

University of Guelph
UNIV*1200(8)

The Lives of Animals

Winter 2012 Course Outline
Tu/Th 4:00-5:20pm
Hutt Building Rm234

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Extension: 54338

Description

Animals are so central to human affairs and tied up with our visions of progress and the good life that we are unable to fully see them. Indeed, as John Berger (1980) writes, “everywhere animals disappear”. This centrality (and disappearance) necessitates a need and willingness to take animals seriously. This course fosters in-depth understanding and appreciation of animal lives.

How do we, as humans, come to know about and understand the lives of animals? At the University of Guelph we do so through biological experiments, welfare research, veterinary encounters, health perspectives, agricultural endeavours, philosophical musings, geographical placements, social and historical constructions, literary representations, and artistic expressions. This course features the wealth of multi-disciplinary approaches to understanding animals, their lives, and their centrality to human society. It does so by engaging with scientists, social theorists and practitioners on campus and highlighting their specific research, insights and perspectives on animals.

We will explore the lives of animals through the following questions: (i) How do humans define, place, and encounter nonhuman animals? (ii) What are the implications for the everyday lives of animals (and humans)? (iii) What ethical and moral issues arise from these human-animal relations?

Course Objectives

By the end of the semester students will be able to:

- Describe key issues related to animals as nature, as companions and as food
- Interpret animal lives through conceptual frame of defining, placing, encountering, assessing
- Apply course issues, concepts and knowledge gained to disciplinary-oriented assignments
- Think critically and form opinions about the roles, meanings and values of animals in society

Approach

The course approach is based on three elements. First, *breadth of perspectives* whereby students are exposed to a broad range of disciplinary research and topics, and a broad range of opinions, including those that are considered mainstream and others that are considered critical. Second, *experiential learning* whereby students gain first-hand experience via field visits, expert insights from guests, and intensive learning via readings, films and lectures. Third, *critical engagement* whereby students are active learners, prepared to engage in reflective papers, in-class exercises, group discussions, conversations with guests, commentary in-the-field, and course assignments.

It is important to create a positive, enjoyable learning environment for all students in the class. It is imperative that students respect their fellow classmates by allowing all the right to voice their opinions without fear of ridicule, and by not making judgemental or objectionable (ethnic, gender, racial, homophobic etc.) comments, especially directed at a classmate.

Please note that class attendance is expected, particularly given the experiential nature of course materials and activities, as well as time/energy generously offered by guest and those coordinating field visits. If you are unable to attend a class session, guest lecture or field visit please contact the instructor directly as soon as possible.

Schedule & Readings

<i>Introduction to Human-Animal Studies</i>		
DATE & LOCATION	TOPIC	TASKS
Jan 10 Hutt 234	Course Overview Introductions, outline & expectations	
Jan 12 Hutt 234	Animal Rights & Issues (film) View <i>30 Days</i> episode on animal rights & issues	☀
Jan 17 Hutt 234	Conceptual Framework (lecture) Detail animal geography framework: define, place, encounter, assess	Read: Philo & Wilbert 2000
Jan 19 Hutt 234	Animals in Academia (lecture) Discuss animal philosophy, scholarship, activism	Read & complete: http://ae.imcode.com/ ☀
<i>Animals as Nature</i>		
Jan 24 Hutt 234	Animals & Habitat (film) View <i>Planet Earth Future: Into the Wilderness</i> to highlight beauty of nature & habitat issues	Read: Habitat synopsis Ex#1 guidelines
Jan 26 Wild Ontario	Wild Ontario (field) Meet wild birds & hear their life stories (hosted by Jenn Bock)	Read: Rehabilitation synopsis ☀
Jan 28 Toronto Zoo (optional)	Zoo Animals (field) Visit Toronto Zoo (tour by Dave Barney; zoo debate by Alice Hovorka)	
Jan 31 Arboretum	Birding & Tracking (field) Encounter wild birds & animals in their habitat (tour by Chris Earley)	
Feb 2 Hutt 234	Animals & Habitat (lecture) Student presentations on lives of Ontario animals based on Exercise #1	Due today (4pm): Exercise #1 ☀
Feb 7 Central Animal Facility	Research Animals (field) Visit CAF to learn about research animals (tour by Mary Fowler & Franceso Leri (Psych))	Read: Lab animal synopsis
Feb 9 Hutt 234	Research Animals (film) View <i>Project Nim</i> to explore animal-based research and its consequences	Read: www.project-nim.com/

<i>Animals as Companions</i>		
Feb 14 Hutt 234	Companion Animals (lecture) Discuss pet culture	Read: Tuan 1984 ☀
Feb 16 Hutt 234	Animal Celebrity (guest) Susan Nance (History) discusses the phenomenon of animal celebrities	Read: Zenyatta webpg Bring: Another celeb (photo, webpg, article)
Feb 28 Hutt 234	Reflection (lecture) Review course topics, experiences, framework; Exercise #2 Writing Workshop	Read: Ex#2 guidelines Bring: Ex#2 draft ☀
Mar 1 Hutt 234	Street Animals (guest) Michelle Lem (OVC) discusses street animals, homelessness & welfare issues	
Mar 6 Hutt 234	Animal Breeding (lecture & film) View <i>Pedigree Dogs Exposed</i> & compare with guide dog program	Due today (4pm): Exercise #2
Mar 8 Hill's Centre	Animals as Pets (field & guest) Visit Hill's Centre (hosted by Lisa Veit OVC) & Humane Society talk on pet care	Read: Humane Society synopsis ☀
<i>Animals as Food</i>		
Mar 13 Hutt 234	Food Animal Production (lecture) Discuss production of food animals	Read: Production synopsis
Mar 15 OAC Barn 37	Food Research (field) Visit fistula cows et al. to learn about agriculture practices with Andy Robinson (OAC)	☀
Mar 20 Hutt 234	Animal-Welfare Products (guest) John Cranfield (Economics) discusses consumer willingness to pay for animal comfort	Read: Consumption synopsis ☀
Mar 22 Arkell Farm (time TBA)	Farm Animals (field) Visit Arkell Farm (tour by Dave Vandenberg) & view layer treatments (Tina Widowski OAC)	Read: Lay et al. 2011
TBA Abattoir (optional)	Killing Animals (field) Visit UoG Abattoir (tour by Ira Mandell OAC)	
Mar 27 Hutt 234	Meatism v. Veganism (lecture) Compare animal- and plant-based diets as based on Exercise #3	Read: Diet synopsis Bring: Food diary

Mar 29 Hutt 234	Reflection Recap of course topics, experiences, framework	Due today (4pm): Exercise #3
<i>Animal Welfare & Ethics</i>		
Apr 3 Hutt 234	Animal Welfare (lecture) Overview of approaches and practices to improve the lives of animals as nature, companions, food	
Apr 5 Hutt 234	Closing Thoughts (lecture) Reflection on course content & experiences; Preparation for Exercise #4	Read: Ex#4 guidelines Bring: news article

Readings available on course homepage <https://courselink.uoguelph.ca/shared/login/login.html> or in some cases via UofG Library http://www.lib.uoguelph.ca/resources/course_reserves_e_learning/

Assignments & Assessment

Participation 10%

Students will be assessed on the quality and quantity of their participation based on the criteria below. Additionally, students will have an opportunity to provide a 'self-assessment' that I will factor into my own assessment of their participation grade. Because active engagement is critical to the course approach, I expect the average level of participation to satisfy the criteria for "7-8".

Grade	Criteria for Participation
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absent.
>5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Present, not disruptive. Tries to respond when called on but does not offer much. Demonstrates very infrequent involvement in discussion.
5-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates adequate preparation: knows basic case or reading facts, but does not show evidence of trying to interpret or analyze them. Offers straightforward information (e.g., straight from the case or reading), without elaboration or very infrequently. Does not offer to contribute to discussion, but contributes to a moderate degree when called on. Demonstrates sporadic involvement.
7-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates good preparation: knows case or reading facts well, has thought through implications of them. Offers interpretations and analysis of course material (more than just facts) to class. Contributes well to discussion in an ongoing way: responds to other students' points, thinks through own points, questions others in a constructive way, offers and supports suggestions that may be counter to the majority opinion. Demonstrates consistent ongoing involvement.
9-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates excellent preparation: has analyzed case exceptionally well, relating it to readings and other material (e.g., readings, discussions, experiences, guests etc.). Offers analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of case material, e.g., puts together pieces of the discussion to develop new approaches that take the class further. Contributes in a very significant way to ongoing discussion: keeps analysis focused,

	<p>responds very thoughtfully to other students' comments, contributes to the cooperative argument-building, suggests alternative ways of approaching material and helps class analyze which approaches are appropriate, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates ongoing very active involvement.
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Minute Papers 10% (☀ on schedule)

Ten 'minute papers' will be assigned throughout the semester aimed at garnering student comprehension of and reactions to course materials and experiences. For example, students may be asked to describe the most important points discussed during the class session, or to pose key questions raised, or to detail their opinion on an issue, etc. Minute papers are part of student active learning and reflective practice, as well as an opportunity for me, as instructor, to gauge how the class is doing with course content. Minute papers will be completed and submitted on-the-spot, usually at the end of a class session. Each paper submitted will receive one mark (1% x 10 papers), which means students receive a mark simply for handing it in. I will provide commentary on approximately six papers per submission and incorporate relevant issues into class sessions.

Exercise #1: Animal Profile 15% (due electronically Feb 2nd by 4pm)

This first exercise is intended to explore the lives of animals from the perspective of natural scientists. Specifically, students will use scientific references to collect information on a particular animal, noting its attributes, behaviours, food preferences, geographical range, habitat context, etc. Based on this 'animal profile', students will investigate present or future habitat changes and discuss the (potential) impact on their animal. This is a group exercise; in-class presentations are scheduled for Feb 2 2012.

Exercise #2: Short Story 15% (due electronically Mar 6th by 4pm)

This second assignment is intended to generate empathetic understanding of animals by imagining their everyday lives through humanities-based creative writing. Specifically, students will write a short story based on an individual animal encountered during Weeks 5, 6 and 7. When depicting animal life experiences, students must connect directly with issues raised during class sessions. This is an individual exercise and stories will be posted voluntarily on the course homepage upon completion. An in-class writing workshop (drafts required) is scheduled for Feb 28 2012.

Exercise #3: Food Debate 15% (due electronically Mar 29th by 4pm)

This third assignment is intended to explore the issue of food consumption from a social science perspective. Specifically, students will compile a debate focused on meat- versus plant-based diets, identifying pros and cons for both diets based on social, economic, political, ecological and ethical dimensions. Students must connect directly with issues raised during Weeks 7, 8 and 9 class sessions. Students will also conduct a three-day food journal, detailing their own food consumption habits. This is a group exercise; in-class discussion is scheduled for Mar 27 2012.

Exercise #4: Animals in the News 35% (due electronically Apr 12th by 4pm)

This fourth and final assignment requires students to apply the course's conceptual framework to an animal-related current event. Students will summarize their chosen event and then analyze it in terms of how the animal is characterized (define), the spaces it is included in (place), the ways it interacts with humans (encounter), and the positive and negative implications that result (assess). This is an individual, essay-based exercise; in-class discussion is scheduled for Apr 5 2012.

Late Penalties

Unless an extension is discussed well ahead of the due date, late penalties of 5%/earned grade/day (including weekends) will be assigned. Extensions will only be granted on the basis of valid medical (doctor's note) or personal (note from Counselling Services) reasons. Late assignments will not be accepted once graded assignments have been returned officially to the class at large unless circumstances permit and alternative arrangements have been made.