

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
Department of Philosophy
Undergraduate Course Outline 2026-27

PHILOSOPHY 2082F
Introduction to the Philosophy of Food
Professor Jasmine Gunkel

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Information including instructor contact details and course location can be found on the course Owl BrightSpace: <https://westernu.brightspace.com/>

PREREQUISITE CHECKING

There are no prerequisites for this course.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Every day at the dinner table, we make ethically significant decisions. What we eat (and what we don't eat), how we eat, who we eat with, all of these choices are value-laden and socially significant. Food choices have a substantial impact on our families and communities, the environment, and nearly all life on earth. Though in our everyday life we may make food choices unreflectively, in this course we'll be subjecting these choices to critical analysis.

The philosophy of food is not only ethically rich, but aesthetically rich. Eating is one of our first pleasures and humans have developed elaborate practices around food. Food preparation and presentation can be intensely creative, precise, and meaningfully.

We'll discuss food justice and world hunger, the environmental and worker impacts of our food choices, factory farming and veganism, pickiness, what food is, the connection between food and culture, and the aesthetics of cooking and eating.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Raise and respond to ethical questions raised by food production, distribution, and consumption
- Reconstruct arguments from philosophical texts, popular culture, and the media
- Predict likely objections to arguments and charitably reply to them
- Constructively discuss food ethics with others
- Make more deliberate, thoughtful choices about what they consume
- More richly engage with the aesthetics of food

COURSE SCHEDULE Draft only, subject to change

Week 1:

Thursday (9/10)

No Reading

Week 2:

Tuesday (9/15)

Andrea Borghini and Nicola Piras, "Food and Foods. Towards a Definition"

Optional reading: Leon Kass, *The Hungry Soul*, Ch. 1 Food and Nourishing: The Primacy of Form

Thursday (9/17)

J. Jeremy Wisnewski, "Cannibalism" in *Encyclopedia of Food and Agricultural Ethics*

Sarah Everts, "Europe's Hypocritical History of Cannibalism"

Week 3:

Tuesday (9/22)

Val Plumwood, "On Being Prey"

& *Eye of the Crocodile*, "Ch. 1 Meeting the Predator" Ch.1

& *Eye of the Crocodile* Ch. 3 "The Wisdom of the Balanced Rock: The Parallel Universe and the Prey Perspective"

Thursday (9/24)

Alistair Norcross, "Puppies, Pigs, and People: Eating Meat and Marginal Cases"

Optional reading: Jasmine Gunkel, "Pleasures of the Flesh"

Optional watch: *Okja*

Week 4:

Tuesday (9/29)

Bob Fischer, *Oxford Handbook of Food Ethics*, Ch. 11, "Arguments for Consuming Animal Products"

Alicia P.Q. Wittmeyer, "The Meaning of a Giant Roast Pig" ("I Admire Vegetarians. It's a Choice I Won't Ever Make.")

Thursday (10/1)

Freegans documentary:

Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"

Week 5:

Tuesday (10/6)

Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, Ch. 1

Excerpt from Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*

Thursday (10/8)

Mark, Budolfson, *Oxford Handbook of Food Ethics*, Ch. 4, “Food, the Environment, and Global Justice”

Reading Week

Week 6

Tuesday (10/20)

David Kaplan, “Hunger Hermeneutics”

Andrew Lupton, “Food Insecurity in London Region Rises Above Ontario Average”

Thursday (10/23)

Christina van Dyke, *Oxford Handbook of Food Ethics*, Ch. 24, “Eat Y’Self Fitter: Orthorexia, Health, and Gender”

Madeline Ward, “Ozempic, ‘Food Noise,’ and the Pathologization of Hunger”

FOOD ETHICS IN THE NEWS PAPER DUE

Week 7:

Tuesday (10/27)

Alex King, “Taco Bell and the Paradox of Ironic Appreciation”

Matt Strohl, *The Ethics of Artisanship: Or, No, You May Not Put Milk in Your Coffee*

Thursday (10/29)

Mathew J. Brown, “Picky Eating is a Moral Failing”

Week 8:

Tuesday (11/3)

Robert Cribb et al, “‘This is the New Slavery’ Migrant Farm Workers Underpaid, Abused, and Injured”

CBC Gem documentary, *Land and Sea*, season 19, “Farm Workers”

Thursday (11/5)

Sabine Tsuruda, “The Moral Burdens of Temporary Farmwork”

Optional watch: *The Hands That Feed Us*

Week 9:

Tuesday (11/10)

Outlaw Ocean Project, “Slavery at Sea”

Thursday (11/12)

Mathew Strohl and C. Thi Nguen, “Cultural Appropriation and the Intimacy of Groups”

Karim Nader, “How to Enjoy a Tiki Bar Without Guilt”

OUTLINE DUE

Week 10:

Tuesday (11/17)

No reading

BRING YOUR FINAL PAPER OUTLINE TO CLASS (2 print copies or digital, email-able version)

Thursday (11/19)

Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer excerpts, “The Honorable Harvest”

And “The Gift of Strawberries”

Tuesday (11/24)

Kyle Powys Whyte, *Oxford Handbook of Food Ethics*, Ch. 16, “Food Sovereignty, Justice, and Indigenous Peoples: An Essay on Settler Colonialism and Collective Continuance”

The Food Chain, “What’s the Future for Indigenous Food?”

Week 11:

Thursday (11/26)

Sarah Conly, “Paternalism, Food, and Personal Freedom”

ARGUMENTATIVE PAPER DUE

Week 12:

Tuesday (12/1)

Sara Bernstein, “Can Unmodified Food be Culinary Art?”

C. Thi Nguyen, “What’s Missing from Cookbook Reviews?”

Optional watch: *The Taste of Things (La Passion de Dodin Bouffant)*

Thursday (12/3)

Jiayang Fan, “The Gatekeepers Who Get to Decide What Food is Disgusting” (“Yuck”)

Watch: Nathan for You, “Poo Flavoured Frozen Yogurt”

Rebecca Mead, “Can Your Stomach Handle a Meal at the Alchemist” (“Sensory Overload”)

Week 13:

Tuesday (12/8)

No Reading (Review Session)

Final Exam:

TBD by registrar

TEXTS

All course materials are available for free on course Brightspace

METHOD OF EVALUATION

In-class quizzes: 15% (surprise dates)

There will be 5 surprise reading quizzes. A quiz will consist of a single question requiring a short answer, and will be graded out of 3 points. The quizzes are not meant to be challenging. Rather, they should be pretty straight-forward if one has done the reading somewhat carefully. A 3 is earned for a correct or near-correct answer, a 2 is earned for a relevant but incorrect answer that demonstrates you've done the reading, and a 1 is earned merely by showing up and taking the quiz. The lowest two scores, including 0s due to a missed quiz, will be dropped when calculating your final grade. Because of this built-in flexibility, **all requests for academic consideration will be denied.**

Short argumentative paper: 20% (due week 6, Thursday at 9am)

This short (700-1000 words) paper will require that you carefully engage with one of the course readings. You must select an argument you'd like to respond to, raise what you think is the strongest objection to it, and imagine how the author might respond. You will be graded on [accuracy, clarity, charity, and strength of argument](#).

This assignment may be submitted up to 3 days late without penalty. As such, requests for academic consideration (absent very unusual circumstances) will be denied. It will be due through Brightspace, but it **must be composed in a Google Doc. Students must write all assignments using Google Docs.** Failure to compose in Google Docs will result in a 0. Students **must paste the link to their Google Doc at the end of their assignment and must set the share settings to allow anyone with the link to edit.**

Argument outline 5% (due week 9, Thursday at 9am)

This assignment will prepare you for your food ethics in the news paper. You'll hand in an outline of the argument you plan to present in your final paper. This assignment is only graded for completion. You will get peer feedback on it. This assignment may be submitted up to 3 days late without penalty.

Food ethics in the news paper: 30% (due week 11, Thursday at 9am)

This longer (1300-1600 words) paper will require that you find a somewhat contemporary news piece that touches on one of the ethical issues we discuss in the early weeks of the course. You will do some structured reflecting on the piece and engage with at least one of the course readings, assessing how the author of the course reading might analyze the issue raised by the news article. You will be graded on [accuracy, clarity, charity, and strength of argument](#).

This assignment may be submitted up to 3 days late without penalty. As such, requests for academic consideration (absent very unusual circumstances) will be denied. It will be due through Brightspace, but it **must be composed in a Google Doc. Students must write all assignments using Google Docs.** Failure to compose in Google Docs will result in a 0. Students **must paste the link to their Google Doc at the end of their assignment and must set the share settings to allow anyone with the link to edit.**

Final exam: 30% (date determined by Registrar)

This will be an in-class exam covering material from the full length of the course. It will

include both multiple choice and short essay questions. See Western's policy on Special Examinations.

Exceptionally good participation will earn you a grade bump of up to 3% (exactly 3%, not 3.01%) if your final grade is at the margins. If your final grade would otherwise be an 87% and so earn you an A, for instance, especially good participation will leave you with an A+. Regularly and thoughtfully participating in class discussion is required to earn this bump.

EMAIL POLICY: Due to the large size of the class, you must email your TA about class matters before me. If it's an emergency, if you haven't heard from them for 2 business days, or if they say your question ought to escalate to me, then it is appropriate to email me. I will not address substantive philosophical questions via email. Rather, I find that philosophical matters are much better addressed in person, when we can easily ask follow up questions of each other and more quickly explore many different objections and views. I will not respond to grade questions and disputes (see below for the appropriate process).

GRADE QUESTIONS AND DISPUTES: I will not adjudicate grade disputes or explain why a grade was earned via email, but only during my office hours. (If you can't make my office hours, you must set up an appointment with me). You are always welcome to come to my office hours to talk with me about how you might improve your work going forward and earn a higher grade on future assignments. However, if you would like to dispute your grade, you must first talk to your TA about why it was earned. If you would still like to dispute it, you must then present me (during my office hours) with concrete reasons why you think your assignment was misunderstood or otherwise should have received a higher score. Even if I myself would have assigned a slightly different grade to the assignment, this is not enough to overturn the score. In respecting my TAs, their time, and their abilities, I will only overturn the grade they assigned if I think it is not within a *reasonable range* for the assignment in question. And there is also a chance that I will think they have graded much too leniently and will lower (rather than raise) your assignment score.

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY POLICIES

The Department of Philosophy policies that govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses are available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website <http://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.

AUDIT

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

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Electronic devices of any kind (including computers, cell phones, and smart watches) are not permitted during quizzes or exams.

STATEMENT ON THE USE OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

In this course, AI use is prohibited. AI may not be used for drafting, writing, or editing papers, nor for the development of ideas. Assignments should reflect the students' own thoughts and

independent written work. **Use of AI will result in a 0 on the assignment and will be escalated according to Western policy.**

Students must write all assignments using Google Docs. Failure to compose in Google Docs will result in a 0. Students **must paste the link to their Google Doc at the end of their assignment and must set the share settings to *allow anyone with the link to edit*.** This allows the TA and instructor to see edit history. If plagiarism or unauthorized AI use is suspected, the instructor and/or TA will meet with the student to discuss their ideas, arguments, and writing process. The student will need to demonstrate their deep familiarity with the assignment to the satisfaction of the instructor or this will be grounds for escalating the case.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION AND ACCESSIBLE EDUCATION

Academic Accommodation is “a means of adjusting the academic activities associated with a course or program of student in order to permit students with disabilities to participate in those activities at the University and to fulfill the essential requirements of a course or program.”

<https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academicpolicies/appeals/Academic%20Accommodationdisabilities.pdf>. Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with Accessible Education at the earliest opportunity. “Accessible Education plays a central role in Western's efforts to ensure that its academic programs are accessible for all students”

https://academicsupport.uwo.ca/accessible_education/index.html

SPECIAL EXAMINATIONS

A Special Examination is any examination other than the regular examination, and it may be offered only with the permission of the Dean of the Faculty in which the student is registered, in consultation with the instructor and Department Chair. Permission to write a Special Examination may be given on the basis of compassionate or medical grounds with appropriate supporting documents. To provide an opportunity for students to recover from the circumstances resulting in a Special Examination, the University has implemented Special Examinations dates. These dates as well as other important information about examinations and academic standing can be found [here](#).

ACADEMIC CONSIDERATION

Students may request academic consideration in cases of extenuating circumstances – that is, personal circumstances beyond the student’s control that have a substantial but temporary impact on the student’s ability to meet essential academic requirements.

1. Requests for academic consideration are made to the Academic Advising office of Faculty in which the student is registered.
2. Requests for academic consideration include the following components:
 - a. Self-attestation signed by the student;
 - b. Indication of the course(s) and assessment(s) relevant to the request;
 - c. Supporting documentation as relevant

Requests without supporting documentation are limited to one per term per course.

Documentation for medical illness, when required, includes the completion of a [Western Student Medical Certificate \(SMC\)](#) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation, by a health care practitioner. Requests linked to examinations scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during official

examination periods as well as practice laboratory and performance tests typically scheduled in the last week of term always require formal supporting documentation.

Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs

RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION

Western's Policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays can be found here:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_religious.pdf.

In the case of mid-term tests, notification is to be “given in writing to the instructor as early as possible, but not later than **one week** prior to the writing of the test”.

COURSE ASSIGNMENT

The last day of scheduled classes in any course will be the last day on which course assignments will be accepted for credit in a course. Instructors will be required to return assignments to students as promptly as possible with reasonable explanations of the instructor's assessment of the assignment.

SCHOLASTIC 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:

https://www.uwo.ca/biology/pdfs/undergraduate/rights-and-responsibilities/scholastic_discipline.pdf

Statement on the use of plagiarism-checking software

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 exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

ACADEMIC ADVISING

Your Home Faculty's Academic Advising Office will support or refer whenever you have an issue that is affecting your studies, including information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters. Do not hesitate to reach out to them if you are struggling and unsure where to go for help. Contact info for all Faculties is here: https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty_academic_counselling.html

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends (24/7 availability).

GENDER-BASED AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website: <https://www.uwo.ca/health/gbsv/index.html>. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.