily Natures" (2010)  
Judith Butler, "Introduction" to *Bodies that Matter* (1988)  
Jonathan Safran Foer, *Eating Animals* (2009)  
Lori Gruen, *Entangled Empathy* (2015)  
bell hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze" (1992)  
Jennifer Jacquet, *Is Shame Necessary? New Uses for an Old Tool* (2015)  
Melanie Joy, *Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs, and Wear Cows: An Introduction to Carnism* (2011)\*  
Cherrie Moraga, *Heroes and Saints* (1994)  
Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975)  
Marion Nestle, *Safe Food* (2003)  
Timothy Pachirat, *Every Twelve Seconds* (2011)  
Michael Pollan, "The Omnivore's Dilemma" (2006)  
Elspeth Probyn, *Eating the Ocean* (2016)  
Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation* (2001)  
Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (1906)  
Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier ..." (1893)  
David Foster Wallace, "Consider the Lobster" (2004)  
Joy Williams, "Screw the Whales, Save the Shrimp" (1989)

### **Percentage Breakdown**

Participation (includes attendance, discussion, in-class writing, presentation): 20%  
Exam 1: 25%  
Exam 2: 25%  
Paper: 30% (5-7 pages)

### **Participation — come to each class with a written comment on the readings for that day. This is not turned in, but for your own notes. You may be asked to share your comment.**

Education is a collaborative endeavor and you must be here to contribute. Your attendance at, preparation for, and participation in class are crucial to the final evaluation of your work, in addition to the exam and essays. The goal of our time in class is to foster an open dialogue about course materials and facilitate your understanding of them. Absences are an issue because they impact the quality of your learning. Work missed due to your absence cannot be made up. If you need to miss class for a religious holiday, you must notify me in advance. I do not accept e-mailed work, nor will I read drafts over e-mail: come see me in office hours. Walking into class over five minutes late is considered late. If you are absent on the day that an assignment is due, it is your responsibility to bring it to my office by the beginning of class or it will be marked as late. If you are severely ill or have an emergency, please contact me. Students are permitted two absences after which instance their final grade will be lowered by 5% for each absence. 2 Late = 1 Absence [If you have four or more absences you will fail the course] \*NOTE: please make every effort to have done your reading and collected your thoughts before class, and be respectful and considerate of the comments and ideas of your colleagues.

### **Office Hours**

My office hours are meant for you, and I welcome the chance to get to speak with you.

## **A Note on E-tiquette**

Cell phones and laptops are not welcome in the space of this classroom — they should remain invisible. If you are distracted by tech., I'll ask that you leave everything but your necessities (food, paper, pen, etc.) by the door. Readings (or portions of them) should be brought in hard copy; i.e. they cannot be read online during class.

## **In-class Writing**

On occasion you will be asked to respond to the day's writing, or that of the lecture before, in writing during class. You will receive a ✓ or a 0; responses are a dialogue with the work. Please demonstrate that you have read and answer the prompt. These are not summaries or outlines of the readings, but analytical responses *to* them.

## **Presentations**

You will sign up for presentations based on the topics handed out in class. Presentations are based on your own research and are a way to share your research outcomes with the class at large. Please cite any sources and bring a handout or use other AV aides. From your presentation you will define and share one term, on a shared Google .doc, which the class will use collaboratively

## **Exams**

Both exams are comprehensive and both will consist of short essays, identification and definition of key terms, and passage/quote ID's. The ID's come from lecture; you must take thorough notes, review your notes, and connect your notes to the readings. I will post the names of the terms at the end of each week for you to organize your notes, but the definitions are your responsibility.

## **Papers**

Papers must conform to MLA guidelines: double-spaced, one-inch margins, 12-point TNR font, surname and page # on each page. *Essays that do not meet the basic requirements in terms of length, format, and content will receive an "F."* All writings are due at the beginning of class on the assigned due date. Papers or any work submitted more than 20 minutes after the deadline are late. Extensions and make-ups will be granted in rare cases, such as medical emergencies or religious observance. Late papers, *if accepted via a pre-arranged extension*, will be docked 1/3 of a letter grade for each day they are late: this is on a case-by-case basis. *No e-mailing work, hard copies only.*

## **Academic Resources**

- There are many resources on campus to help you succeed and deepen your educational experience: <http://www.nyu.edu/life/resources-and-services/student-resourcecenter.html>
- The Office of Disability Services for Students provides various services and accommodations: (<https://www.nyu.edu/life/safety-health-wellness/students-with-disabilities.html>). If you are enrolled in the program and need special arrangements please speak with me in advance of deadlines. 212-998-4980
- Purdue OWL, MLA guidelines: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

**Honor Code:** Academic dishonesty is an assault on the integrity of the University and intellectual property and shows extreme disrespect for your instructor, fellow students, and yourself. Taking credit for work that is not your own, downloading papers or parts of papers from the Internet, and submitting work that you have written for another class or purpose are all constituted as plagiarism. Plagiarism will result in the failure of this class and possibly suspension or expulsion from the University. When in doubt, cite. Refer to:

<http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity>

*\*No student will pass this course without completing all of the above requirements\**

## **1/26**

Course Introduction; Yamanaka, "Boss of the Food"\*

Peter Singer, "Introduction" from *The Ethics of What We Eat*\*

*Health*, "Switching to a Vegan Diet"\*

Michelle McMacken, "two essays"\*

## **2/2 \*class begins at 5:15 today\***

Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (1906)\* [PDF]

Marion Nestle, "Introduction" from *Safe Food* (2003)  
Eric Schlosser, "What's in the Meat?" (2001)\*

### **2/9**

Michael Pollan, "The Omnivore's Dilemma" (2006)\*  
Michael Pollan, "The Ethics of Eating Animals" (2006)\*  
Jonathan Safran Foer, "Storytelling" from *Eating Animals* (2009)\*  
Jonathan Safran Foer, "Words/Meaning" from *Eating Animals* (2009)\*  
*If This is Kosher* (2006) [viewing in class]  
Bich Minh Nguyen, *Stealing Buddha's Dinner* (2007) [first half, do not bring to class]

### **2/16**

Bich Minh Nguyen, *Stealing Buddha's Dinner* (2007) [second half, bring text to class]  
Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier ..." (1893)\*  
Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975)\* (skim reading, do not bring to class)

### **2/23**

Cherríe Moraga, *Heroes and Saints* (1994)\*  
Judith Butler, "Introduction" (1988)\* [pp 1-15] (skim this reading, do not bring to class)  
Stacy Alaimo, "Bodily Natures" (2010)\* (pp 1-7, 15-17)\*  
*The Wrath of Grapes* (1988) [viewing in class]

### **3/2**

Timothy Pachirat, *Every Twelve Seconds* (2011)\* [Introduction]  
Ruth L. Ozeki, *My Year of Meats* (1998) [Ch. 1-4, pp 1-83]  
Lori Gruen, *Entangled Empathy* (2015)\*  
Eric Schlosser, "Cogs in the Great Machine" (2001)\*  
*Death on a Factory Farm* [viewing in class]

### **3/9 EXAM 1**

### **~~3/16~~ No class, Spring Break**

### **3/23**

Ruth L. Ozeki, *My Year of Meats* (1998) [to end]  
Carol J. Adams, "The Rape of Animals the Butchering of Women" (1990)\*  
bell hooks, "The Oppositional Gaze" (1992)\* (skim this reading, do not bring to class)

### **3/30**

Sue Coe, *Dead Meat* (1996)  
Eric Schlosser, "The Most Dangerous Job" (2001)\*  
Melanie Joy, *Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs, and Wear Cows: An Introduction to Carnism* (2011)\*

### **4/6**

Jennifer Jacquet, *Is Shame Necessary? New Uses for an Old Tool* (2015)\*  
Joy Williams, "Save the Whales, Screw the Shrimp" (1989)\*  
David Foster Wallace, "Consider the Lobster" (2004)\*  
Elspeth Probyn, *Eating the Ocean* (2016)\*  
Clip from *Blackfish* (2013)

### **4/13 EXAM 2**

### **4/20 Project drafts due in lecture (5pp minimum)**

### **4/27 Individual Paper Meetings (and 4/25 "Vegan Living" event)**

### **5/4 Papers due in class; course conclusion**

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