

FIRST PAPER TOPICS

Write a short (~1500 word) paper on ONE of the following topics. Be sure to follow the “Guidelines for Papers” that is distributed with this assignment. Your paper will be evaluated based on (i) the clarity and soundness of the *argument* for your *thesis*, (ii) your demonstrated understanding of the readings and the material covered in class, and (iii) the insight and creativity shown in engaging the issues. *NOTE: For each topic, you should, in justifying your answer, be sure to explain what might seem appealing about other answers and why your answer is preferable.*

Jonathan Bloom in *American Wasteland* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, 2010) points out:

“Every day, America wastes enough food to fill the Rose Bowl. Yes, *that* Rose Bowl – the 90,000-seat football stadium in Pasadena, CA...As a nation, we grow and raise more than 590 billion pounds of food each year. And depending on whom you ask, we squander between *a quarter* and *a half* of all the food produced in the United States.” (xi)

According to Bloom, the waste occurs throughout the food chain, “from farm to fork.” In particular, from “abandoned harvests, pristine supermarket produce sections, and restaurants where abundance is always on the menu...[and] in your home.” (xvi)

What should be done? Write an argumentative essay of roughly 1500 words on either of the following questions:

1) What is an individual’s moral responsibility with respect to waste in making food choices? In short, what should you and I do? For example, should one always be a member of the “Clean Plate Club”? Should one avoid certain restaurants that serve huge helpings? Should one refuse to buy “pristine supermarket produce”? Should one do nothing? Considering the “big three” moral theories we covered in class, outline what you think each theory would recommend and defend what you take our moral responsibility to be.

2) The huge waste that Bloom describes is partly a result of how individuals act, but also largely how we structure the food chain in the United States. Describe a particular practice or institution that you take to make a significant contribution to the waste problem, and explain how and why it does so. For example, is there a social/political problem with a part of the food distribution system? With the agriculture system? With the consumer? Is there a better way to organize the society to reduce waste? Would such a reorganization be just? Considering political theories we covered in class, outline what they would recommend in response to the problem you identify and defend what you take to be a just solution.

3) What counts as desirable or even edible food is not just a matter of its nutritional qualities, but its social meaning. How does the social meaning of food contribute to the amount of waste Bloom describes. For example, if so much food is thrown away, why don’t more people go dumpster diving? Describe and critique some set of social meanings that together contribute to the waste of food, working with specific examples. What is our moral responsibility with respect to these meanings?

GUIDELINES FOR PAPERS

1. All papers should be neatly typed, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins and in an easily readable standard font¹, sized between 10-12 point. Be sure to include *your* name and *your TA's name* on your paper. For safety, keep copies of your papers. *Please number your pages.* Papers should be turned in at the time and date indicated on the syllabus and on the paper topics.
2. All papers should be within the length guidelines specified. If you have more to say than you can fit within the page limits, pare down your discussion: make sure you have stayed on topic, focus your discussion on the most important points for your argument. However, note that because this is a CI-H course, you must submit a total of **20 pages** during the term.
3. Essay topics must be taken from the list distributed in class, and your paper should be on *one* topic only. Stick closely to the topic; *be sure you address the question asked.* All papers should be clearly organized around a *thesis*, and should provide *arguments* for it. You may write on a topic of your own design if you submit a proposal in writing to your TA at least 72 hours in advance of the deadline, and it is approved.
4. If you wish to attribute a position to a philosopher we have discussed, be sure to check that the text supports your attribution. On controversial points you should cite textual evidence, e.g., by quotation, or by giving the page numbers of relevant texts in parentheses. It is *imperative* that you indicate when you are quoting or paraphrasing an author, and when you do you *must* cite references to the original text. Failure to do so counts as plagiarism and will be handled accordingly. However, points made in lecture or in class handouts are “common property” for students in this class and may be relied upon in your papers without citation.
5. Although quotes are helpful, please keep quotation to a minimum. The paper should be, by in large, *in your own words.*
6. If you consult secondary sources – including websites! – this *must* be acknowledged in the paper. If you quote or paraphrase a secondary source, this must be attributed to the author; if you relied on texts in your preparation which were not assigned in class, include reference to them in a bibliography at the end of the paper (even if you don't quote from them).
7. Papers are due at the date and time specified. After that time papers will be considered late and will be penalized one third of a grade per day, i.e., from a B+ to a B. If you foresee special difficulties with the deadline, speak to your TA well in advance.

Bloom, Jonathan. *American Wasteland: How American Throws Away Nearly Half of Its Food (and What We Can Do About It)*. DaCapo Lifelong Books, 2011.

¹ Times, Times New Roman, Palatino, Helvetica, Arial, or others very similar.

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24.03 Good Food: The Ethics and Politics of Food Choices
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