

***Contemporary Issues in Animal-Human Relationships***  
***(aka Animals, People and Nature)***  
**ACR 823**

**105A Berkey Hall**  
**Friday 3:00-5:50**  
**Office Hours: Th/Fr 6-7 or by appointment**

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***Course Description***

This graduate course examines one of the most fiercely debated topics in contemporary science and culture: the animal question – or, what is the fitting role of animals in human culture and of humans in animal culture? Through the lens of interdisciplinary contemporary scholarship, we will examine

- animals as philosophical and ethical subjects. Are language and rational thought prerequisites for the extension of justice and/or morality? What about the assertion that there is a connection between the human treatment of animals and our treatment of marginalized human groups?
- animals as reflexive thinkers. Do some nonhuman animals possess material culture, social morality, and emotions such as grief and sadness?
- animals as domesticates, “pets” and food. What is the link between animal domestication and the spread of contagious diseases, especially zoonotic diseases? How do humans “petrify” nature? What are the social, environmental and biological consequences of using animals as food?
- animals as scientific objects. What are the issues surrounding the use of animals in scientific speculation, classification and experimentation, such as in vivisection, cloning and the human-animal relationship in technoscience?
- animals as spectacle and sport. What is the cultural meaning of pitting animals in combative struggle against humans or against other animals? Do humans have a penchant for hunting and for gazing at exotic animals in confined places? Do these activities help shape the meaning of animals in human culture, reinforcing Michel Foucault’s ideas about power and surveillance? Should humans swim with dolphins, feed stingrays, play with killer whales?
- Finally, we will examine the thorny question of the meaning of nature and its reconfiguration from a binary purified category to a fluid nature-culture network composed of actants-in-relation.

***Books***

*The Animals Reader: The Essential Classic and Contemporary Writings*  
Linda Kalof & Amy Fitzgerald, 2007  
*Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*  
Donna Haraway, 1991

*Watching Wildlife*

Cynthia Chris, 2006

*The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery*

Marjorie Spiegel, with Alice Walker, 1996

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

**Requirements:** Students will be responsible for all of the class readings. In addition, individual students will be assigned to write summaries of selected readings and present them to the class. Summaries are to be prepared according to the directions below, with enough copies for the professor and the students in the class. The summaries are to be written as literature review essays, not lists of bullet points or in outline format. On the date due the student must lead a class discussion on the reading. The student must prepare two questions centered by the student's assigned reading that will serve as the foundation for class discussion. The presenter should begin the summary of the reading. The discussion questions will then serve as a guide for a more thorough analysis of the material through class discussion. The course will be conducted as a seminar. At the end of the semester, each student will have a portfolio of summaries collected from student colleagues which will be helpful in preparing the final project, the 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 2 weeks of class.

**Instructions for the final project:**

For your final project (written paper and oral presentation), you will apply the material covered during the semester in 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, preferably also publishable. 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 less words is fine, but not less than 2,500, please. The paper is due at our last meeting during Week 16, and each of you will give an oral presentation of the paper during Weeks 15-16 (see the schedule for your assigned presentation day).

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, so-called "problem" animals such as pit bull dogs or backyard deer, the ethics of hunting – whatever interests you), but it must be grounded in the literature we have read this semester. Thus, I ask that the paper include at least 25 citations from that literature, and at least half of those must come from the texts for the course, *The Animals Reader*, *Watching Wildlife*, *Simians/Cyborgs and Women*, and *The Dreaded Comparison*. 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).

As you know, I am very keen on visual presentations, so consider including images in your presentation, and perhaps even in your paper. You will have 20 minutes during the last two weeks of class for your presentation, with 10 minutes for discussion (see the schedule for your assigned day). The presentation can be a slide show in power point or you may bring your visuals to class, perhaps as handouts.

Finally, I want to approve your paper topic. Please submit a one-page paper proposal to me by email anytime between now and October 3. I'll get my feedback to you within 24 hours of your sending me your proposal, and everyone should have feedback no later than the next class meeting, October 10.

**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 is not. Your grade will be based on A's for the written summaries = 50% and the final paper and oral presentation = 50%.

#### **Format and Instructions for Written Summaries and Presentations:**

The presentation dates are assigned alphabetically by position on the class roster (see the schedule). My apologies for cramming some folks with summaries in sequential weeks (some of the assignment were made on the basis of what I know of student interests). 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.

For an example of what the written summary should look like see the Chapter 7 summary on postmodernism from a book I'm using in another class, *Practices of Looking*; the summary is on Angel. You need to bring two copies of your summary to class for me, and send a copy to each student by email through the Angel system. Summaries are to be prepared according to the directions below, with at least one question centered by the assigned reading that will serve as the foundation for class discussion. The presenter should begin with a 10 minute summary of the major themes in the reading. The discussion question(s) will then serve as a guide for a more thorough analysis of the material through class discussion. Summaries must be typed, single spaced, preferably two-sided copy on one sheet of paper. This is NOT A CRITIQUE of the reading, just a documentation, or a summary of what the author had to say, a literature review. All critique must be saved for class discussion, and not included in the summary. [Critique is also an appropriate and admirable part of the research paper.] The last part of the summary includes the question(s) for class discussion. Some good generic questions for discussion include:

- What links can you make between this reading and other readings for this class? Can you think of any links between this reading and some of your other classes?
- Choose a major theorist (such as Albert Einstein, Mary Wollstonecraft or Thomas Kuhn) and guess what they would think about this reading.
- Give an alternative theorist's perspective on this reading (for example, what would E.O. Wilson think about Haraway's essays?)

***Schedule of Readings & Topics***  
***ACR 823***

Week 1: Introductions

Week 2:

TOPIC: Philosophical beliefs about animals (ethics, morality, cognition)  
*The Animals Reader* Part 1

- |   |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| • Aristotle, Bentham and Singer             | Ryan Theiler       |
| • Tom Regan                                 | Amy Smith          |
| • Martha Nussbaum                           | Maggie Fitzpatrick |
| • Spiegel (Defense of Slavery) (no summary) |                    |

Week 3:

- |   |                  |
|---|------------------|
| • Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari ( <i>Animals Reader</i> ) | Stacy Rule       |
| <i>The Dreaded Comparison</i> (Spiegel)                       |                  |
| • Part 1 to page 65   | Maria Iliopoulou |
| • Part 2 page 65 to end                                       | Jennifer Kelly   |

TOPIC: Animals as reflexive thinkers  
*The Animals Reader* Part 2

Week 4:

- |  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| • Michel de Montaigne and René Descartes | Melissa Liszewski |
| • Bekoff                                 | Ryan Theiler      |
| • Van Schaik, et al.                     | Maria Iliopoulou  |
| • Masson and McCarthy (no summary)       |                   |
| • Sanders and Arluke (no summary)        |                   |

TOPIC: Animals as domestics, “pets” and food  
*The Animals Reader* Part 3

Week 5:

- Jim Mason and Mary Finelli
- Plutarch and Carol Adams
- Yi-Fu Tuan
- Mithen (no summary)
- Ritvo (no summary)

Melissa Liszewski  
Jennifer Kelly  
Stacy Rule

Week 6:

TOPIC: Animals as spectacle and sport  
*The Animals Reader* Part 4

- Pliny the Elder and Garry Marvin
- Evans, et al.
- Randy Malamud
- Matt Cartmill
- Nibert (no summary)

Maggie Fitzpatrick  
Maria Iliopoulou  
Amy Smith  
Ryan Theiler

Week 7:

*Watching Wildlife* (Cynthia Chris)

- Introduction, Chapter 1 (Wildlife Film Era) and Chapter 2 (The Quest for Nature)
- Chapter 3 (Wildlife, Remade for TV) and Chapter 4 (Animal Sex)
- Chapter 5 (The Giant Panda as Documentary Subject) and Conclusion (Learning from TV, Learning from Animals)
- *Masculinity and Animal Display*, Kohlstedt (on Angel) (no summary)

Maria Iliopoulou  
  
Melissa Liszewski  
  
Amy Smith

Week 8:

TOPIC: Animals as symbols  
*The Animals Reader* Part 5

- John Berger
- Claude Lévi-Strauss
- Steve Baker

Melissa Liszewski  
Jennifer Kelly  
Stacy Rule

- Jonathan Burt
- Boria Sax (no summary)

Maggie Fitzpatrick

Week 9:

TOPIC: Animals as scientific objects  
*The Animals Reader* Part 6

- Coral Lansbury
- Lynda Birke
- Sarah Whatmore

Maggie Fitzpatrick  
 Jennifer Kelly  
 Ryan Theiler

Week 10: No Class – I'm in Chicago at the Animals in Film & History Conference

Week 11:

- Sarah Franklin
- Donna Haraway (in *Animals Reader*)
- Chapter 10 of Haraway's *Simians, Cyborgs and Women*  
 (Biopolitics of Postmodern Bodies)
- Paul Thompson's Review of Franklin's Dolly Bodies  
 (on Angel) (no summary)

Melissa Liszewski  
 Amy Smith  
 Maggie Fitzpatrick

Week 12:

*Simians, Cyborgs and Women* (Haraway)

- Chapter 1 (Animal Sociology)
- Chapter 2 (The Past is the Contested Zone)
- Chapter 5 (Contest for Primate Nature)

Ryan Theiler  
 Amy Smith  
 Stacy Rule

Week 13:

- Chapter 7 (Gender for a Marxist Dictionary)
- Chapter 8 (A Cyborg Manifesto)
- Chapter 9 (Situated Knowledges)

Jennifer Kelly  
 Stacy Rule  
 Maria Iliopoulou

Week 14: No Class – Thanksgiving

Week 15: Student Presentations

- Ryan Theiler

- Stacy Rule
- Maggie Fitzpatrick
- Amy Smith

#### Week 16: Student Presentations

- Melissa Liszewski
- Maria Iliopoulou
- Jennifer Kelly



Kinship, author unknown, circulated widely on the internet (May 2008)