COURSE DESCRIPTION.

In the 19th Century, Ludwig Feuerbach declared “You are what you eat” (more lyrical in the German: Der 
Mensch ist was er isst). On its face, Feuerbach’s point could not be more clear: you are what you eat 
because when you eat, what you eat is literally incorporated into the self; what was part of the external 
world becomes the part of the self (and later, at the other end of the digestive tract, part of the self 
becomess part of the external world). More generally, when we eat, the border between the self and the 
other is transgressed, and we experience the limits of our identity. This is why religious celebrations 
invariably involve sharing a meal: when we eat together, we enact and consummate ethical and political 
community by celebrating our mutual constitution by the same material substance.

In this class, we will explore the varied significance of Feuerbach’s statement by focusing, first, on the 
complex relationship between eating and identity, and, second, how that relationship informs particular 
approaches to politics, ethics, economics, and aesthetics. For if the great debates of human history are 
all ultimately debates about how we do or should engage with the world that surrounds us, what better 
place to examine those debates than where the self makes its most intimate contact with (indeed, 
becomes indistinguishable from) the world? In this place, we often see distilled and intensified 
expression of ethical and political commitments.

We will look at philosophical texts that speak directly or indirectly to the issue of digestion, as well as 
more practical texts exploring the science and politics of dietary regulations; the economic and 
rhetorical construction of an obesity “epidemic;” the ethics of owning plants and animals; the moral and 
aesthetic judgments underlying vegetarianism, cannibalism, and genetic engineering; and the pressing 
concerns of globalization and food security. At the same time, we will consider the political and 
philosophical value of liberalism, communism, humanism, environmentalism, and materialism.

TEXTS.

The following texts should be available at the bookstore or wherever fine paperbacks are sold:

- John Locke, Second Treatise on Government (Hackett 1980)
- Karl Marx, Capital Volume 1 (Penguin 1977)
- Michael Pollan, The Omnivore’s Dilemma (Penguin 2006)
- Marion Nestle, Food Politics (U California Press 2003)
- Amartya Sen, Poverty and Famines (Oxford 1981)
- Vandana Shiva, Stolen Harvest (South End Press 2000)

Other readings will be made available on the web or as handouts.
ASSIGNMENTS.

You are expected to participate actively in each week’s class discussion. In addition, you will each be responsible for facilitating 2 class sessions and preparing a research paper designed for publication in an academic journal.

Class facilitation involves two specific components: prepare a short (3-5 page, double-spaced) paper on the week’s assigned readings that will be used to guide class discussion. You will circulate these papers via email before class, present the paper in class, and then coordinate a discussion of the paper and/or the readings for approximately one hour. I recommend (though do not require) that you talk to me in advance of your presentation so that we can consider the best way to approach it, and you can feel free to collaborate (or not) on your presentations. You will each do this twice (once before Spring Break and once after), and we will decide within the next week which weeks you would like to present.

Your research paper will be on a topic of your choosing. We should probably talk about this project as soon as you have some idea of your interests, and you will submit a detailed proposal for this paper no later than March 25. This proposal will include a 500 word abstract, a properly formatted preliminary annotated bibliography, and your thoughts on an appropriate outlet for publication of your project. Your final paper should be formatted in the style preferred by your chosen outlet.

ASSESSMENT.

Each of your class facilitations will count for 25% of your final grade.
Your final paper (including the proposal) will count for 50% of your final grade.

ACCOMMODATIONS.

If you need adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information to share with me, or if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, please come see me so we can arrange whatever needs to be arranged.

SCHEDULE.

Week 1, Jan 21
   Eating and working.

Week 2, Jan 28
   Kass, The Hungry Soul, Intro and ch 1
   Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, ch 27 (H)
   Locke, Second Treatise on Government, ch 1-5

Week 3, Feb 4
   Marx, Capital, ch 1 (pp 125-177)
   Rabinbach, The Human Motor, ch 2-3 (H)

Week 4, Feb 11

Week 5, Feb 18
   Nietzsche, On the Genealogy of Morals, Preface and Essays 1-2
Week 6, Feb 25
Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Essay 3

Week 7, Mar 4
Kass, *The Hungry Soul*, ch 2-6 and conclusion

*spring break*

Week 8, Mar 18
Benbow, “Ways In, Ways Out: Theorizing the Kantian Body” (H)
Miller, “Orifices and Bodily Wastes” (H)
Probyn, “Beyond Food/Sex” (H)

Week 9, Mar 25 - **Paper proposals due**
Pollan, *The Omnivore’s Dilemma* parts 1-2

Week 10, Apr 1
Pollan, *The Omnivore’s Dilemma* part 3
Petrini, *Slow Food Manifesto* (H)
Philpott, “Slow Food Fight” (H)

Week 11, Apr 8
Nestle, *Food Politics*, Parts 1-3

Week 12, Apr 15
Sander Gilman, *Fat: A Cultural History* (skip chapter 2)
Oliver, “The Politics of Pathology: How Obesity Became an Epidemic Disease” (H)

Week 13, Apr 22
Vandana Shiva, *Stolen Harvest*
Faiola, “The New Economics of Hunger” (H)

Week 14, Apr 29
Sen, *Poverty and Famines*, ch 1-2, 4-6, 9-10
Baro and Deubel, “Persistent Hunger: Perspectives on Vulnerability, Famine, and Food Security in Sub-Saharan Africa” (H)

Week 15, May 6
Singer, “All Animals are Equal” (H)
Bulliet, “Postdomesticity: Our Lives with Animals” (H)

Final paper due by 1pm on May 13

*This syllabus subject to change with appropriate notice from the instructor.*