
WGS 298: Critical Issues

Critical Animal Studies

Instructor: Chloë Taylor, Associate Professor of Women's and Gender Studies

Contact: chloe3@ualberta.ca

Office and office hours: Assiniboia Hall 3-71 by appointment

Class time and location: Tuesday and Thursday, 9:30-10:50 in: Tory 1-5

Course Description

This course will introduce students to the new and rapidly growing field of critical animal studies. Critical animal studies is *critical* in the sense that it challenges accepted attitudes and practices towards its subject matter; thus, in this course we will ask challenging questions about commonly held views concerning animals and human-animal relations, as these play out in the domains of science, food, and the pet industry. In later weeks we will consider ways in which critical animal studies intersects with other areas of critical theory such as feminist, queer, disability, anti-racism, and decolonial studies. We will ask questions such as How are loving animals and eating animals caught up with constructs of gender? How does science construct “queer” animals and “gender” in nature? How do ableism and racism play into animal activist movements, and how might animal liberation, disability liberation, anti-racist and decolonial movements be allied? What does the future look like for animals and human-animal relations, and are these futures that we should strive for or resist?

Textbooks (available in the university bookstore)

- Margo DeMello, *Animals and Society: An Introduction to Human-Animal Studies* (*this book is also available on-line through the University of Alberta library*)
- Sunaura Taylor, *Beasts of Burden: Animal and Disability Liberation*
- J. M. Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals*
- J. M. Coetzee, *Disgrace*

All other required readings will be available on e-class

Assignments

- Reading Reflections and Attendance: 25%
- Mid-term take-home exam: 25%
- Final take-home exam: 50%

Reading Reflections and Attendance: 25%

Every class as of Thursday, September 6 you should hand in a 1-page reflection on the reading or readings for that class. Reflections must be submitted in person and not by email or via a friend or classmate. Reflections should be typed, double spaced, 12 point font, with 1 inch margins. These reflections should demonstrate that you have completed the reading, readings and/or film viewing for the class in advance and have reflected on them. Did you like the materials? Why or why not? Do you agree or disagree with the arguments in the articles? Why do you dis/agree? Can you think of other examples of these arguments? Submission of the reading reflections will be a way for me to track attendance and that you have completed the readings before class. For this reason, and because each reflection is worth only 1% of your grade and you may miss several and still earn an A in the class, reflections may only be submitted on the day that we discuss the reading or readings in class and are not eligible for “flex days” (see below) or extensions.

Mid-term take-home exam: 25%

The mid-term take-home exam will include 3 short answer questions (worth 5% each) and 1 longer answer question (worth 10%), for a total of 25%. Short answer questions will examine student comprehension of central concepts from lectures and readings. Your answers to the short answer questions should be about 1 page long each. The longer answer question provides students with the opportunity to make connections between the readings and to consider recurring themes. Your answer to the longer answer question should be about 2 pages long. Group work is not allowed for take-home exams. You will have to answer all of the exam questions. The total length of the exam should be approximately 5 pages long, double-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font with normal, 1 inch margins. The exam questions will be distributed on October 4 and the exam will be due on October 18 at the start of class.

Final take-home exam: 50%

The final take-home exam will be cumulative, with a focus on material covered after the mid-term. It will include 4 short answer questions (worth 5% each) and 3 longer answer questions (worth 10% each), for a total of 50%. Short answer questions will examine student comprehension of central concepts from lectures and readings. Your answers to the short answer questions should be about 1 page long each. The longer answer questions will provide students with the opportunity to make connections between the readings and to consider recurring themes. Your answers to the longer answer questions should be about 2 pages long each. Group work is not allowed for take-home exams. You will have to answer all of the exam questions. The total length of the exam should be approximately 10 pages long, double-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font with normal, 1 inch margins. The exam questions will be distributed on December 6 and the exam will be due at a date during the final exam period.

Assignment Deadlines and “Flex Days”

Each student has 5 “flex days” which they may use for the mid-term and final take-home exams *but not for the reading reflections or attendance*. That is, you can use your flex days to turn either one of these assignments in 5 days late, or you may opt to distribute your flex days between the 2 eligible assignments. For example, you might turn your mid-term in 2 days after the official deadline and reserve your remaining 3 flex days for the final exam, with no penalty. Flex days include days that we don’t meet and weekends—so, if you need to submit an assignment on a weekend or a day that we don’t meet, email it to me (and that is when it will be considered submitted) and then bring me a hard copy the next time we meet or slide it under my office door if it is after classes are over. You do not need to notify me about when you will be using your flex days or how many you have used; I will keep track.

Classroom Etiquette

When in class you should practice active and respectful listening to the other members of your class, and not engage in distracting activities such as whispering, passing notes, emailing, texting, surfing the Internet, being on Facebook or tweeting about the class (or anything else) while your classmates or instructor are speaking. You should come to class prepared to focus on the class.

Grading Scale

Description	Letter	Percentage	Grade Point
Excellent	A+	94-100	4.0
	A	88-93	4.0
	A-	82-87	3.7
Good	B+	78-81	3.3
	B	74-77	3.0
	B-	70-73	2.7
Satisfactory	C+	66-69	2.3
	C	62-65	2.0
	C-	58-61	1.7
Poor	D+	54-57	1.3
Minimal Pass	D	50-53	1.0
Fail	F	0-49	0

Academic Honesty

The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Codes of Student Behaviour and avoid any behaviour that could potentially result in any suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.

The "Don't Cheatsheet " is available on the University Governance website at: <http://www.governance.ualberta.ca/>. From the drop down menu click on *Student Appeals* and navigate to the Don't Cheatsheet.

Writing help is available through the:

- Student Success Centre: <http://www.studentsuccess.ualberta.ca/>
- Centre for Writers: <http://www.c4w.arts.ualberta.ca/>

Please do not hesitate approach me with any questions you may have regarding appropriate academic behaviour.

Policy on Recording Lectures

Audio or visual recording of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as part of an approved accommodation plan. Recorded material is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior consent from the content authors.

Policy about course outlines can be found in the **Evaluation Procedures and Grading System** section of the **University calendar**.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

Introduction to the course

Tuesday, September 4: Overview of the course; Margo DeMello, “Human-Animal Studies,” Chapter 1 of *Animals and Society*

Thursday, September 6: Margo DeMello, “Animal-Human Borders,” Chapter 2 of *Animals and Society*

What are animals?

Tuesday, September 11: Margo DeMello, “The Social Construction of Animals,” Chapter 3 of *Animals and Society*

Thursday, September 13: J. M. Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals*

Animal emotions and being emotional about animals

Tuesday, September 18: Marc Bekoff, “The Case for Animal Emotions and Why They Matter,” Chapter One of *The Emotional Lives of Animals: A Leading Scientist Explores Animal Joy, Sorrow, and Sympathy—and Why They Matter*

Thursday, September 20: Brian Luke, “Taming Ourselves or Going Feral? Toward a Nonpatriarchal Metaethic of Animal Liberation,” Chapter 12 of *Animals & Women*; in class screening of Melanie Joy, “Carnism: The Psychology of Eating Meat”—if you miss class, watch it at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7vWbV9FPo_Q

Gender and Animal Activism

Tuesday, September 25: Josephine Donovan, “Animal Rights and Feminist Theory”; in class screening of *I Am an Animal* documentary—if you miss class, watch it at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ma18ZXWotB4>

Thursday, September 27: Jason Wyckoff, “Linking Sexism and Speciesism”

Animals, Gender, and Sexuality

Tuesday, October 2: Vasile Stanescu, “*The Whopper Virgins: Hamburgers, Gender, and Xenophobia in Burger King’s Hamburger Advertising*”

Thursday, October 4: Jennifer Terry, “‘Unnatural Acts’ in Nature: The Scientific Fascination with Queer Animals”; **Mid-term questions distributed**

Disability and Animals

Tuesday, October 9: Sunaura Taylor, *Beasts of Burden*, Prologue and Part One

Thursday, October 11: Sunaura Taylor, *Beasts of Burden*, Part Two

Being Animals

Tuesday, October 16: Sunaura Taylor, *Beasts of Burden*, Part Three

Thursday, October 18: Sunaura Taylor, *Beasts of Burden*, Part Four; **Mid-term exams due**

Interdependent Animals and the Politics of Pets

Tuesday, October 23: Sunaura Taylor, *Beasts of Burden*, Part Five

Thursday, October 25: Margo DeMello, “The Pet Animal,” Chapter 8 of *Animals and Society*

Animals and Science

Tuesday, October 30: Donna Haraway, “Primateology is Politics by Other Means” (guest lecture by Esther Rosario)

Thursday, November 1: Margo DeMello, “Animals in Science,” Chapter 9 of *Animals and Society* (guest lecture by Esther Rosario)

Loving Animals

Tuesday, November 6: Kathy Rudy, "LGBTQ...Z?"

Thursday, November 8: Vasile Stanescu, "Why 'Loving' Animals is Not Enough: A Response to Kathy Rudy, Locavorism, and the Marketing of 'Humane' Meat"



November 12-16: Fall Semester READING WEEK—NO CLASSES



Race and Animals

Tuesday, November 20: Margo DeMello, "Human Oppression and Animal Suffering," Chapter 13 of *Animals and Society*

Thursday, November 22: J. M. Coetzee, *Disgrace*

Animals and Colonization

Tuesday, November 27: Billy-Ray Belcourt, "Animal Bodies, Colonial Subjects" & Margaret Robinson, "Animal Personhood in Mi'kmaq Perspective"

Thursday, November 29: Greta Gaard, "Tools for a Cross-Cultural Feminist Ethics: Exploring Ecological Contexts and Contents in the Makah Whale Hunt"

The Future of Animals

Tuesday, December 4: Elizabeth Kolbert, "The Sixth Extinction," Chapter One of *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History*

Thursday, December 6: Watch *Okja* on Netflix; **Final exam questions distributed**