

Philosophy 371 Special Topics Seminar

The Philosophy of Food:

Thinking With Your Mouth Full

READ ME!! Staying in this class means that **you understand and agree** to the requirements described here.

SAVE ME!!! Ignorance of the contents of this syllabus is not an excuse and will not protect you from Lisa's wrath.

REREAD ME!!! This syllabus contains assignments DUE AT THE END OF THE SEMESTER about which I may not remind you!

Lisa Heldke Contact Information

<p>Office Location:</p> <p>Old Main 104B</p> <p>Office Hours:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M 2:30-3:30, • W 2:30-3:30, • F 10:30-22:30, • by appointment 	<p>I encourage you to come talk to me at any point, about the issues the class is discussing, or for consultation on papers or help with understanding a reading assignment. Feel free to schedule an appointment if none of these times works for you.</p>
<p>Email, phone:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • heldke@gac.edu, 933-7029 <p>Class email alias:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • s-phi-371-all@gac.edu 	<p>Some advice about email and phone contact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send assignments via email ONLY if requested to do so (otherwise hand in paper copies). • Get yourself a class “buddy” who will collect handouts if you are gone, hand in your assignments if you can’t, and generally tell you what you missed. You are responsible for all information that you miss when you are absent. • I do not have email at home, so I can’t guarantee you a prompt reply to email questions on weekends or evenings. • I will send any updates, changes to the reading assignment, or additions to informal writing assignments AT LEAST 24 hours before the relevant class period; please check your email if you think there might be a change brewing. If it comes fewer than 24 hours before class, you are NOT responsible for it! • Make an email folder for this class, and keep the emails I send you—ESPECIALLY including the electronic syllabus copy!

About this Course

“Food is a much more complex subject than one might think, you know. There is every reason why a philosopher should think about food.”

Alexander McCall Smith, *Friends, Lovers, Chocolate*, 2005

Why *should* philosophers think about food, anyway? Despite the centrality of food to human life, its study has tended to be shunted to the periphery of philosophy.¹ This seminar is devoted to the study of the just-emerging field of philosophy of food. You have chosen to be a part of a small but growing cadre of philosophers who are taking food to be a serious object of philosophical study. In this course, your research and writing have a genuine opportunity to make original contributions to the field.

Our study of food will range over many of the traditional philosophical divisions: epistemology and metaphysics, ethics, and aesthetics. We'll consider food at many stages, beginning with its emergence from the soil, and continuing through its arrival in our mouths.

Course Goals: Philosophy Major and Minor

This advanced level seminar will increase your independence as a philosophical thinker. The course will require you to read, understand, and critique on your own significant quantities of philosophy writing; to participate in focused philosophical discussion and debate; and to engage in a sustained independent philosophical writing project.² Your work will be both challenging and rewarding.

Texts

All are required; all are available in the Bookmark:

- Curtin and Heldke, *Cooking, Eating, Thinking*
- Kass, *The Hungry Soul*
- Korsmeyer, *Making Sense of Taste*
- Probyn, *Carnal Appetites*
- Thompson, *The Spirit of the Soil*

Access to education

Every student has a right to be able to learn in this class. If you have learning disabilities, please see me NOW about ways we can work to make the class work well for you. Bring any documentation you have about your learning disability.

Course Components

You must complete all work for the class. If you don't, you may fail the class. Details about each component follow this list.

1. **Attendance and Participation**
2. **Discussion Essays**
3. **Term Paper**
4. **Critiques of Classmates' Work**
5. **Feeding each other**
6. **Mindful eating**

1. Attendance and Participation

Preparation: A seminar works well when each member of the seminar comes to class each week, having prepared as if they were leading the class. Your preparation for the class should include, at a minimum, the following:

- Identify the thesis or central claim being made in the reading(s).
- Outline the organization of the reading(s): what are the major arguments? Where does one stop, and the next start?
- Draw connections between this week's reading and previous weeks' readings.
- Articulate two to three reflective questions that you believe would help us to discuss the substance of the text. (NOTE: This stage requires you to think about what aspects of the text are most significant and worth discussing, as well as to consider the substance of previous discussions; your questions ought to help us to deepen and expand what we've already talked about. Don't select peripheral or shallow questions, or questions that *simply* rehearse an old argument.)

Please recognize that such preparation cannot happen if you do your reading all in the afternoon before class. Begin your course preparation *early*.

Participation: With this level of preparation, you'll be ready to contribute to class discussion in several ways:

- By introducing your own questions
- By advancing the discussion of your classmates' questions, using knowledge of the text
- By being an active listener

I will not specify formal expectations for participation; I'll work with you more individually, to help you cultivate your discussion skills. Please let me know if there is something you'd particularly like to improve this semester.

Attendance: I regard all absences as "excused"; that is, I assume that, as busy, responsible adults, you will occasionally find yourself unable to attend class, whether it is because of illness, transportation problems, special events, family crises, etc. I do not differentiate among these reasons, and expect you to be responsible for your attendance. Because discussion is absolutely

central to a seminar, and because this seminar meets only once a week, missing even a single class is significant. (We have only about a dozen meetings.) Discussion, once missed, cannot be redone or “made up” in some other way. Therefore, absences affect your course grade. Any more than one absence will result in your grade being lowered one full letter. If you believe that this attendance policy will be difficult for you to meet, I would encourage you to reconsider remaining in the seminar.

2. Discussion Essays

Each week, part of our class discussion will be devoted to essays written by two members of the class. Discussion essays should raise an issue or question, and advance an argument relevant to that question. Your essay may analyze, critique, or further develop the reading. It may draw connections between this and other texts. The requirements are that it be philosophical; that it have a thesis; and that it raise question(s) in which you are genuinely interested that you believe would merit discussing with your classmates.

Discussion essays should be two to three pages in length, typed, double-spaced. They **MUST** be emailed to class members **BY 5 P.M. ON MONDAY** (yes, Monday). Mail to s-phi-371-all.

You will write at least three discussion essays during the term. (We’ll make a schedule on the first day.) Graded check, check plus, check minus. I’ll hand around a signup sheet.

3. Term Paper

You will write a philosophical term paper in a series of stages, described briefly below. The purpose of these stages is to give you the experience of writing philosophy somewhat in the way that a professional philosopher would do so. Pick a topic that you care about.

For those of you not majoring in philosophy, I hold open the option of doing a somewhat different kind of writing project—one that is philosophical, but that speaks more directly to your disciplinary interests. (I have one possibility for some community-based research, arranged through the Community Service office.) We’ll talk about this option in class.

Begin investing time in your term paper **EARLY**. Take these preliminary writing stages **DEADLY** seriously! Make a folder, and save copies of your research at all stages. (DATE them and file them in chronological order.) Save copies of your classmates’ critiques. You will turn in this folder along with your final paper, to document the emergence of your thesis.

- **Initial Proposal:** A two page preliminary essay in which you identify the territory you will be investigating. For some of you, this initial document will actually present a thesis; for others of you, it will more likely identify a set of questions or puzzles you wish to investigate further. **DUE FRIDAY, MARCH 31, BY 5 P.M.** via the class email list (s-phi-371-all@gac.edu). Graded check, check plus, check minus.
- **Chunk of Argumentation:** A four-to-five page piece of writing that moves your thesis beyond the initial proposal another step toward a full draft with a clear thesis. You determine what the chunk includes; my requirement is that it be a piece of philosophical argumentation. Perhaps it is a summation of your entire argument; perhaps it is a draft of one portion of your final essay.

Perhaps it's a piece of argumentation that won't even be a part of your final essay, but is something you need to clarify before going on to your project. All of these are fine uses of the "chunk" stage; just be sure that they actually involve reflective philosophical thought. **DUE FRIDAY, APRIL 13 BY 5 P.M.** via email to ME and to one other classmate, chosen in consultation with me. Check, plus, minus.

- **Full First Draft:** Just what it sounds like; a completed first draft. You needn't have a tidy bibliography at this point, and you may have ugly paragraphs that need surgery, but your arguments are all there, all fleshed out. **DUE FRIDAY, MAY 12 BY 5 P.M.** via email to ME and to that same classmate. Check, plus, minus.
- **Final Draft:** Turn in your final paper along with the portfolio of drafts and comments that you've been keeping all semester. Use some kind of secure folder, place items in the folder in chronological order, and put your **clearly identified** final draft on top. **DUE MAY 25 BY 5 P.M.** in my box in the philosophy department. Letter grade.

4. Critiques of Classmates' Work:

You will serve as a critic to one or more of your classmates at each stage of the term paper writing process. Not mere "busy work," your written comments will strengthen your classmates' essays, and also give you insights into your own writing. You will receive a check for all critiques completed.

- **Initial Proposals:** You will read and comment (in writing) on all classmates' proposals. **DUE IN CLASS ON APRIL 5;** bring **two copies** (one for me; one for author).
- **Chunk of Argumentation:** You will be paired with one classmate working on a related topic; you will read and comment on each other's pieces of argumentation. Your written comments are **DUE APRIL 19 IN CLASS.**
- **First Draft:** You and that same partner will trade drafts. Written comments on these are **DUE MAY 17 IN CLASS.**

5. Feeding Each Other

In a class on the philosophy of food, actual eating must play a role. To that end, we'll have at least four joint dinners during the semester (more, if you want); these will take place at our regular class time (which we might begin half an hour earlier or perhaps end half an hour later). You and a partner will be responsible for organizing one of them.

- You are free to do this in whatever ways you see fit. The requirement is that it be done reflectively—that is, you need to make mindful decisions about what you will feed us, why, and how.
- As part of your dinner, you will give a brief, philosophically rich talk about your meal, in order to invite us to eat it reflectively.

That's the only requirement. Above and beyond this, I invite you to bring "thematic snacks" any time. It's a good idea to let the rest of us know if you're bringing something, so we don't overload any one night.

6. Mindful Eating

Pick some aspect of your own eating on which you would like to reflect this semester, and then set yourself a regular time during which you do some philosophical reflection. You are completely free to set this up as you wish. You will find it useful to include writing as one aspect of your reflection.

I will set aside some time each week for people to report to each other about what they've been thinking about.

Course Grade

Roughly 70% of your grade will be your final paper and its various preliminary stages; the remaining 30% will be your discussion essays for the weekly seminar. (Note that participation does not "count" toward your grade; in an advanced seminar, I assume well-prepared participation. Similarly, the other components don't figure in as a percentage, but I take it as a given that you will participate in these activities, because they will contribute to your learning.) I reserve the right to adjust these percentages as the semester evolves, in light of new directions the class takes, tornadoes, and other unanticipated events.

A note on plagiarism

If you pass off someone else's words or ideas as your own, you have plagiarized--***whether you do so intentionally or by accident***, and whether you do so in a formal paper or an informal writing. That is true whether you quote directly, or paraphrase someone else's ideas. That includes ideas in books, exchanged in conversation, or on the web. Please consult a style manual, me, the Writing Center, or ***someone*** if you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism in your written work. (I have a handy sourcebook called *Writing With Sources* that I'd be happy to show you.) Suffice it to say, plagiarism is a violation of college policy, and is also a violation of the policies of this class. If you plagiarize, you will receive a zero on that assignment, and I will report the incident to the dean. If you plagiarize a second time, I will give you an F for the class, and inform the dean of the reason for the grade.

Reading and Work Schedule

This schedule is very tentative. I reserve the right to modify it (perhaps drastically) in light of the interests of members of the class and the depths of our discussion. Please do tell me if there is a particular text or topic on which you would like us to spend more (or less) time. (I've noted on the schedule a few possible additions we might consider.)

As the schedule stands, we will read small, selected portions of several new works in the field, covering topics in a variety of philosophical fields—metaphysics, aesthetics, ethics, social and political philosophy, etc. By introducing you to these topics and texts, I intend to provide you with possible topics for your own term papers. BY ALL MEANS read ahead if you think you might be particularly interested in researching one of the topics we're reading later.

Date	Reading	Essays by:	Other Assignments
February			
	Metaphysics		
8	<i>The Hungry Soul</i> , Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2.	1 2	Please also BRING to class the Curtin/Heldke anthology, so we can make some decisions about who will read what for the following period.
15	<i>Cooking, Eating, Thinking</i> , Section One: READ Curtin's essay, and at least one other substantive essay from the section (chosen in consultation with class). Read around entire section to get a sense of it.	1 2	
	Aesthetics		
22	<i>Making Sense of Taste</i> , Chapters 1 and 4	1 2	Bring <i>Cooking, Eating, Thinking</i>
Possible additions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David Hume, "The Standard of Taste" • Brillat-Savarin • Elizabeth Telfer 		
March	Ethics		
1	<i>Cooking, Eating, Thinking</i> , Section Two: READ Curtin's essay, and at least one other substantive	1	

	essay from the section. Read around entire section, to get sense of whole.	2	
8	<i>The Spirit of the Soil</i> , Chapters 1, 5 and 7	1 2	Bring <i>Cooking, Eating, Thinking</i>
Possible additions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More of <i>The Hungry Soul</i> • Ethical vegetarianism 		
	Social and Political Philosophy		
15	<i>Cooking, Eating, Thinking</i> , Section Four: READ my essay, and at least one other substantive essay from section. Read around entire section, to get sense of whole.	1 2	Bring <i>Carnal Appetites</i> ; look at it in advance, to consider chapters you'd like to read
22	<i>Carnal Appetites</i> , Chapter 1 and others TBA		
Possible additions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heldke, <i>Exotic Appetites</i> • Jeremy Iggers 		
29	No class: spring break		
31	INITIAL TERM PAPER PROPOSALS DUE BY 5 P.M. VIA THE CLASS EMAIL LIST.		
April	Epistemology		
5	Raymond Boisvert, "Clock Time/Stomach Time" and "Food Transforms Philosophy" (Electronic handouts.)		RESPONSES TO TERM PAPER PROPOSALS DUE IN CLASS. BRING 2 COPIES.
12	<i>Cooking, Eating, Thinking</i> , Section Three: READ my introductory essay and "Recipes for Theory Making;" read around in entire section		

Possible additions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heldke, "Do You Really Know How to Cook?" 		
14	CHUNK DUE BY 5 P.M. VIA EMAIL TO ME AND ONE CLASSMATE		
19	Presently unscheduled		CRITIQUE OF ONE CLASSMATE'S CHUNK DUE IN CLASS. BRING 2 COPIES.
26	Presently unscheduled		
May	Presently unscheduled		
3	Presently unscheduled		
10	Presently unscheduled		
12	FULL DRAFT DUE BY 5 P.M. VIA EMAIL TO ME AND ONE CLASSMATE		
17	Summing up class: agenda to be determined		CRITIQUE OF ONE CLASSMATE'S DRAFT DUE IN CLASS. BRING 2 COPIES.
Scheduled Final	FINAL PRESENTATIONS OF THESES		
22	FINAL DRAFT AND ACCOMPANYING FOLDER DUE IN MY OFFICE BY 5 P.M.		