

GYC201HoganCOM101

The following assignment fits into the food theme of my COM101 classes. This theme is the lens through which all of the writing, critical thinking, and information literacy learning outcomes are taught. Each of the readings, films, discussions, activities, and assignments simultaneously develop students' communication skills while challenging their assumptions about food and food culture in the United States as well as introducing them to a number of pressing food issues. This particular assignment is the culmination of the unit on issues related to eating meat. Over the course of several weeks, we will explore cultural attitudes in the US related to eating meat, the impact on public health and the environment of factory farming, and various moral/ethical questions related to the treatment of people and animals in the industrial food system. This unit is the prelude to a unit explicitly about sustainable food practices. In essence, this is about "the problems" and the sustainability unit is "the solutions."

- 1.) Greening Your Curriculum 201: Eco-Literacy and Local Connections
- 2.) Bill Hogan, Composition I (COM101)
- 3.) Reflective Essay: How would you describe your personal relationship with the animals that you eat? As a society, do we have a healthy relationship with the animals that we eat?
- 4.) Learning outcomes covered by the assignment:
 1. Employ the basic techniques during the writing process:
 - 1.1 Prewriting techniques, such as journaling, free writing, or clustering;
 - 1.2 Drafting techniques, such as experimenting with various organizational patterns;
 - 1.3 Revision techniques, such as identifying sections in a piece of writing which require more elaboration or support;
 2. Demonstrate skill in writing rhetorically:
 - 2.1 Develop an awareness of his or her writing voice, such as through peer review of drafts;
 - 2.2 Read and/or write in a variety of genres, both academic and nonacademic.
 3. Demonstrate the following skills in reading rhetorically:
 - 3.1 Comprehend a text, such as by producing a summary;
 - 3.2 Recognize the writer's choices, by identifying the text's purpose and audience;
 - 3.3 Respond to a text in a manner that requires summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting.
 4. Perform the following during the research process:
 - 4.1 Locate information from a variety of sources, such as in the library, on the web, or through interview or observation;
 - 4.2 Correctly identify types of sources, such as an online database article, a selection from an anthology, a website article, or blog;
 - 4.3 Evaluate a source's credibility, based on authorship and bias;
 - 4.4 Create MLA style in-text and Works Cited entries for varied sources.
- 5.) Learning outcomes of the assignment:

Students will learn about the conditions in which livestock are raised and slaughtered in both the "conventional" industrial food system and on sustainable farms. They will learn about four major "objective" areas of concern: public health, moral/ethical issues, cultural attitudes, and environmental impact. They will learn to synthesize information and blend

informed, subjective opinion with objective facts. Critical thinking, information literacy, and writing with sources are also learning outcomes.

- 6.) This assignment requires students to use critical thinking skills in many ways. They must reconcile their own attitudes, habits, and decisions with their newfound understanding of everything involved in how we eat meat. This requires considerable thought and complex reasoning. They also must exercise some empathy and creativity in imagining a better way to raise and eat animals. Lastly, they must wrestle with the arguments of the various authors that we read on the subject.
- 7.) This is relevant in all of my students' lives, whether they eat meat or not. The implications are immediate and close-to-home, often uncomfortably so.
- 8.) Assessment:
This is a COM101 course, so the majority of the semester grade comes from essay assignments. I assess both writing skills and content knowledge with each essay. Writing skills like grammar, mechanics, punctuation, and organization are also assessed. For this assignment, I will also gauge how well a student comprehends the readings/films that we covered in class and how effectively they synthesize that information into their own essays through summary and quotation. Students earn a letter grade based on all of these criteria.
- 9.) The assignment:

Reflective Essay Assignment

How would you describe your personal relationship with the animals that you eat? As a society, do we have a healthy relationship with the animals that we eat?

Your assignment is to reflect on these questions, demonstrating both subjective thoughtfulness and awareness of the objective issues involved in these relationships. Thoughtful reflection includes qualifications and conditions – it is not only acceptable, but often necessary to include any doubts, counterarguments, or even contradictions in your own thoughts and behavior. You must also demonstrate awareness of the larger, objective issues - particularly the public health, environmental, ethical, and cultural aspects – involved in eating meat.

The following series of questions are meant to help you investigate your own thoughts, beliefs, and behavior. You don't have to address each of these questions in your own essay. Simply use them to challenge your assumptions and prompt reflection.

Consider your own habits. Do you eat meat? If not, why not? If so, what animals, cuts, and preparations? How often? Where from? If you eat meat, what are some animals that you don't eat? Do you not eat certain types of meat simply because the taste or texture or does the thought of some types of meat gross you out? Why? Think about the different reasons you have for not eating certain animals and/or parts of animals.

Consider your context. How much of your eating habits are the product of individual choice and how much are the product of your context? What food did you grow up eating at home? What influence has that had in shaping your eating habits? Consider where you grew up, any cultural influences, your religion, etc....

Consider your own experience. Have you ever killed an animal that you've eaten? What effect did that have on you? Have you ever seen one killed either in person or otherwise? Does knowing how an animal lived and died make you more or less comfortable eating it? Does seeing raw meat have an effect on you? What specific experiences have shaped your eating habits?

Consider the ethical issues. Have you ever thought about the animals that you eat? What lines do you draw between "acceptable" and "unacceptable" treatment of animals raised for slaughter and consumption? How are animals treated on "factory farms"? What are the ethical issues involved? What are the differences between the animals that we care for as pets and those we eat?

Consider the environmental impact. What impact do CAFOs (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations) have on the environment? How does global demand for meat affect the environment? With a growing global population, can the planet sustain our current level of meat consumption?

Consider public health issues. What are the issues involved? Do any of the practices seen in *Food, Inc.*, for example, concern you as they relate to health and safety? What are the working conditions like at slaughterhouses? How does eating meat impact the obesity epidemics in developed nations as well as the problem of famine in developing nations?

Consider our cultural attitudes. What are the prevailing cultural attitudes towards eating meat? How are these attitudes manifested in advertisements, on television, and in personal interactions? Generally, do Americans know where the animals they eat come from and how they were raised? Do they care?

You must summarize, paraphrase, and quote at least three sources in your essay and follow MLA guidelines for in-text citations. You must also have a separate Works Cited page. I encourage you to use any of the texts (films, articles, videos) that we have covered in class.

Format & Requirements

This essay is worth 15% of your course grade.

There is a 1,250 word minimum and 1,500 word maximum.

- Put your name, the date, instructor's (my) name, class/section number, and the name of the assignment in the top left corner of the first page
- Include a descriptive title; centered and one line above the first paragraph
- The essay must be double-spaced with margins of one inch all around
- Use 12-point font
- Insert page numbers on the bottom right corner of each page
- The essay must be stapled
- Cite every source clearly and according to MLA guidelines both in-text and in the Works Cited page