

Contemporary Issues in Animal-Human Relationships

CSUS 823

Fall 2016

Wednesday 3:00-5:50

Class meets in 6H Berkey Hall (first meeting is on Sept 7)

Office Hours: Wednesday 2-3 pm or by appointment

Dr. Linda Kalof

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Course Description

CSUS 823 is centered on one of the most fiercely debated topics in contemporary science and culture: what is the fitting role of animals in human culture and of humans in animal culture? Through the lens of interdisciplinary contemporary scholarship,

- Students gain a social science perspective on the relationship between humans and other animals, a perspective valuable to those enrolled in disciplines that are primarily science-based and have not had the opportunity to consider animals as members of a community and as thinking-feeling-reflective beings.
- The course explores the shared community of humans and other animals. Finding ways to peacefully coexist with our wild neighbors is a pressing topic given the movement of coyotes, foxes, bears, mountain lions, wolves and other animals into urban and surrounding areas. We examine the biological, ecological, sociological and philosophical issues associated with co-existing with other animals in urban and rural areas.
- We will examine the cultural representation of animals in literature and film.
- We will examine the relational obligations that arise from the varied ways that animals relate to human societies and institutions, building on recent developments in the political theory of group-differentiated citizenship and studies of human-farm animal working relationships
- We will examine the role of top predators in ecosystems and the possibility of rewilding to restore ecological balance to parts of the globe that have been damaged by human intervention.
- We will examine the “Despret effect” and the principle of additive empiricism in exploring animal agency.

Books

We are all to read the Despret book (first listed here), and each student has been assigned one additional book to summarize and present the summary to the class (see the Schedule for the relevant dates for presentations). I encourage everyone to read as many of the books listed here as you can manage (four of them are online at the MSU Library). At the end of the

course each of you will have access to the written summaries online in D2L (I discuss this further below).

(All) *What Would Animals Say If We Asked the Right Questions?* Vinciane Despret, forward by Bruno Latour, University of Minnesota Press, 2016. E-ISBN-13: 9781452950532, E-ISBN-10: 1452950539, Print-ISBN-13: 9780816692392

(Abney) *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights*. Sue Donaldson & Will Kymlicka. 2011, Oxford University Press. ISBN 9780199599660 0199599661, MSU Library call number HV4708 .D66 2011

(Kapsar) *Where the Wild Things Were: Life, Death and Ecological Wreckage in a Land of Vanishing Predators*. Stolzenburg, William. Bloomsbury, 2008. ISBN-10: 0674060180, ISBN-13: 978-0674060180, MSU Library call number QL758 .S746 2008

(Hassel) *Feral: Rewilding the Land, the Sea, and Human Life*. Monbiot, George. University of Chicago Press, 2014. ISBN-10: 022632527X, ISBN-13: 978-0226325279, MSU Library call number QL83.4 .M66 2014

(Suchyta) *Animals as Neighbors: The Past and Present of Commensal Species*. Terry O'Connor. MSU Press, 2013. Full text can be downloaded from the MSU Library: <http://site.ebrary.com.proxy1.cl.msu.edu/lib/michstate/detail.action?docID=10742526>

(Leon) *Livestock/Deadstock: Working with Farm Animals from Birth to Slaughter*. Rhoda Wilkie. Temple University Press, 2010. Full text can be read online at the MSU library: <http://site.ebrary.com.proxy1.cl.msu.edu/lib/michstate/detail.action?docID=10397381>

(Burnley) *Posthumanities : Animal Stories : Narrating across Species Lines*. McHugh, Susan. Univ of Minnesota Press, 2011. Full text can be downloaded from the MSU Library: <http://site.ebrary.com.proxy1.cl.msu.edu/lib/michstate/detail.action?docID=10502053>

(Sittig) *The Animated Bestiary : Animals, Cartoons, and Culture*. Wells, Paul. Rutgers University Press, 2008. Full text can be downloaded from the MSU Library: <http://site.ebrary.com.proxy1.cl.msu.edu/lib/michstate/detail.action?docID=10275488>

The basics: No exams, written summaries of selected readings, powerpoint presentations of the summaries, one class project (final paper & oral class presentation). This course can be used as an elective requirement for the graduate specialization in **Animal Studies: Social Science & Humanities Perspectives** see <http://animalstudies.msu.edu>

Requirements: Students will be responsible for reading and summarizing one of the assigned books for the class (see the Schedule for the assignments) and everyone is to read the Despret volume. The summaries of assigned books will be presented to the class according to the Schedule). The summaries are to be written as literature review essays, not as a critique (nor a list of bullet points/outline). Critique of the readings will be saved for class discussion (and

critique is also an appropriate and admirable part of the final research paper). For an example of what the written summary should look like see the “prototype summary” posted on D2L. The student must prepare two questions centered by the student’s assigned reading that will serve as the foundation for class discussion. After the student presents the summary (using powerpoint) the discussion questions will then serve as a guide for a more thorough analysis and critique of the material. By the date of the assigned reading, the summary, discussion questions and powerpoint presentations must be uploaded onto D2L in the STUDENT SUMMARIES and POWERPOINT drop boxes.

The course will be conducted as a seminar. At the end of the semester, each student will have access to a portfolio of summaries on D2L which will be helpful in preparing the final project. The final project’s written portion is due at the time of our final exam (see the university schedule) and the oral portion will be scheduled during the last weeks of the semester.

Instructions for the final project:

For your final project (written paper and oral presentation), you will use the material covered during the semester to write a scholarly paper on the “animal question.” Any aspect of the animal question is suitable. I suggest that you choose something that is meaningful to you, and I of course would like to see potentially publishable essays. In that regard, I would like to see papers of about 5,000 words (the minimum publishable piece) if you intend to work toward submitting a paper to a journal. If you do not have that goal in mind, then a paper of fewer words is fine, but not less than 2,500, please. The paper is due by the end of the final exam period for the class, uploaded onto D2L, no hard copy is necessary. As noted above, each of you will give an oral presentation of the paper during the last two weeks of class (see the schedule for your assigned presentation day for the final project, TBA).

The paper can be on any topic in animal studies (hunting, raising animals for food, using animals as laborers, blood sports, ethics/philosophy, vivisection, petkeeping, animal theme parks, zoos, keystone predators, so-called “problem” animals such as pit bull dogs or backyard deer or urban wildlife – whatever interests you). The paper must be grounded in the literature we have read this semester. Thus, I ask that you include at least 30 citations from that literature, and at least half of those must come from the texts for the course. Remember that for the literature covered in class, you will have summaries provided by your colleagues. Your paper must have an introduction, a body, a conclusion and a list of references cited (use any standard citation format).

Finally, I want to approve your paper topic. Please submit a one-page proposal to me by email by midterm. Given the schedule, I’ll try to get my feedback to you within 24 hours of receiving your proposal, so everyone should have feedback no later than the first class meeting after midterm.

PRESENTATIONS: The summary and final presentation dates are assigned and listed on the schedule. If the schedule doesn’t work for you (for example you might need to miss class for travel or other reasons) please feel free to find someone to switch with. Just be sure to let me know of the switch so I can keep track of who is doing what when. If you need to make a change you might have to do two summaries in one week.

You will have 30 minutes during the last two weeks of class for your presentation, including time for discussion. The presentation should be a slide show in power point or you may bring your visuals to class, perhaps as handouts.

Evaluation: I expect all of the summaries to be of very good (A) quality. I may ask that a summary be rewritten if it is not of very good quality, but it is expected all will be, and you will not hear back from me unless yours falls below an A. Your grade will be based on A's for the written summaries = 50% and the final paper and oral presentation = 50%.



Coyote on a commuter train, author unknown, circulated widely on the internet (May 2012)

CSUS 823 Fall 2016
Schedule & Assignments

Week 1 (Sept 7): Introductions

Week 2 Initial Discussion of Despret volume

Week 3: No Class

Week 4: Livestock/Deadstock

Aimee

Week 5: Zoopolis

Marie Carmen

Week 6: Animals as Neighbors

Mark

Week 7: Where the Wild Things Were

Kelly

Week 8: Feral

Willow

Week 9: The Animated Bestiary

Kyle

Week 10: Animal Stories

Sandy

Week 11: Final Discussion of Despret volume

Week 12: No Class – Thanksgiving Week

Week 13: Student Project Presentations I (to be assigned)

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Week 14: Student Project Presentations II (to be assigned)

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Week 15: We do not meet during the Final Exam period but the final papers are due by 5 pm, Thursday, Dec 15 2016