Special topics:
A history of animals in the atlantic world

History 497, section 001
Spring Semester 2011
Monday, 6:30-9:10 PM
Burkhardt Building 106
Abel Alves
Burkhardt Building 216
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Office Hours: Monday, 5:00-6:30; also by appointment

Prospectus

The anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss once wrote that animals are not only “good to eat,” they are “good to think.” Throughout the course of human history, people have interacted with other animals, not only using them for food, clothing, labor and entertainment, but also associating with them as pets and companions, and even appreciating their behaviors intrinsically. Nonhuman animals have been our symbols and models, and they have even channeled the sacred for us. This course will explore the interaction of humans with other animals in the context of the Atlantic World from prehistoric times to the present. Our case studies will include an exploration of our early hominid heritage as prey as well as predators; our domestication of other animals to fit our cultural needs; how nonhuman animals were used and sometimes respected in early agrarian empires like those of Rome and the Aztecs; how Native American, African and Christian religious traditions have wrestled with the concept of the “animal”; the impact of the Enlightenment and Darwinian thought; and the contemporary mechanization of life and call for animal rights. Throughout the semester, we will be giving other animals “voice,” even as Aristotle in The Politics said they possessed the ability to communicate. We will also explore who we are as a unique species and what we share with other animals.

Grading
Grading will be based on a take-home exam (25%); your own evidence-based and substantiated definition of “animal” (10%); a book review (15%) of one of the assigned or optional readings; a critical analysis of a work of art found online or at the Ball State University Museum of Art (10%); and a final research paper (7-10 pages) or group project (30%). The final paper or project will also be presented to the entire class as part of your grade (5%). Attendance and discussion will determine the final portion (5%) of your grade. The book review and art critique should be in the vicinity of some 750 words.

For the final paper or project, please select something that is both manageable in scope and of interest to you. If you choose to work as an individual, you might consider focused engagement with one primary source: e.g., a detailed analysis of the writings of Montaigne on animals; an analysis of anthropomorphism and zoomorphism in the Florentine Codex; what the RSPCA stands for today through a reading of their website; the life of Anna Sewell in relation to Black Beauty; an overview of how Peter Singer, James Serpell and Linda Kalof compare in their approaches to the history of human association with other animals; or how a modern ethologist (Cynthia Moss or Jane Goodall) describes animal behavior. Try to build on something that you have read in class or already know a little about from other classes. If you choose to join a group, you might consider continuing work on an electronic exhibit and catalogue of Ball State University Museum of Art works that portray nonhuman animals. There are other potential group projects: e.g., the meaning of humane husbandry in contemporary agriculture or student pet-keeping explored through interviews. A very useful background overview to any of these topics regarding human association with other animals is: James Serpell, In the Company of Animals: A Study of Human-Animal Relationships (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

If you face any physical challenges that might interfere with your success in this course, please do not hesitate to tell me. Aside from what I can do to accommodate your needs, assistance often can be provided by the Office of Disabled Student Development (SC 116/285-5293) and the Learning Center (NQ 323/285-1006).

books

**Required:**

**Optional (choose one):**

Useful websites
Syllabus

Week I (January 10): Humans and Other Animals: Competition, Cooperation and Coevolution
Required Reading: None

Recommended:

Monday, January 17: NO CLASS in honor of Martin Luther King Day.

Week II (January 24): Human Agrarian Empires: the Mediterranean World
Recommended:


Week III (January 31): Human Agrarian Empires: the Americas and Africa

Required Reading: *The Florentine Codex*. Vol. 11: *Earthly Things*.

**DEFINITION OF “ANIMAL” DUE.**

Recommended:


Week IV (February 7): Nonhuman Animals and the Christian Mosaic

Required Reading: Kalof, 40-96.

Recommended:


Week V (February 14): Montaigne vs. Descartes, a French Duel

Recommended:

Week VI (February 21): The Spanish Empire
Required Reading: *The Animals of Spain* handout.
TAKE-HOME EXAM DUE.

Recommended:

Week VII (February 28): Colonial British America
Required Reading: De John Anderson, *Creatures of Empire*.

Recommended:

March 6-March 13: SPRING BREAK

Week VIII (March 14): Enlightenment Impact, from La Mettrie to Bentham

**ART ANALYSIS DUE.**

**Recommended:**

**Week IX (March 21): The Darwinian and Humane Revolutions**


**Recommended:**

**Week X (March 28): Susie the Gorilla: Early 20th-Century Zoos, Gender, Science and Popular Culture**

**Required Reading:** Susie the Gorilla handout
  Discussion led by Katherine Craig, M.A. Candidate, Department of History, Ball State University

**Recommended:**

Week XI (April 4): Animal Welfare, Animal Rights and Transhumanism
Required Reading: David DeGrazia, *Animal Rights.*
BOOK REVIEW DUE.
Recommended:

Week XII (April 11): Anthropomorphism and Zoomorphism in Fiction
Required Reading: Select a recommended work of fiction.
Recommended:

Week XIII (April 18): MOVIE
Recommended:

Week XIV (April 25): Presentations

Final Exam Period (May 2, 7-9 PM): Presentations

RESEARCH PROJECT DUE.

![Kitchen Still Life with a Scene of the Supper at Emmaus Beyond, 1551–1553. Pieter Aertsen and Studio. Netherlandish. Courtesy of the Ball State University Museum of Art.](image-url)