When the state of California banned the production of foie gras in 2012 it was disgust at the French practice of force-feeding ducks and geese (known as gavage) that was at the heart of the media storm that ensued. Yet in the course of the controversy, gavage was unmoored from its connection to human-animal relationships and employed by French critics to describe American imperialism, consumption, and obesity. By displacing the site of gavage from birds to humans such responses made use of animal alterity to depict the insatiable American as the ‘true’ beast – fat and stupid, but also predatory and devouring – and thus a more appropriate object of disgust. In his paper, Prof. Forth examines cultural stereotypes about ‘the fat American’ to illuminate the nexus of disgust and animality that structures negative images of corpulent bodies.

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