Course Outline

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Course Description

As cultural phenomena like BBC’s *Planet Earth*, the multi-billion dollar pet industry, and internet cats attest, we are obsessed with animals. Yet we do not know very much about our fellow creatures at all. This course investigates how fiction, video games, film, and other popular media influence our relationships with animals. In the first half of this course, we will feel the world through an elephant’s trunk, meet a man who lived as a badger, and consider why we want to snuggle koalas but not cockroaches. The second half flips the question of the animal on its head, tracking how and why we humans consider ourselves distinct from other species, and whether our assumptions about human exceptionalism are justified. Throughout this course, we will sniff out the links between animal ethics, thought, and speech to change how we think about and live with other animals.

Objectives and Learning Outcomes

This course enables students to:

- critically assess animal representations in popular culture
- articulate the moral and philosophical dilemmas about our relationships with other animals
- question how we define ourselves as “humans”
- think like an animal

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1 This syllabus is subject to change. Any/all changes will be announced in class.
Required Texts
Marion Copeland, *Cockroach*
Charles Foster, *Being a Beast*
J.M. Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals*
Tania James, *The Tusk That Did the Damage*
Linda Kalof and Amy Fitzgerald, *The Animals Reader*
Bhanu Kapil, *Humanimal*
Indra Sinha, *Animal’s People*

NB! All of the other assigned readings will be posted on OWL.

Assignment Breakdown
Presentation 20%
In-class free-writes (ongoing; 8 total) 20% (2.5% each)
Paper 1 25%
Paper 2 25%
Participation 10%

Fall Semester – Animal

Prologue: Why Animals?
Week 1
Foster, “Becoming a Beast”

Week 2
van Dooren et al. “Cultivating Arts of Attentiveness”
Govindrajan, “Animal Subjects”

Unit I Quandaries
Week 2
Aristotle, “The History of Animals” (Kalof and Fitzgerald 3-4)
Bentham, “Principles of Morals and Legislation” (K and F 8-9)
Wolloch, “Animals in Enlightenment Historiography”

Week 3
Singer, “Animal Liberation or Animal Rights?” (K and F 14-22)
Regan, “The Rights of Humans and Other Animals” (K and F 23-29)
Nussbaum, “The Moral Status of Animals” (K and F 30-36)

Week 4
Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals* (selections TBA)

Unit II Cuteness ❤
Week 4
Fisher and Yoh, “Could Nintendo’s *Animal Crossing* be a tool for conservation messaging?”
Week 5
In-class screening: *Zootopia*

Week 6
Berger, “Why Look at Animals?”
Malamud, “Zoo Spectatorship”

Unit VII Disgust 😝
Week 7
Ngai, “Disgust”
Raffles, *Insectopedia*

Week 8
Copeland, *Cockroach*
*Life in the Undergrowth* ep. 4, “Intimate Relations”

Week 9
Mavhunga, “Vermin Beings”
Mawani, “Bees, Bedbugs, Biopolitics”

Unit VI Eating
Week 10
King, *Personalities on a Plate* (selections TBA)
Srinivasan and Rao, “Will Eat Anything that Moves”

Week 11
In-class screening *Life of Pi*
Class discussion: *Life of Pi*

Week 12
no readings assigned

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**Winter Semester – Human**

Unit VII – Becoming Humanimal
Week 1
Tomas Nagel, “What is it Like to be a Bat?”
Foster, “Badger”

Week 2
Foster, “Fox”
Week 3
Singh. Wolf Children and Feral Man
Kapil, Humanimal
also check out Julia Fullerton-Batten’s photo project: Feral Children, 2015

Unit VIII Empire
Week 4
McClintock, Imperial Leather (selections)
Cartmill, “Hunting and Humanity in Western Thought”

Week 5
Kela, “Where the Wild Things Are Not”
Eha, A Naturalist on the Prowl (selections)

Week 6
James. The Tusk That Did the Damage

Week 7
James. The Tusk That Did the Damage
Guha, “The Authoritarian Biologist”

Unit IX Race | Capital
Week 8
Spiegel, “In Defense of Slavery” (K and F 10-13)
Jackson, Becoming Human (selections)

Week 9
Kim, “The Optic of Racism”
Maron, ‘Wet markets likely launched the coronavirus. Here’s what you need to know”

Week 10
Animal’s People

Week 11
Animal’s People

Week 12
Wrapping up