

## History of Vegetarianism (HIST 415)

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*Pythagoras Advocating Vegetarianism* (1618-1630) by Peter Paul Rubens

Vegetarianism and veganism are growing movements that promote plant-based foods, animal rights, and environmental sustainability. Increasing numbers of people around the world – particularly in wealthier nations – have adopted plant-based diets in recent years. This demand has led new companies such as Impossible Food and Beyond Meat to develop plant-based meat substitutes including burgers that “bleed” beet juice. In the process they have redefined “meat.” At the same time, animal meat consumption continues to rise.

Although we usually consider it to be a modern movement, vegetarianism goes back well before recorded history. In this course we will explore the religious, philosophical, ethical, nutritional, and environmental roots of vegetarianism, from early humans to Ancient Greece and India to present-day Europe and America. Food choices have always reflected an individual’s identity and beliefs, and

we will examine the historical contexts within which people chose to embrace a plant-based diet. Surprisingly, the history of vegetarianism intersects with some of the world's most important social and political movements.

Though the consumption of meat and animal products may seem outwardly insignificant (or so ingrained that many do not question it), the questions raised by this topic are profound and concern many fields of knowledge including medicine, sociology, economics, gender, race, and anthropology. Did humans evolve to eat meat? Is the slaughter and consumption of animals sanctioned by religion? In what ways is food considered a political statement? What are the consequences of animal farming on the environment?

Note: We will spend significant class time in discussion, conversation, and debate. Please remember this is not a course on how to become a vegetarian, or a platform from which to pressure anyone to change their eating habits. I expect you to be respectful of others' opinions while willing to share your own. Thank you.

**Cellphone Policy:** Please do not use your phones during class. That said, if you know you might need to take a call during class sit toward the back so you can step out quietly. Thank you.

### **Grading:**

Your grade will be based on in-class participation (including leading class discussion, a debate, and a short presentation to the class on your final paper), weekly reading quizzes, one 4-6 page paper due week 4, and a final research paper.

**In-class Participation:** Please come to class prepared to discuss the readings listed on the syllabus for that date. You will also sign up to lead discussion with a partner for one class; you'll need to submit your discussion questions to me the day before class.

**Reading quizzes** will always be on Wednesdays at the beginning of class. You will answer one question I draw from one of the reading assignments or from Monday's lecture (I'll post these on Tuesdays). Your lowest quiz score will be dropped.

**Papers:** You will write one 4-6 page paper based on primary and secondary sources I provide (and that we discuss in class). The paper is due at the end of Week 4 but the prompt will be posted by week 2. Your final paper (in lieu of an exam) will be a research paper of 8-10 pages.

### **Grade Categories:**

Reading Quizzes – 15%

In-class Assignments/Participation – 25%

Paper 1 – 25%

Final Paper – 35%

### **Canvas:**

This course uses the Canvas system and you can access the course website via your Canvas front page. The course website contains this syllabus, all reading assignments and questions, lecture slides, etc. Please submit your papers online, via the course website.

### **Academic Honesty:**

Any form of plagiarism or academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and students suspected of academic misconduct may face disciplinary action, as outlined in the Students' Code of Conduct: <https://uodos.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/AcademicMisconduct.aspx>. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with University policies regarding plagiarism and what constitutes academic misconduct: <http://library.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/index.html>. Please come see me or one of the GEs if you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism or academic misconduct or if you are unsure how to properly cite a source.

### **Learning Accommodations:**

If you have a learning disability, please let me know. The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. I need to know if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center in 360 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or [uoaec@uoregon.edu](mailto:uoaec@uoregon.edu).

### **Basic Needs:**

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the Dean of Students Office (541-346-3216, 164 Oregon Hall) for support. Furthermore, if you are comfortable doing so, please let me know about your situation so I can help point you in the right direction for assistance.

### **Harassment or Assault**

Any student who has experienced sexual assault, relationship violence, sex or gender-based bullying, stalking, and/or sexual harassment may seek resources and help at [safe.uoregon.edu](http://safe.uoregon.edu). To get help by phone, a student can also call either the UO's 24-hour hotline at 541-346-7244 [SAFE], or the non-confidential Title IX Coordinator at 541-346-8136. From the SAFE website, students may also connect to Callisto, a confidential, third-party reporting site that is not a part of the university.

### **Mental Health Support**

College can be the best time of your life – but it can also be extremely difficult and overwhelming. If you need help dealing with anxiety or depression, or need to seek counseling, please contact the Division of Student Life at 541-346-3216.

### **Instructor Contact:**

I am here to help you. I want you to enjoy this class and to do well. I encourage you to come see me during my scheduled office hours or, if you can't make those, let me know and I'm happy to find another time to meet. You can come see me to talk about any of the material covered in class, a reading you didn't quite understand, or if there's some aspect of history you'd like to know more about. I'm also glad to read early drafts of your papers and make suggestions for improvements. Or

you can just stop by just to chat. Email is the best way to get ahold of me. I will respond to all student emails within 24 hours.

**Required Texts: \*most readings are posted on Canvas**

Colin Spencer, *Vegetarianism: A History* (London: Grub Street, 2016)

Adam D. Shprintzen, *The Vegetarian Crusade: The Rise of an American Reform Movement, 1817-1921* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013)

**Recommended Texts:**

John Lawrence Hill, *The Case for Vegetarianism: Philosophy for a Small Planet* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996)

Breeze Harper, *Sistas Vegan: Black Female Vegans Speak on Food, Identity, Health, and Society* (Lantern Books, 2009)

Rod Preece, *Sins of the Flesh: A History of Ethical Vegetarian Thought* (UBC Press, 2017)

Jonathan Safran Foer, *Eating Animals* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2009)

Tristram Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution* (London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006)

**Class Schedule: (\*subject to change)**

**Week 1: Gatherers and Hunters**

October 1: Introduction to the Course

**Reading:** “Vegetable Love: the History of Vegetarianism” *New Yorker* (New York, N.Y.: 1925), 22 January 2007, pp. 80-84 (Canvas)

October 3: Early humans and their “natural” diet: Did humans evolve to eat meat?

**Readings:** Introduction, Richard Wrangham, *Catching Fire: How Cooking Made us Human* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), introduction; Spencer, *Vegetarianism*, Chapter 1: In the Beginning

**Week 2: Early Roots of Vegetarianism**

October 8: Ancient Greece: Pythagoras and the Philosophers

**Readings:** Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, p. 39-59; Spencer, *Vegetarianism*, Chapter 4: Pythagoras and His Inheritance

October 10: Hinduism & Buddhism: Guest Speaker

**Readings:** “India’s Sacred Cow” by Marvin Harris, <http://spraakdata.gu.se/taraka/SacredCow.pdf>; “On meat eating,” from the Lankavātāra Sutra: A Mahāyāna Text, ed. and trans. Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki (Canvas)

**Week 3: From Sacrifice to Sacraments, Feast to Fast**

October 15: Food taboos in Judaism and Islam

**Readings:** Richard Lobban, “Pigs and their Prohibition,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, February 1994. (Canvas)

October 17: Christianity’s uneasy relationship with meat

**Readings:** Spencer, *Vegetarianism*, Chapter 5: Selections, Simoons, *Eat Not This Flesh* (1994) (Canvas)

**Week 4: The Renaissance**

October 22: Renaissance & the Scientific Revolution

**Reading:** Spencer, *Vegetarianism*, Chapter 8, “The Renaissance”

October 24: Eighteenth-century Dietary Medicine

**Reading:** Stuart, *Bloodless Revolution*, Chapter 13: “Dr. Cheyne’s Sensible Diet”

**Friday, October 25: PAPER I DUE (Canvas)**

**Week 5: Industrial Revolution**

October 29: Vegetarian Societies Organize

**Readings:** Percy Bysshe Shelley’s “Prometheus” (excerpts); John Frank Newton, “The Return to Nature” (1811); Shprintzen, *The Vegetarian Crusade*, Chapters 3 & 4

October 31: Meat Production in Urbanized, Industrialized Societies

**Readings:** William Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis* (Chapter 3); Readings: Safran Foer, “The Truth About Eating Animals,” *Eating Animals* (252-267)

**Film excerpt:** “Eating Animals”

**Week 6: Health & Nutrition**

November 5: Battle Creek Sanitarium, Frosted Flakes, and the Seventh-day Adventists

**Readings:** *Vegetarian Crusade*, Chapter 5: “Looks Like Meat, Tastes Like Meat, Smells Like Meat”

November 7: Colonial Campaigns: “Save the Children”

**Readings:** Lizzie Collingham, *The Taste of Empire* (excerpts)

**Week 7: Animal Rights & Ethical Concerns**

November 12: Factory Farming & CAFOs

**Readings:** Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation* (2002)

November 14: Environmental Effects of Meat: Is it Sustainable?

**Readings:** John Lawrence Hill, *The Case for Vegetarianism*, Chapter 4

**Week 8: Intersections of Food, Gender, Class, and Race**

November 19: Meat-eating and Masculinity

**Readings:** Anne Delessio-Parson, “Doing Vegetarianism to Destabilize the Meat-Masculinity Nexus in La Plata, Argentina,” *Gender, Place and Culture*, Dec. 2017, Vol. 24(12), pp. 1729-1748; Susanna Timeo and Caterina Suitner, “Eating Meat Makes You Sexy: Conformity to Dietary Gender Norms and Attractiveness,” *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 2018, Vol. 19(3), pp. 418-429.

**DUE: Final Paper Proposals**

November 21: Politics of Vegetarianism

**Reading:** Stuart, *Bloodless Revolution*, “Epilogue: Vegetarianism & the Politics of Ecology: Thoreau, Gandhi, and Hitler” (418-446); Excerpts, Harper, *Sistab Vegan*

**In-class:** Debate prep

**Week 9: Debating Diets**

November 26: Global Vegetarianism

**Readings:** *The Case for Vegetarianism* (reference); “Why People in Rich Countries are Eating more Vegan Food,” *The Economist*, October 13, 2018.

November 28: THANKSGIVING

**Week 10: Superfoods and Superdiets: Spirulina or Steak?**

December 3: Modern Issues in Vegetarianism: Looking forward

**Readings:** TBA

In-class presentations (research papers)

December 5: In-class presentations (research papers)