

Philosophy of Animal Rights & Vegetarianism

Spring 2010
Rhetoric 98 Section 2/Philosophy 198 Section 1
Facilitator: Alex Setzepfandt
Sponsor: R. Jay Wallace

Wednesday 5:00-7:00
2 units
259 Dwinelle
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Course Description

What?

We will discuss animal ethics from a philosophical point of view, meaning we will examine what obligations, if any, we have towards animals. After dabbling in the basics of moral philosophy, we will examine whether our current treatment of animals is speciesist, or discriminatory in a manner akin to racism or sexism. We will then ask the question of whether we should become vegetarians. From there, we will look at critiques of the views we've read and also look at alternative viewpoints. The course is constructed with both philosophy and non-philosophy majors in mind. There will be time devoted to making sure all people are comfortable with the texts, understanding what philosophy is, and learning how to practice it.

Why?

The animal rights movement is an important contemporary social movement. In the last few decades, many philosophers and social critics have begun to question whether the way we get our food is morally acceptable. There have been questions, for example, about whether our current agriculture practices are environmentally sustainable, safe, and fair in their treatment of animals and workers. In this class, we will discuss whether our treatment of animals, in particular, is ethical. The ethics of animal treatment is especially important because we are all responsible for the food choices we make, whether they are ethically permissible or unacceptable.

How?

During the course, we will try to answer the essential question of whether vegetarianism is morally required. The course is not geared towards one answer; rather, both sides of the debate will be critically analyzed from a rational and unbiased viewpoint. The format of the class will primarily be discussion-based, with lecture used to make sure we are all on the same page. All viewpoints will be equally respected and open to criticism.

Course Objectives

- Become familiar with philosophical enquiry
- Understand the fundamental arguments behind the animal rights movement
- Critically analyze arguments from both sides of the debate
- Improve writing skills in general and philosophical skills in particular
- Become comfortable with your food choices

Required Texts

1. Peter Singer. *Animal Liberation*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2009.
2. Course Reader.

Evaluation Procedures

There are two sections that each student will be graded on. In order to pass the class, one must pass both sections:

- **Participation (25%)**
 - Attendance (15%)
 - You are only allowed to miss two classes. Exceptions will be given only in extreme circumstances.
 - Discussion (10%)
 - You are expected to do the readings before class and come prepared to discuss them. Since our class is relatively small, everybody will be expected to contribute their ideas and questions.
- **Journal Entries (75%)**
 - Journal entries are 2-3 page reflections done on any of the readings in a particular section. You can, among other things, use it to answer a discussion question, write about what you found problematic about a reading, or talk about something you are confused about.
 - There are three journal entries, the dates of which can be seen on the course calendar below. Early journal entries will be accepted, but late ones will not. Any good excuses need to be emailed to me before the due date.
 - You should send your journal entry to my email address (alexsetz@gmail.com). Please send them in .doc format because I will use track changes in Word to comment on them. If you don't have Word, send them to me as a plain text or rtf file. Comments will be sent back within two weeks.

Course Calendar

Class	Date	Topic	Reading	Assignments
1-3		Introduction to Moral Philosophy	2	1
1	1/20	Introduction		
2	1/27	What is moral philosophy?	Rachels 1	

3	2/3	Utilitarianism and Kantianism	Rachels 2	Journal Entry
4-6		Introduction to Animal Ethics	3	0
4	2/10	What is speciesism?	<i>AL</i> 1	
5	2/17	How do we treat animals?	<i>AL</i> 3	
6	2/24	Should we be vegetarians?	<i>AL</i> 4	
7-10		Responses to Singer	3	1
7	3/3	Are some animals more equal than others?	Francis and Norman Sagoff	
8	3/10	Environmental Ethics vs. Animal Ethics	Everett	
9	3/17	Is it permissible to eat well-raised meat?	Pollan	Journal Entry
10	3/24	Spring Break		
11-16		Other Views & Issues	4	1
11	3/31	Different theories, different problems	Anderson	
12	4/7	Justice for animals	Nussbaum	
14	4/14	Animal Ethics and Moral Psychology	Rollin	Journal Entry
15	4/21	Animals and the law	Wolfson and Sullivan	
16	4/28	Conclusion		

Reading List

Introduction to Moral Philosophy

Rachels, James and Stuart Rachels. "What is Morality" and "Ethical Egoism." The Elements of Moral Philosophy. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2007. 1-15; 68-88.

Rachels, James and Stuart Rachels. "The Utilitarian Approach" and "Kant and Respect for Persons." The Elements of Moral Philosophy. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2007. 89-99; 130-140.

Introduction to Animal Ethics: Peter Singer's View

Singer, Peter. "All Animals Are Equal." Animal Liberation. New York: Harper Perennial, 2009. 1-23.

Singer, Peter. "Down on the Factory Farm." Animal Liberation. New York: Harper Perennial, 2009. 95-157.

Singer, Peter. "Becoming a Vegetarian." Animal Liberation. New York: Harper Perennial, 2009. 159-183.

Responses to Singer's View

Francis, Leslie Pickering and Richard Norman. "Some Animals are More Equal than Others." Philosophy 53.206 (1978): 507-527.

Sagoff, Mark. "Animal Liberation and Environmental Ethics: Bad Marriage, Quick Divorce." Osgoode Hall Law Journal 22.2 (1984): 298-307.

Everett, Jennifer. "Environmental Ethics, Animal Welfarism, and the Problem of Predation." Ethics & the Environment 6.1 (2001): 42-67.

Pollan, Michael. "An Animal's Place." The New York Times 10 Nov. 2002.

Other Views & Issues

Anderson, Elizabeth. "Animal Rights and the Values of Nonhuman Life." Animal Rights: Current Debates and New Directions. Ed. Cass R. Sunstein and Martha C. Nussbaum. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004. 277-298.

Nussbaum, Martha C. "Beyond 'Compassion and Humanity': Justice for Nonhuman Animals." Animal Rights: Current Debates and New Directions. Ed. Cass R. Sunstein and Martha C. Nussbaum. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004. 299-320.

Rollin, Bernard E. "Reasonable Partiality and Animal Ethics." Ethical Theory and Moral Practice 8.1/2 (2005): 105-121.

Wolfson, David J. and Mariann Sullivan. "Foxes in the Hen House: Animals, Agribusiness, and the Law: A Modern American Fable." Animal Rights: Current Debates and New Directions. Ed. Cass R. Sunstein and Martha C. Nussbaum. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004. 205-233.