

Seminar in Philosophy

Philosophy of Food

PHIL 299/399
Winter 2023

Professor: Dr. Brandon Polite
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Course Description

This seminar will focus on a key issue in contemporary philosophy: **the ethics, politics, and aesthetics of food.**

The course will culminate in a significant piece of writing. Special attention will be paid to the key steps of research, drafting, and revision, as well as to developing careful textual analyses and compelling arguments.

PHIL 399 students will present their paper and answer audience questions in a symposium on campus **early Spring Term** to fulfill the capstone requirement for the major.

Office Hours

MWF 2:40–3:30
Old Main 304

Time & Location

MWF 12–1:20 p.m.
Old Main 201

The goal of this course is for you to develop the habits and skills of a careful writer, including:

- **locating sources & evaluating** them for relevance
- **incorporating** multiple sources in a unified manner
- **improving** your position in response to feedback
- **offering** your classmates constructive feedback
- **analyzing** texts carefully
- **defending** original arguments
- **copyediting**

COURSE details

Website: Accessible via <https://classroom.google.com>

Masks: Masks are required in class at all times. Your mask should be at least surgical quality: e.g., KN95, KF94, & N95. Cloth and paper masks are ineffective at preventing the spread of Covid-19.

Readings: All readings are available as pdfs or web links on Google Classroom.

Honor Code: This course operates within the parameters set by the Honor Code. Students are encouraged to talk through all course material with one another and to function as interlocutors for one another. This extends to preparing to write your prompts and essays. However, each student is required to write their own work, to cite all sources fully, and to give explicit credit where particular formulations of claims, arguments, and examples are the product of cooperative work.

Accommodations: If you have academic accommodations of any sort and need particular allowances, such as a notetaker or more flexible deadlines, please let me know early on in the term so that we can make a plan to help you succeed in the course.

Late Assignments: There is enough flexibility built into the assignments & structure of the course that you shouldn't find it too difficult to turn the work in on time. But if you feel like you need additional time and would like to negotiate reasonable, extended deadlines for any assignment for any reason, get in touch with me prior to the deadline. Communication is essential.

Schedule

Week 1: Aesthetics		
1/4	W	Alexandra Plakias, "The Aesthetics of Food"
1/6	F	C. Thi Nguyen, "What's Missing from Cookbook Reviews" link
Week 2: Aesthetics		
1/9	M	Ray Oldenberg, "The Character of Third Places" & other readings
1/11	W	Matt Strohl "On Culinary Authenticity"
1/13	F	Shen-yi Liao, "Bittersweet Food"
Week 3: Aesthetics, Ethics, & Politics		
1/16	M	Carolyn Korsmeyer, "Delightful, Delicious, Disgusting"
1/18	W	Cora Diamond, "Eating Meat and Eating People"
1/20	F	Adrienne Martin, "Factory Farming and Consumer Complicity"
Week 4: Ethics & Politics		
1/23	M	Sarah Conly, "Paternalism, Food, and Personal Freedom"
1/25	W	Syl Ko, selections from <i>Aphro-ism</i>
1/27	F	Susan Wolf, "The Ethics of Being a Foodie" Paper Proposal due
Week 5: Research		
1/30	M	Discuss your readings Research paragraph(s) due
2/1	W	Discuss your readings Research paragraph(s) due
2/3	F	Discuss your readings Research paragraph(s) due
Week 6: Drafting		
2/6	M	No Class Work on paper
2/8	W	No Class Day of Dialogue
2/10	F	Writing Workshop Work-in-Progress 1 due in class
Week 7: Drafting & Revising		
2/13	M	Meet with PHIL 299 Students No Class for PHIL 399 students
2/15	W	Meet with PHIL 399 Students No Class for PHIL 299 students
2/17	F	Writing Workshop with All Students Work-in-Progress 2 due in class
Week 8: Drafting & Revising		
2/20	M	Meet with PHIL 299 Students No Class for PHIL 399 students
2/22	W	Meet with PHIL 399 Students No Class for PHIL 299 students
2/24	F	Writing Workshop with All Students Work-in-Progress 3 due in class
Week 9: Drafting & Revising		
2/27	M	Meet with PHIL 299 Students No Class for PHIL 399 students
3/1	W	Meet with PHIL 399 Students No Class for PHIL 299 students
3/3	F	Writing Workshop with All Students Work-in-Progress 4 due in class
Week 10: Polishing		
3/6	M	Meet with PHIL 299 Students No Class for PHIL 399 students
3/8	W	Meet with PHIL 399 Students No Class for PHIL 299 students
3/12	Su	Polished Term Paper due by 10 p.m.

Daily Writing Prompts

Due Prior to Class Meetings
Weeks 1–4

Workshop Policies

The Friday Writing Workshops during Weeks 6–9 are **mandatory**. You must attend and participate in them. Even if your Work-in-Progress isn't fully complete or where you want it to be, you must bring it to the meeting with you to workshop it in class.

Failure to attend a workshop without a valid and verifiable reason (illness, etc.) will result in a **5% reduction in your term paper grade** for each workshop missed.

If you (have to) miss a workshop, get in touch with me ASAP.

Grading Scale

A+	100 – 97.7	C+	79.9 – 77.7
A	97.6 – 93.4	C	77.6 – 73.4
A-	93.3 – 90	C-	73.3 – 70
B+	89.9 – 87.7	D+	69.9 – 67.7
B	87.6 – 83.4	D	67.6 – 63.4
B-	83.3 – 80	D-	63.3 – 60

Also Due 3/12 by 10 p.m.

PHIL 299 Students: Reflection Paper
PHIL 399 Students: Powerpoint

Grading

PHIL 299 Students

Engagement	20 pts
Daily Writing Prompts (7)	10 pts
Paper Proposal	5 pts
Research Paragraphs (3)	10 pts
Work-in-Progress Drafts (4)	20 pts
Term Paper	30 pts
Reflection Paper	5 pts

Grading

PHIL 399 Students

Engagement	20 pts
Daily Writing Prompts (7)	10 pts
Paper Proposal	5 pts
Research Paragraphs (5)	10 pts
Work-in-Progress Drafts (4)	20 pts
Term Paper	30 pts
PowerPoint	5 pts

Engagement | 20 pts

Engagement comes in many forms, not just attendance. It includes (but is not limited to) the following:

Preparation:	reviewing readings & materials before class
Focus:	avoiding distractions during in-class activities
Presence:	engaged and responsive during in-class activities
Asking Questions:	in class, out of class, online, offline
Listening:	hearing what others say, & also what they're not saying
Specificity:	referring to specific ideas from readings & discussions
Synthesizing:	making connections between readings & discussions

Daily Writing Prompts | 10 pts

The aim of these assignments is for you to generate ideas about the readings that could eventually be developed into your term paper, as well as to facilitate class discussion. As such, the grading scale is simple:

Satisfactory	Says something thoughtful about some aspect of the reading.
Unsatisfactory	Doesn't say anything thoughtful about the reading.

You will have **10 opportunities** to submit these assignments during Weeks 1–4. Here are how many Satisfactory Prompts you need to submit to earn a particular score out of 10 pts: **7=100%, 6=85%, 5=70%, 4=55%, 3=40%, 2=25%, 1=10%**.

PHIL 299 students: Your prompts should be a minimum of **50 words long**.

PHIL 399 students: Your prompts should be a minimum of **100 words long**.

Paper Proposal | 5 pts

The aim of this assignment is for you to plan out what you intend to write in your term paper: your topic, thesis, the sources you'll use, and so on. Your ideas about each of these will almost certainly change to some degree as you delve further into the writing process; however, the more thought you can put into your proposal, the better you'll set yourself up for success. The grading scale is as follows:

Very Thoughtful	5 pts	Complete and very detailed.
Pretty Thoughtful	4 pts	Complete and pretty detailed.
Somewhat Thoughtful	3 pts	Maybe not entirely complete or a bit vague.
Inadequate	≤ 2 pts	Mostly incomplete or much too vague.

Research Paragraphs | 10 pts

For Week 5, you will find readings (articles, book chapters, etc.) on your own, relative to the topic you proposed to write on, and read them. You will be tasked with walking your classmates and I through your articles in class each day that week. To help you do so, you will write short paragraphs on each reading, which will be due prior to the start of each class meeting. Each paragraph will be a **minimum of 150 words long**. In them, you will state the reading's thesis and explain one of the main reasons the author gave to support it—the one you'd most be interested in writing about in your term paper. If you want, you can also write about how you might use the article in your term paper; however, this isn't necessary. And you'd need to write at least 150 words before doing so.

PHIL 299 students are required to read and write paragraphs on at least **3 readings**.

PHIL 399 students are required to read and write paragraphs on at least **5 readings**.

These assignments will be graded simply as **Satisfactory** or **Unsatisfactory** relative to expectations described above. The percentage satisfactory (out of 3 for PHIL 299 students, and out of 5 for PHIL 399 students) will be your score out of 10 points.

Work-in-Progress Drafts | 20 pts

Weeks 6–10 will focus exclusively on the writing process. You will write a series of increasingly polished and expanded drafts, each of which will undergo workshops and revisions. These drafts will be graded with respect to whether they **meet, exceed, or fall below** the minimum expectations for them.

The minimum expectations for Work-in-Progress 1 (worth 2 pts) is that you've explained one or more of the sources you'll be using in your paper *clearly and carefully*.

Here are the grading criteria for **Works-in-Progress 2, 3, and 4** (worth 4 pts, 6 pts, and 8 pts, respectively):

Exceeds minimum expectations: The student has thoughtfully and carefully revised and expanded their draft in response to the feedback provided by their classmates and professor on the previous version, while reaching and perhaps exceeding the minimum word length for the assignment. In short, you've made great progress.

Meets minimum expectations: The student has attempted to revise and expand their draft in response to the feedback provided by their classmates and professor on the previous version, getting close to and perhaps exceeding the minimum word length for the assignment. In short, you've made good progress.

Below minimum expectations: The student has put some, but not much, thought into revising or expanding their draft in response to the feedback provided by their classmates and professor on the previous version, and is perhaps well short of the minimum word length for the assignment. In short, you've made some progress.

Less than acceptable: The student has made few substantive changes to the paper since the previous version. How few will affect the assignment's score. In short, you've made little-to-no progress.

The full grading breakdown and the word length requirements can be found in the "**Work-in-Progress Grading**" and "**Schedule of Paper Development**" tables below.

Work-in-Progress Grading	WiP 1 2 pts	WiP 2 4 pts	WiP 3 6 pts	WiP 4 8 pts
Exceeds minimum expectations 100%	2 pts	4 pts	6 pts	8 pts
Meets minimum expectations 85%	1.7 pts	3.4 pts	5.1 pts	6.8 pts
Below minimum expectations 70%	1.4 pts	2.8 pts	4.2 pts	5.6 pts
Less than acceptable 55%-0%	≤ 1.1 pts	≤ 2.2 pts	≤ 3.3 pts	≤ 4.4 pts

PHIL 299 Students | Schedule of Paper Development:

Week	Assignment	Writing Expectations	What Should Be Written	Value
1–4	Daily Writing Prompts	Minimum 50 words (x 7)	Thoughtful responses to the readings	10 pts
4	Paper Proposal	Fill out questionnaire	Topic, Thesis, Sources, etc.	5 pts
5	Research Paragraphs	Minimum 150 words (x 3)	Reflections on the readings	10 pts
6	Work-in-Progress 1	Minimum 750-word draft	Exegesis	2 pts
7	Work-in-Progress 2	Minimum 1500-word draft	Exegesis + Some Argument	4 pts
8	Work-in-Progress 3	Minimum 2000-word draft	Intro + Exegesis + Most of Argument	6 pts
9	Work-in-Progress 4	Minimum 2400-word draft	Nearly Completed Paper	8 pts
10	Term Paper	2400–3000 words	Completed Paper	30 pts

PHIL 399 Students | Schedule of Paper Development:

Week	Assignment	Writing Expectations	What Should Be Written	Value
1–4	Daily Writing Prompts	Minimum 100 words (x 7)	Thoughtful responses to the readings	10 pts
4	Paper Proposal	Fill out questionnaire	Topic, Thesis, Sources, etc.	5 pts
5	Research Paragraphs	Minimum 150 words (x 5)	Reflections on the readings	10 pts
6	Work-in-Progress 1	Minimum 900-word draft	Exegesis	2 pts
7	Work-in-Progress 2	Minimum 1800-word draft	Exegesis + Some Argument	4 pts
8	Work-in-Progress 3	Minimum 3000-word draft	Intro + Exegesis + Most of Argument	6 pts
9	Work-in-Progress 4	Minimum 3600-word draft	Nearly Completed Paper	8 pts
10	Term Paper	3600–4500 words	Completed Paper	30 pts

Term Paper | 30 pts

This is the assignment that all of your others have been building toward over the course of the term. The paper will follow the traditional philosophical format of interpreting one or more philosophical positions & developing your own argument in response to them. The length of the paper will differ between PHIL 299 and PHIL 399 students:

PHIL 299 Students: 2400–3000 words | 8–10 pages

PHIL 399 Students: 3600–4500 words | 12–15 pages

PHIL 399 students will additionally be tasked with raising and responding to multiple objections to their positions, which will partly account for additional word length.

The grading criteria for the paper will be the same that I use for term papers in all of my classes. But your grade will also be informed by my sense of the work you put into the paper over the course of the term.

PHIL 299 Students

Reflection Paper | 5 pts

At the very end of the term, PHIL 299 students will be tasked with writing a short, informal paper (**minimum 500 words**) in which they reflect on their experience with the writing process: what they struggled with, where they think they improved, and what they'll carry forward in future courses. This paper will be graded simply on **how thoughtful** it is.

Phil 399 Students

PowerPoint | 5 pts

As PHIL 399 students will be presenting their work as part of a symposium on campus during the early part of Spring term, they'll be tasked with devising a PowerPoint slide presentation to help their audience follow along. I'll work with them on this during our weekly PHIL 399 exclusive meetings. The PowerPoint will be graded solely on **how helpful** it is.

Recommended Readings

Week 1

- Andrea Borghini, "Seven Philosophical Questions about Recipes"
- Richard Shusterman, "Somaesthetics and the Fine Art of Eating"

Week 2

- Andrea Borghini & Andrea Baldini, "Cooking & Dining as Forms of Public Art"
- Uku Tooming, "Aesthetics of Food Porn"

Week 3

- Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"
- Alicia P.Q. Wittmeyer, "I Admire Vegetarians. It's a Choice I Won't Ever Make" | [link](#)

Week 4

- Kyle Powys Whyte, "Food Justice and Collective Food Relations"
- Samantha Noll & Esme Murdock, "Mitigating the Tensions Between Food Security & Food Sovereignty"

Recommended

These are the readings I also would have assigned if this were a regular course, rather than a writing-intensive seminar. You are not required to read them. But I definitely encourage you to read any that are relevant to your paper topic. You can even write a **Research Paragraph** on **one** of them for credit during Week 5. No more than one paragraph on these readings will count, however, as you're meant to learn how to locate relevant sources on your own.