

Humanities 4: Animals in Human Culture

WILD CHILD: CHILDREN AND ANIMALS

Professor Michael Ziser
Spring 016, CRN: 62906
TuTh 4:40-6:00pm, 2 Wellman Hall

Office Hours: M 4-5pm, W 3-4pm & by appt
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In the modern adult world it is very easy to get through an entire day without encountering the faintest reminder of the existence of the nonhuman world. But take a step inside the average *child's* bedroom and you will find an incredible array of creatures—goldfish and teddy bears, cartoon chipmunks and puppy slippers, elephant noises and monkey business—spilling from every corner. It is almost as if one comes of age precisely by stepping through a filter that strips one of any animal fellow travelers. How did this happen, and what does it mean?

This course will explore how ideas about animals come to be mixed up with ideas about childhood in the modern West, as well as how adulthood comes to be something from which the animal is necessarily absent. We will look carefully at tales of feral children, chimpanzees raised by humans, Teddy Bears[®], Bambi's life on the streets of fin de siècle Vienna, Tarzan, “wire mothers”, neotenic cartoon animals, and Nature Deficit Disorder, among other wild and wonderful things. By the end, we will have a much deeper understanding of what our civilization has told us it means to be animal and human, child and adult.

No prerequisites: all students with an interest in animals, the environment, child development and psychology, anthropology, philosophy, and/or cultural studies are encouraged to enroll and explore.

Objectives and Goals

This course offers a deep investigation of the historical roles that animals have played in human culture from the particular perspective of the discourse of childhood and child development.

Course Format

Lecture, film screenings, and limited in-class discussion.

Course Materials

Karen Joy Fowler, *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves: A Novel* (NY: Putnam's, 2014) ISBN 978-0142180822

Anna Sewell, *Black Beauty*, ed. Kristen Guest (NY: Broadview, 2015) ISBN 978-1554812882

A custom reader with excerpts from novelists, poets, philosophers, historians, cultural critics, psychologists, and natural scientists.

Means of Evaluation

10 short assignments, due throughout the quarter (70-100%); Final exam (30%)

Requirements:

This class is designed to reward steady attention and moderate effort rather than concentrated performance on exams and written projects. If you attend class and keep up with the weekly reflection exercises, it should be fairly easy to get a high grade. By the same token, repeatedly missing class assignments will quickly put you behind in a way that will be difficult or impossible to make up for. Carefully note the requirements below and plan ahead around your other commitments this quarter.

Workload: Expect to spend 50-60 hours on this course, spread evenly over the quarter (~5-6 hrs / wk) and broken down as follows: pre-class reading and preparation: up to 1.5 hrs; in-class lectures and screenings: 2.5 hrs; after-class short assignments: ~1.5 hrs.

Attendance: No attendance will be taken, but assignments will be difficult or impossible to complete without knowing the material covered in class.

Reflection Assignments. Each class meeting there will be a short assignment indicated on the main syllabus and detailed in the weekly reading guide, due by 11:55pm the day after they are assigned. You are responsible for completing **ANY TEN** of these, provided **at least TWO** of them are from Week 6 or later. Your work on these assignments will be graded on a simple 0-3 scale (Complete, satisfactory, on time = 3; Incomplete, deficient or late = 2; Incomplete, deficient, and late = 1; missing = 0). If you do more than 10 assignments, the lowest scores will be dropped.

Final examination (Monday 6 June, 8-10am): **OPTIONAL.** If you have completed your full complement of ten short assignments and/or are satisfied with the grade earned, you **do not** need to sit for the final exam. This is the best and most time-efficient option. If you wish, however, you may take the final exam and substitute the grade you earn for up to three lower short assignment scores. For example, if you have completed 7 reflections (scoring say 67/100) and score 80% on the final exam, your final grade will be $67 + .8(30) = 91\%$. If you completed 10 reflections but scored 1 on two of them and 2 on another ($25/30 = 83.3\%$), then got a 60% on the final exam, your final grade would be calculated by subbing the exam grade for the two lower scores: $(23 + 6(.60)) / 30 = 26.6 / 30 = 88.7\%$. The exam itself will consist of short answer questions and passage identifications. To prepare for the final exam during the quarter, be sure to read all of the assigned texts and to attend all of the lectures.

Grading:

Short Assignments (10 x 10%)	100%	Due Wednesdays and Fridays by 11:55pm
Final Exam (optional)	up to 30%	Monday 6 June, 8-10am

Plagiarism: I have a zero tolerance policy for plagiarism and other forms of cheating. If you are in a time crunch and are tempted to pass off someone else's work as your own out of desperation, don't! It is much better to come talk to me ahead of time to arrange a compromise on the due date. You will incur a small penalty but avoid an F and a referral to Student Judicial Affairs (the minimum penalty for cheating).

Lateness: a standard 1 pt (out of 3) grade penalty (e.g. 3 to 2) for each 24-hour period after the listed due date applies. Exceptions are granted only for serious reasons, and then only when arranged with me at least 12 hours ahead of the due date (late-breaking documented medical emergencies excepted).

NOTE: This syllabus and all other course handouts will be posted on the HUM 4 SmartSite. Important reading links, images, etexts, writing guides, class policies, and FAQs will also be posted there. Make it a habit to check the site on a regular basis.

HUM 4: WILD CHILD—CHILDREN AND ANIMALS

Professor Ziser

Spring 2016

Reading and Lecture Schedule

(S) = pdf available on SmartSite

Week One Introductions

- Tu 3/29 Preparation: none
In-class: Introductions and Course Overview
Reflection: Animal Introduction. Write up a short “autobiography in animals” in which you describe your life to this point through the nonhuman animals that have impacted you in memorable ways. This might include pets, of course, but also vermin (those lice that so embarrassed you, the cockroaches in the kitchen), plush toys, TV characters, and wild animal encounters, etc. Describe them as completely as possible, and include a reflection on what influence they have had on you individually and collectively. Photos welcome! 250 words minimum, uploaded via the Assignments page on SmartSite. Due Wednesday 3/30 by 11:55pm.
- Th 3/31 Preparation: read excerpts from Kellogg and Kellogg, *The Ape and the Child* (S)
In class: film, *Project Nim* (2011, 93min)
Reflection: Pick any one of the characters, human or nonhuman, in *Project Nim* and write the transcript of an imaginary interview with them (2pp double spaced). Try to illuminate something that the documentary overlooks or merely suggests. Upload your response to the Assignments page by Friday 4/1 at 11:55pm.

Week Two: Lost Siblings

- Tu 4/5 Preparation: begin Fowler, *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves* (parts I and II, to p103)
In class: lecture, Adopting Apes
Reflection: browse the images of the early Soviet chimpanzee adoption experiments of N.N. Ladygina-Kohts (http://www.kohts.ru/ladygina-kohts_n.n./ichc/html/apc.html). Choose one or two images or compound images, paste it/them into a Word file, and write a 250-word (min.) response to it or, alternatively, edit the image(s) in some significant way—recontextualize, re-mediate in paint or needlepoint, radically crop and collage, etc. Your critical or creative response should be uploaded to Assignments by Wednesday 4/6 at 11:55pm. Time-intensive responses may qualify for double credit (request and detail with assignment).
- Th 4/7 **NO CLASS MEETING:** Professor Ziser at Funeral
Preparation: continue reading Fowler, *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves* (parts III and IV, to p209)
Reflection: walk or ride your bike out to the [UC Davis Primate Center](http://localwiki.org/davis/California_National_Primate_Research_Center) (outside source at http://localwiki.org/davis/California_National_Primate_Research_Center) or as near as you can get (entrance at Hutchison and Rd 98). Reflect on the building, its location on a college campus, and its purpose. If you were going to stage a performance of some kind—words, photos, visual arts, songs, or dance—near the Center, what would it be? This might be a ritual, an attempt at communication, a protest, or a counterprotest... Write up your plan and its goals and upload to Assignments by Friday 4/8 at 11:55pm.

Week Three: Reports from the Lab

- Tu 4/12 Preparation: finish *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves* (Parts V and VI, to p308)
In class: lecture: Ethology and Child Psychology
Reflection: On any online bookseller or other platform that permits online reviews (Amazon, Barnes and Noble, Powell's, Goodreads, etc.), submit a book review of *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves* (250 words min.) You can do this straight, or you can pretend to be writing the review from the perspective from one of the semi-historical characters mentioned in the book. Upload a working link to your review to Assignments by Wednesday 4/13 at 11:55pm.
- Th 4/14 Preparation: read Franz Kafka, "Report to an Academy" (S)
In class: film, *Human Nature* (2002, 96 min)
Reflection: *Human Nature* makes a number of implicit claims about the motivations behind the training of animals and children to suppress their innate desires. What are these claims, in your own words? And to what extent do you agree with them? Your 250-word response should be uploaded by Friday 4/15 at 11:55pm.

Week Four: Feral Children

- Tu 4/19 Preparation: read Shattuck, "Prisoner Without a Crime," from *The Forbidden Experiment* (NY: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1980) 5-40.
In class: lecture: The History and Meaning of Feral Children
Reflection: On SmartSite is a set of lists of wild children taken from Adriana Benzaquén's book *Encounters with Wild Children*. Choose one wild child and produce a verbal or visual portrait of him/her/it. You can base your portrait on information you find online or in the library, or you may allow your imagination some free rein. 250 words min. by Wed 4/20 at 11:55pm.
- Th 4/21 Preparation: read Edgar Rice Burroughs, "Tarzan's First Love" (S)
In class: film, Truffaut, *The Wild Child* (1970; 85min)
Reflection: *The Wild Child* has often been called Truffaut's most personal film, as he wrote, directed, and starred in it. Speculate about what a filmmaker in particular might find in this subject matter that speaks directly to questions about his artistic project and his chosen medium. You can do this purely as a thought experiment, but if you want to you might look into Truffaut's biography to some degree. 250 words min. by Fri 4/22 at 11:55pm.

Week Five: Model Savages

- Tu 4/26 Preparation: read R. Kipling, "Mowgli's Brothers" and "Tiger, Tiger!" (S)
In class: lecture: Childish and Bestial Races
Reflection: Kipling was born in Bombay and in many ways embodied the perspective of the English imperial administrative class, including its sense of racial and civilizational superiority to nonwhite peoples. Read George Orwell's mixed [assessment of Kipling](http://orwell.ru/library/reviews/kipling/english/e_rkip) (http://orwell.ru/library/reviews/kipling/english/e_rkip) and write about the reasons that we might want to distance ourselves from his worldview. How strong is the case against Kipling? Do you see particularly strong evidence or counterevidence? 250 words min., due Wed 4/27 at 11:55pm.
- Th 4/28 Preparation: read Kipling, "Kaa's Hunting" (S)
Read Kipling, "The Cat that Walked by Himself" (S)
In class: film, *The Jungle Book* (78min)
Reflection: Kipling's "Just So Stories," like "The Cat that Walked by Himself," are playful riffs on evolutionary explanations that were becoming prevalent in late Victorian England and the US. With Kipling's tale in mind, read Stephen Jay Gould's short essay "The Panda's Thumb" (S). What do these very different kinds of pieces have in common? Does Kipling's amusing tale contain any insight into selection as described by Gould (following Darwin)?

[Reflections for Week 6 and late will be posted by Week 5 of the quarter.]

Week Six: Squee! Nurturing Cuteness

- Tu 5/3 Preparation: read Lawrence, "Neoteny in American Perceptions of Animals" (S)
read Gould, "Homage to Mickey Mouse" (S)
read Kingsley, from *Water-Babies* (S)
In Class: lecture, Cuteness, Human and Animal
- Th 5/5 Preparation: read Daniel Harris, "Cuteness" and "Baby Talk" (S)
read Christine Yano, from "Kitty Backlash," from *Pink Globalization* (S)
In Class: film, *Milo and Otis* (90 min)

Week Seven: Moralizing with Pets

- Tu 5/10 Preparation: read from Grier, *Pets in America* (S)
read Sivils, "Juvenile Environmental Literature" (S)
In Class: lecture, The Biological and Cultural History of Pets;
Short film, "Evolution in Action: The Silver Fox Experiments" (Belyaev)
- Th 5/12 Preparation: read Yi-Fu Tuan, from *The Making of Pets: Domination and Affection* (S)
read Ascione, from *Children and Animals* (S)
In Class: film, *Lassie Come Home* (1943, 89 min)

Week Eight: The Animal's-Eye View

- 5/17 Preparation: read Anna Sewell, *Black Beauty*, Part I (to p100)
read von Uexküll, from *A Stroll the Worlds of Animals and Men* (S)
In class: lecture, Representing Animal Worlds
- 5/19 Preparation: read Sewell, *Black Beauty*, part II (to p132)
read Nelles, "Beyond the Bird's Eye"
In class: film, *Watership Down* (1978, 101 min)

Week Nine: Animal Cruelty and Child Welfare

- Tu 5/24 Preparation: read Anna Sewell, *Black Beauty*, part III (to p181)
read Pearson, from *Rights of the Defenseless* (S)
In class: lecture, Human and Animal Rights
- Th 5/26 Preparation: read Sewell, *Black Beauty*, part IV (to end, p193)
read J. B. Watson, "The Dangers of Too Much Mother Love" (S)
read Blum, "Untouched by Human Hands," "Chains of Love," "The Perfect Mother" (S)
In class: film, *The Black Stallion* (1979, 118 min)

Week Ten: Graduating into Humanism

- Tu 5/31 Preparation: read Gail Melson, from *Why the Wild Things Are* (S)
In class: film, *Babe* (1995, 91 min)
- Th 6/2 Preparation: read Haraway, from *When Species Meet* (S)
In class: lecture, Conclusion: Animal Companionship and the Preservation of Youth

Final Exam (OPTIONAL): 8-10am, Monday 6 June in 2 Wellman Hall