

ASLE Vegan Studies Workshop Proposal
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An emergent vegan studies theoretical approach to textual and cultural discourse, as defined in my 2015 work *The Vegan Studies Project: Food, Animals, and Gender in the Age of Terror* (and followed by such works as Emelia Quinn and Benjamin Westwood's 2018 collection *Thinking Veganism in Literature and Culture: Towards a Vegan Theory*) differentiates itself from more familiar conceptions of "animal studies," an umbrella term for a three-pronged field that gained prominence in the late 1990s and early 2000s, consisting of critical animal studies, human animal studies, and posthumanism. While veganism is certainly a consideration of these modes of inquiry, it is also a distinctly different entity, an ethical delineator that for many scholars and teachers marks a complicated boundary between theoretical pursuit and lived experience. From the perspectives of many of us working to make veganism "fit" as scholarly endeavor and deeply held identity category, animal studies has often proven unsure of what to do with veganism and vegan scholars, whether to embrace veganism, treat it as an overly emotional and quixotic response to an environmental and dietary paradox, or to mediate its presumed extremity via a discourse of "ethically sourced" animal products.

For vegan studies scholars, for animal studies to matter, the work that is done in its name necessarily has to be in the service of animals. A vegan studies approach is theoretical, but it engages a lived politics of listening, care, emotion, and the empathetic imagination. Further, if vegan studies is about listening (rather than speaking for), then we must be willing to listen to perspectives that may challenge our conceptions of "theory" in favor of work that is more activist, potentially experimental, and less bounded by the strictures of academic writing. This is not to say that vegan studies should be anti-theory, but that it should be theoretically *different*: informed by theory, driven by theoretical inquiry, but also fully engaged in activist praxis, dedicated to establishing a conversation that crosses boundaries and expands both knowledge and social engagement beyond the confines of the academy.

I envision a four-part, four-hour workshop comprised of the following components:

1. Time for participants to read and discuss texts that are significant to this sub-field. I'm currently working on a vegan studies bibliography, which I will share, and I will also distribute foundational readings in vegan studies.
2. A case study, during which I present my reading of Mike White's film *Beatriz at Dinner* and share clips from the film.
3. A breakout session during which participants generate vegan readings of various texts (literary, visual, etc.). I will provide several such texts ahead of the workshop and will ask participants to bring others.
4. A second breakout session on vegan studies pedagogy that will engage with creating a vegan studies curriculum in courses from first-year composition to graduate seminars, to stand alone academic concentrations (see, for example, <https://www.veganstudies.org>).

Leader's qualifications: I am the author of *The Vegan Studies Project: Food, Animals, and Gender in the Age of Terror* (U of Georgia P, 2015) as well as editor of the forthcoming *Through a Vegan Studies Lens: Textual Animals and Discursive Ethics* (U of Nevada P, 2019).