

**THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO**  
**DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY**  
**Undergraduate Course Outline 2017-18**

**Philosophy 2010: The Philosophy of Food**

**Fall Term 2017**  
**UCC66**  
**T 1:30-2:20**  
**W 9:30-11:20**

**Instructor: Benjamin Hill**  
**STVH 3142:**  
**519-661-2111 x80143**  
**Office Hours: M, 9:30-10:30 am**  
**T, 11:30-12:30 pm**  
**Email: Please use OWL Messages**  
**Emergencies Only: [bhill28@uwo.ca](mailto:bhill28@uwo.ca)**

**DESCRIPTION**

Nothing we do day-in, day-out is as value-laden as eating. We have greater moral impact on others, on our community, and on our world through our relationship with food than with anything else, except perhaps for familial and intimate relationships. Yet those values contained within or implicated by our food are almost always hidden from us, and almost always, it seems, by design. We ourselves are, moreover, almost always complicit in those values being hidden from us. This course is meant to challenge the hiddenness of food values and to challenge ourselves for our roles in their hiddenness. It is going to make you uncomfortable. It is supposed to be make you feel uncomfortable (hence the term “challenge” above) because the story about the food system, its values, and our responsibility for it is not a cheery story. This course is meant to be an intensely immersive experience exploring and challenging both the food values of our society as well as your own individual food values. The aim is to develop your abilities to think critically and philosophically about your food choices, about the connections between your food choices and our food system, and about ultimately yourselves and your own values. Issues dealt with in the course may include human rights, food justice, the treatment of animals, the environment, moral and political dimensions of genetically modified food, hunger and obligation to the poor, the role of food in gender, personal and ethnic identity, the role of food in shaping our community, and the role food plays in living the good life. The course is an “active learning” course, which aims to do this through philosophical discussions and investigative assignments.

Prerequisites: None

Antirequisites: None

Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

**WARNING**

This course will require frequent, sometimes personal, and extended discussions of food, an individual’s relationship with food, and the role food does, can, or should play in one’s life.

Individuals with a history of eating or food disorders may find the material and the course difficult and traumatic. If you have a history of eating or food disorders, I would ask that you think twice about enrolling in this course and carefully consider the potential impacts on your recovery or continuing struggle with eating or food disorders. If you are currently experiencing an eating or food disorder, please seek professional help immediately through the Student Development Centre ([http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/psych/eating\\_disorders.html](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/psych/eating_disorders.html)). Please take care of yourselves and your well-being.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

**Attendance is mandatory for this course and unexcused absences will adversely affect the student's grade. See Methods of Evaluation for information about how attendance is graded.**

The objectives of this course include:

- (1) Understanding contemporary food systems, including production, processing, development, distribution, consumption, and waste;
- (2) Discovering the nature and degree of one's connections with and dependence on the contemporary food systems;
- (3) Understanding the notion of "food values", and how to assess them;
- (4) Understanding how the contemporary food system impacts human rights and why;
- (5) Understanding the notion of "food justice";
- (6) Understanding how issues surrounding food justice arise within the contemporary food system;
- (7) Understanding the notion of "sustainable food" and how food values impact our conception of sustainability;
- (8) Discovering how to balance issues of human rights, food justice, and sustainability within the greater scheme of food values;
- (9) Discovering what your own food values are;
- (10) Discovering how to judge and assess your own food values relative to alternative possibilities;
- (11) Discovering the extent to which your food choices accurately reflect your food values;
- (12) Discovering how to modify your food values and/or your food choices.

## **TEXTS**

Thompson, Paul. *From Field to Fork: Food Ethics for Everyone*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. ISBN 9780199391691;

Warner, Melanie. *Pandora's Lunchbox: How Processed Food Took Over the American Meal*. New York: Scribner, 2014. ISBN 9781451666748.

## **METHODS OF EVALUATION**

**Sustainability Group Project (40%)** Students will be assigned to groups to work together on a project regarding local food systems and the values of sustainability. This year's project is to conduct a critical review of the food policies and practices at Western Hospitality Services from the standpoint of sustainability and sustainable food values. Students will be required to produce

(1) a technical report, (2) a website or powerpoint, and (3) an academic poster in support of their project. Groups will also be required to orally present their posters to the public. More details about the assignment and its grading rubric will be available via OWL. Students should expect to contribute a minimum of 1000 words to this project's final report.

**Book Review (25%)** All students are required to write a 1000-1200 word *critical* book review of *Pandora's Lunchbox* by Melanie Warner. The due date is Wed October 18, 23:59:59. The review should describe the thesis and main argument(s) of the book as well as provide some reflective, critical comments about its thesis and argument. A grading rubric and guidelines for writing a book review will be available via OWL.

**Food Journals (9%)** All students will be required to complete and submit three (3) food journals tracking their eating habits over a week, documenting any changes in their eating habits, and containing critical reflections on their eating habits as revealed in their journal. Journals should be kept for the following periods: Sept 14-20 (due Sept 22, 23:59:59); Oct 6-12 (due Oct 16, 23:59:59, and yes I know that covers Thanksgiving — think about how you eating changes during the holiday period); Nov 12-18 (due Nov 20, 23:59:59). For each journal submission, the critical reflections should constitute a minimum of 300 words (for a total of 900 words minimum across all three journals). An example of a few food journals will be provided for your convenience. The food journal should *include everything you eat and drink*: meals, snacks, coffee/smoothies, beer/alcohol, etc.. The goal behind the food journals is self-discovery and the promotion of mindful, self-critical eating.

The formatting of the food journal is up to you. It should be something that you can submit electronically via OWL. Feel free to include photos as well as lists and descriptions of what you consume. The food journal must include the following information: time/date; menu item(s); primary ingredients; social context; any thoughts or reflects you wish to share with yourself regarding why you are eating this here and now.

N.B., during the course of the class and its activities, you may be sharing your journals and engaged with the journals of others. Although they are your own journals primarily for your own benefit, you should approach them as if they were public documents. You are also expected to be professional when you engage with others and their food journals. **Judgmental, belittling, shaming, rude, ridiculing, bullying, and all other unprofessional behavior, comments, and attitudes are inappropriate and will not be tolerated.** Food is a powerful conduit directly attached to people's self-identity, body image, cultural identity, moral self, and self-esteem. Sometimes, discussing people's food values and eating habits can be difficult and it needs to be approached respectfully. **We require that all discussion be respectful and kind even when that discussion is critical, defensive, emotional, and contradictory.**

**Examinations (16%)** Students are required to complete two self-administered multiple choice, true/false, or short answer examinations. The examinations will be available for a limited time via OWL and are to be completed during that window. The examinations will be open-book, open-note. Students are not to collaborate, discussion, consult with one another, or jointly complete the examination; completing the examination must be an individual effort. An honor pledge will be included with each examination. The examinations will cover all the materials in the assigned readings and discussed or reviewed during class.

The examinations will be available between Oct 4-6, 23:59:59 and Nov 8-Nov 10, 23:59:59.

**Attendance (10%)** All students are required to attend every class. A sign-in sheet will be distributed. Attendance does not connote mere physical presence in the classroom. It requires paying attention and not engaging in rude, disruptive, or disrespectful behavior during the class. Examples of such behavior include, but are not limited to: texting, checking email, reading the newspaper, reading material for another class, chatting or joking during class, surfing the internet, internet shopping, etc.. The instructor reserves the right to strike any person's name from the attendance roll for engaging in the above, or any other such disruptive or disrespectful behavior. Students are awarded 2.86 points per hour of class attended (35 hours). **To request that an individual absence be excused from the grade calculation, send a message via OWL to the "INSTRUCTOR ROLE" with the subject heading "ABSENCE" detailing the date of the absence and the reason(s) why it should be marked as an "excused absence". ONLY MESSAGES SENT TO OWL AS DESCRIBED ABOVE WILL BE CONSIDERED FOR EXCUSAL.**

**CEL *Optional* Component (EXTRA CREDIT UP TO 05%)** Students have the opportunity to participate in a Community Engaged Learning partnership in the course. Community Engaged Learning at Western partners with local and international organizations to mobilize knowledge and exchange resources in order to address critical societal issues. By engaging students, staff, and faculty in meaningful experiential learning opportunities, CEL helps meet community defined needs while promoting students' sense of civic engagement and social responsibility. These partnerships help extend Western's reach beyond campus and foster excellence and innovation in teaching and learning. The CEL opportunity is project-based, where students will work in groups of 3-5 to complete a deliverable defined by the community partner. Students will be expected to complete 2 hours per week for 8 weeks. Further details describing the opportunities and the requirements will be posted on our class OWL site and presented in class. Extra Credit up to 05% will be awarded based on successful completion of the engagement with the community partner and submission of a satisfactory concrete deliverable to the community partner.

### **Grade available prior to November 5th**

The following grades will be available prior Nov. 5<sup>th</sup>, a total of 44.70% of your final grade:

- Book Review (25%)
- Attendance through Nov 1<sup>st</sup> (5.70%)
- First Examination (08%)
- First and Second Food Journals (06%)

### **Essay Course Word Count**

As a course that satisfies the senior level essay course requirement, student enrolled in this course should expect to submit a minimum of 2900 words of written work.

### **Course Average**

The course target average is set at 76+/- per departmental guidelines and policies.

### **ACCOMMODATIONS POLICIES**

Non-medical absences will be accommodated by the instructors with sufficient explanation and

documentation for the absence. Late assignments and missed deadlines will also be accommodated by the instructors with sufficient explanation and documentation. Documentation must be submitted by the student directly to the appropriate Faculty Dean's office and not to the instructor. It will be the Dean's office that will determine if accommodation is warranted.

The Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness is here:

<https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/index.cfm>

For accommodations of work worth less than 10% of the total course grade, documentation and decanal approval is not necessary.

No electronic devices or printed materials are allowed during in-class examinations.

### **ACADEMIC OFFENCES**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf).

### **ADDITIONAL POLICIES**

The **Department of Philosophy Policies** which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at

<http://www.uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>. It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

The policy of the Department of Philosophy is that all written work must be submitted to turnitin.com. See <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Registrarial Services (<http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>)

Student Support Services (<http://westernusc.ca/services/>)

### **AUDITING**

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

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