Summary

This course explores how different food systems affect animals and the environment. We will first examine general questions in ethics: do we have moral obligations to animals, plants, species, ecosystems, and nature; are our obligations directly owed to nonhumans or only a function of what we owe each other as humans; are these individual or collective obligations? We will then survey the structure of industrial animal agriculture and its impacts on humans, nonhumans, health, and the environment. We will next consider alternatives to the industrial food system (local food, organic food, GMOs, synthetic food) and ask whether they are truly consistent with our obligations to humans and nonhumans, especially in the context of global hunger and climate change. Throughout the course, we will address issues in the ethics of eating meat, culture, environmental impact, and food justice.

General Information

Time: M/W 2:00-4:55 – Place: Bobst 737
Instructor: Nicolas Delon
Email: nicolas.delon@nyu.edu
Office: 285 Mercer, #1006 – Office hours: goo.gl/0tl38l

Readings

Required books
It’s recommended that you buy your own copy. However, if you choose not to, you must come to class with detailed notes. The books are on reserve at Bobst and copies are on sale at NYU Bookstore.

- James McWilliams, Just Food, 2009
- Ronald Sandler, Food Ethics: The Basics, 2015
- Peter Singer & Jim Mason, The Ethics of What We Eat, 2006

Recommended
- Lori Gruen, Ethics and Animals, 2009 (available online through NYU)
- Jonathan Safran Foer, Eating Animals, 2009
Grades

- **Papers** (60%): You will be assigned two take-home papers. Each paper will be 8 to 12 pages long. The first paper will be due on **7/24**; the second paper will be due on **8/14**.

- **Presentation** (20%): Pairs of students will give a 15-20 minute presentation investigating and discussing (the accuracy, importance, and impact of) EITHER a recent debate in the press or the media surrounding a particular food product, diet, or agricultural system or method; OR an advocacy campaign for a particular diet, food type, or food system, whether from a government agency, a public health actor, a private company, or an activist organization.

- **Summaries** (10%): At least two hours in advance, you must post online a short paragraph summarizing the key claims of the day's readings and a question or comment about them.

- **Attendance and participation** (10%): Attendance is mandatory (you must request permission and/or bring a timely notice if you miss more than one class); active class participation is strongly encouraged. As in papers, you will be assessed on the basis of your demonstrated capacity to engage with arguments, verify assertions, research facts, unpack implicit assumptions, and critically examine your own views. Online discussion on NYU Classes also counts towards participation.

Policies

- **Laptops** are only allowed to take notes. They will be banned if they cause distraction. **Cell phones** must be on silent and left in your bag. If you need **special accommodations**, let me know so I can properly assist you.

- **Plagiarism** and other forms of academic dishonesty will be checked for electronically and will result in failure for 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. See NYU College of Arts and Science policy on Academic Integrity: [http://cas.nyu.edu/page/ug.academicintegrity](http://cas.nyu.edu/page/ug.academicintegrity).

- **Late Papers/Extensions**: Extensions are only given in exceptional circumstances. Please discuss a request with me **well in advance**. Without extension or past the extended deadline, late papers will lose **15 (%)100** grade points for each day late.
Schedule

- 7/6 - Course introduction
  - Singer and Mason, “Introduction”

- 7/8 - Ethics and Animals
  - Singer, “All animals are equal”
  - DeGrazia, “The moral status of animals,” “The harms of suffering, confinement, and death”

- 7/13 - Ethics and the Environment
  - Jamieson, “The environment as an ethical question,” “The value of nature”

- 7/15 - Factory farming and welfare
  - Sandler, chapter 3, pp. 74-97
  - Singer and Mason, chapters 2 and 4
  - Sullivan and Wolfson, “Foxes in the henhouse”
  - Jones, “Captivity in the context of a sanctuary for formerly farmed animals”

- 7/20 - Consumers and workers
  - Sandler, chapter 1, pp. 4-31
  - Pachirat, “Kill floor,” “A politics of sight”
  - Singer and Mason, chapter 11

- 7/22 - Cattle and climate change
  - FAO, “Livestock's Long Shadow”
  - Worldwatch “Livestock & Climate Change”
  - Singer, “No More Excuses”
  - Niman “The climate change case against cattle: Sorting Fact from Fiction”

- 7/27 - Hunting; contextual veganism
  - Sandler, chapter 3, pp. 97-106
  - Varner, “Environmental ethics, hunting, and the place of animals”
  - Kheel, “Vegetarianism and ecofeminism”

- 7/29 - The psychology of meat eating
  - Herzog, “The cats in our houses, the cows on our plates,” “The carnivorous yahoo within ourselves”

- Bastian, Loughnan, Haslam, & Radke, “Don’t mind meat?”

- 8/3 - Conscientious omnivores
  - Pollan, “The ethics of eating meat”
  - Singer and Mason, “The conscientious omnivores”
  - McWilliams, “The omnivore’s contradiction”

- 8/5 - Local food, organic food, genetically modified organisms
  - Sandler, chapter 1, pp. 31-43, chapter 4
  - McWilliams, chapters 1, 2, 3

- 8/10 - Fishing / Presentations (I)
  - Braithwaite, “Why it took so long,” “Looking to the future”
  - Hilborn, “Let us eat fish”
  - Jacquet, “Silent water”

- 8/12 - Feeding the planet / Presentations (II)
  - Sandler, chapter 2
  - Foley, “Can we feed the world and save the planet?”
  - Gottlieb and Joshi, “Accessing food,” “The food system goes global”
  - Crist, “Abundant Earth and the population question”