

## ENGLISH 607.42: THE HUMAN AND ITS OTHERS: THE QUESTION OF THE ANIMAL

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### Course Description:

Over about the past fifteen to twenty years there has been an outpouring of scholarship devoted to the subject of the Other. Yet so far scant critical or theoretical attention has been turned to questions of the animal Other. Animals figure prominently in an extraordinarily wide range of texts and genres: oral stories both aboriginal and non-aboriginal, myths, natural history, spiritual literature, philosophy, yoga manuals (e.g. downward-facing dog etc.), hunting and sporting narratives, explorers' journals, biology textbooks, first-person adventure narratives, field guides, jokes, children's books, cookbooks, didactic materials, fiction, poetry and creative nonfiction. They are also represented in other kinds of cultural 'texts' such as nature documentaries, movies, videos, animation, zoos, circuses, rodeos, pet competitions, art exhibits including performance art, and cartoons, to list just a few. Animals, wrote Claude Levi-Strauss, are good to think with.

In this seminar we will begin to think with animals first and foremost by considering them in their Otherness. Beginning with a brief investigation into poststructuralist, postmodern, postcolonial, feminist, and ecocritical interrogations of Otherness and the ethics of representation, we will examine the humanist bias and the blind spots regarding the animal in existing theories of the Other. Then we will interrogate theorizations of the animal in relation to the question of language. One of the traditional demarcations between humans and other animals has been the notion that humans are the only ones capable of language and that this trait sets us above other species. Research in zoosemiotics and the long-term studies of naturalists, however, challenge this proprietorial exclusivity, and deep ecologists like Christopher Manes question why we privilege language over photosynthesis or sporogenesis. Thinkers such as James Hatley, Val Plumwood and Jacques Derrida propose that edibility be factored into concepts of subjectivity, including, in Hatley's words, "the uncanny goodness of being edible to bears." Emmanuel Levinas proposes the face as the basis for an ethics of self and Other, but the faces of animals (except pets) are widely believed to be the faces of species, not individuals. In summary, we will examine questions of subjectivity, the gaze and the face, constructions of the animal Other in nature photography, communication between humans and other mammals, the question of emotion as it pertains to animals other than humans, problems of anthropomorphism and anti-anthropomorphism, problems of realism in relation to representing the animal Other, captive and/or domestic vs. wild animals, ethics and etiquette in human/non-human relationships, postmodern animals, inter-species collaborations (e.g. musicians and birds), conservation rhetoric and the difficulty of representing creatures who do not create documents and whose languages we do not comprehend, how theorizing the animal Other alters our sense of ourselves and our own species, and other topics.

**Required Texts:**

**Theory:**

Linda Kalof and Amy Fitzgerald, eds., *The Animals Reader*  
Adrian Franklin, *Animal Nation: The True Story of Animals and Australia*, 2006

**Poetry:**

Méira Cook, ed., *The Poetry of Don McKay*  
Philip Kevin Paul, *Taking the Names Down from the Hill*

**Nonfiction:**

Sharon Butala, *The Perfection of the Morning: An Apprenticeship in Nature*  
Karsten Heuer, *Being Caribou: Five Months on Foot with an Arctic Herd*  
Sandra Steingraber, *Having Faith: An Ecologist's Journey to Motherhood*

**Photography / Nonfiction:**

Charlie Russell and Maureen Enns, *Grizzly Seasons: Life with the Brown Bears of Kamchatka*

**Oral Storytelling:**

Harry Robinson, *Write It on Your Heart: The Epic World of an Okanagan Storyteller*

**Fiction:**

Ralph Lutts, ed., *The Wild Animal Story*  
Marian Engel, *Bear*  
Alissa York, *Effigy*  
Barbara Gowdy, *The White Bone*

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**Assignment Portfolio:**

Short Essay (6 - 8 pp.):	20% (due week 8)
Oral Seminar Presentation:	30%
Essay (16 - 20 pp.):	40% (due in class, last class of term)
Class Participation:	10%
TOTAL	100%

EXAM: There will be no final examination in this course; what counts is your thorough preparedness for class (having completed the required readings and thought about them), participation and engagement throughout the entire course.

Students must **COMPLETE** and submit **ALL** of the assignments for the course in order to be eligible for a passing grade. Graduate students must **PASS** every assignment in order to be eligible for a final passing grade for the course.

TEXTS AND TOPICS: In each of the two essays and the oral presentation, students will explore a different text and preferably a different topic.

The short essay may focus on one of the literary texts, or students may prefer to explore a specific theoretical question pertaining to the course – such as one arising from the course description or topics or issues which arise from class discussion.

**RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS:** Each seminar presentation will be 30 - 40 minutes in length. Following the formal presentation, each presenter will also be responsible for leading and responding to discussion, commentary and questions for an additional 30 minutes. The presentation grade is based on both components, not just the formal portion. It will be expected that students will collaborate with one another to stimulate and propel discussion each class.

You must **sign up** for your oral seminar presentation. No changes to your selection can be accommodated after that date so please check your calendar for all of your courses, work and personal life before committing yourself to a particular date. If you fail to present to the class, you will receive a grade of 0 for that assignment and fail the course. There will be no alternate or makeup assignments to substitute for anyone missing, skipping or being late for their own oral seminar presentation. There can be no rescheduling of seminars without throwing everyone in the course into chaos.

In the event that two or more people wish to present on the same book, each person will be asked to speak to the class for a minute or two as to why they should be the one to present on that book, and then the whole class will vote.

**WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS:** All written assignments for the course are to be typed, double-spaced with one inch margins on all four sides of the paper. Typed assignments must be in 12-point readable font (e.g. Times Roman). Improperly formatted assignments will be returned unassessed for proper formatting, and a late penalty will accrue until the proper format has been implemented and the assignment received by the instructor. Fudging the margins or using a larger or smaller font to attempt to disguise problems with length is unprofessional (and noticed instantly).

**Submission of written assignments:** Assignments are due in class on their respective due dates. Electronic submissions will not be accepted, nor will the instructor print out at her own or the Department's expense students' e-submissions.

**Late penalties:** Late penalties will be deducted for late written assignments. One mark (1%) will be deducted per day late.

**PLAGIARISM:** See the attached handout on plagiarism. Plagiarism is documented, reported to administration and disciplined. It is each student's individual responsibility to understand fully the nature of plagiarism. If you have either general or specific questions about it, please do not hesitate to ask me either in class or during my scheduled office hours.

## Grade Equivalencies:

A+	4.0	90-100%
A	4.0	84-89
A-	3.7	80-83
B+	3.3	77-79
B	3.0	74-76
B-	2.7	70-73
C+	2.3	67-69
C	2.0	64-66
C-	1.7	60-63
D+	1.3	57-59
D	1.0	50-56
F	0	0-49

## SUPPLEMENTARY AND RESEARCH SOURCES:

**Animal Studies Bibliography:** <http://ecoculturalgroup.msu.edu/bibliography.htm>

This is an extensive and wonderful bibliography.

Canadian literary texts about animals are far too numerous to list. I will simply list a few here which address concerns similar to those we will be addressing in class.

Stuart Houston, Tim Ball, and Mary Houston, *Eighteenth-Century Naturalists of Hudson Bay*

Grey Owl, *Men of the Last Frontier* and others of his books

Andy Russell, *Adventures with Wild Animals*

—, *Grizzly Country*

Farley Mowat, *Never Cry Wolf* and most of his other books

Charlie Russell and Maureen Enns, *Grizzly Heart: Living Without Fear Among the Brown Bears of Kamchatka*

Yann Martel, *The Life of Pi*

Patricia Van Tighem, *The Bear's Embrace: A True Story of Surviving a Grizzly Bear Attack*

Alexandra Morton, *Listening to Whales*

Brian Payton, *Shadow of the Bear: Travels in Vanishing Wilderness*

Terry Glavin, *Waiting for the McCaws and Other Stories from the Age of Extinctions*

Fred Bodsworth, *Last of the Curlews*

Douglas Glover, *Elle*

Serge Bouchard, ed., *Caribou Hunter*

Gail Anderson-Dargatz, *The Cure for Death by Lightning*

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND CLASSES

**Week 1: Introduction to the course, texts and one another**  
**The Animals in This Country**  
**Do Animals Have a History?**

Clip from video documentary *The War Against the Indians*, dir. Harry Rasky, specifically the first 20 - 25 minutes of the film in which native people from various First Nations groups in North America (Cree, Hopi, Haida) speak about the natural world, human-animal relations, communicating with animals, origins in the animal world, etc.

Margaret Atwood, "The Animals in This Country" (poem, photocopy handout)

Lecture based on the following readings from *The Animals Reader*: Aristotle, "The History of Animals"

Marjorie Spiegel, "In Defense of Slavery"

René Descartes, "From the Letters of 1646 and 1649"

Harriet Ritvo, "Animal Planet"

Students sign up for oral presentations on assigned texts. Presentations begin week 4.

Students arrange car-pooling to the Banff Centre for Monday, Sept. 17<sup>th</sup>, if they wish.

**Week 2: Please NOTE:** Class for this week will be to attend the lecture and book launch of Alan Weisman's *The World Without Us*, Banff Centre, Rolston Recital Hall, Monday, September 17<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 p.m. Tickets are \$10 and available from Ticket Master or the Banff Centre's Box Office. You can call to reserve a ticket, which will be held for you at the Box Office the night of the talk.

Rationale: Because the title of this course is "The Human and Its Others: The Question of the Animal" and Weisman's book is about the world WITHOUT humans, attending his talk presents a unique opportunity to envision such a scenario. His book has only just been published; therefore I have not assigned it as a text, nor do you have to read it. But I urge you to attend this talk. [Suggestion: Plan to go to Banff in the early afternoon and take a hike on one of the mountain trails prior to the talk.]

THERE WILL BE NO CLASS THEREFORE on Thursday, Sept. 20<sup>th</sup>. You do not need to buy Weisman's book (though you can, of course).

**Week 3:** Instructor presenting a paper at a U of Manitoba conference and giving several readings at the Thin Air Writers' Festival in Winnipeg. One of the following weeks we have a make up class.

- Week 4:** **Colonial / Postcolonial Animals; Nation, Narration, and Nationality; Concepts of Native/non-Native; Australian Animals**  
Adrian Franklin, *Animal Nation: The True Story of Animals and Australia*
- Week 5:** **The Realistic Wild Animal Story**  
Ralph Lutts, ed., *The Wild Animal Story*: Lutts 1;  
Roberts 25, 31; Seton 45, 48, 59;  
Burroughs 129; Roosevelt 192; Seton 153; Roberts 182;  
Atwood 215; Dunlap 237;  
  
*The Animals Reader*: Marc Bekoff, “Wild Justice and Fair Play: Cooperation, Forgiveness, and Morality in Animals”
- Week 6:** **Ab-original Animals**  
**The Animals of Orality; Indigenous Animals**  
  
*The Animals Reader*: Steven Mithen, “The Hunter-Gatherer Prehistory of Human-Animal Interactions”  
  
Harry Robinson, *Write It on Your Heart: The Epic World of an Okanagan Storyteller*
- Week 7:** **Working Animals and Dream Coyotes; Wild and Domesticated Animals; The Novice in Nature**  
  
**Video and excerpt from DVD about Butala and her connections to the prairie.**  
  
Sharon Butala, *The Perfection of the Morning: An Apprenticeship in Nature*
- Week 8:** **Looking at Animals:**  
**Problems of Representation I: The Gaze, the Zoo, the Photograph, the Documentary Film**  
**Problems of Representation II: Representing Endangered Species**  
  
*The Animals Reader*: John Berger, “Why Look at Animals”  
Randy Malamud, “Zoo Spectatorship”  
Steve Baker, “What is the Postmodern Animal?”  
  
Charlie Russell and Maureen Enns, *Grizzly Seasons: Life with the Brown Bears of Kamchatka*  
Documentary video: *Walking with Grizzlies: A Story about Maureen Enns and Charlie Russell Living with Grizzlies in Kamchatka* (52 minutes)
- Week 9:** **Listening to Animals: Birds, Birdsong, Why Do Birds Sing?**  
Méira Cook, ed., *The Poetry of Don McKay*

**Animals, Aboriginality and Healing;**  
**Poetry Animals**  
**O Canada, Our Home on Native Land: Decolonizing**  
Philip Kevin Paul, *Taking the Names Down from the Hill*

**Week 10: Touching Animals: Pets**  
**The Desire to Touch Animals: Interspecies Relationships**  
**Women and/as Animals I;**  
**The Edible Woman**

Marian Engel, *Bear*

*The Animals Reader*: Carol J. Adams, “The Sexual Politics of Meat”  
Yi-Fu Tuan, “Animal Pets: Cruelty and Affection”

Supplementary: Val Plumwood, “Human Vulnerability and the Experience of Being Prey” –  
<http://www.aislingmagazine.com/aislingmagazine/articles/TAM30/ValPlumwood.html>

**Week 11: Becoming Animal**  
**Apprenticing Oneself to an Animal**  
**Adventures with Wild Animals**  
*The Animals Reader*: Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, “Becoming-Animal”

Karsten Heuer, *Being Caribou: Five Months on Foot with an Arctic Herd*

Watch video: *Being Caribou*, dir. Leanne Allison (72 minutes)

**Week 12: Shooting Animals; Hunting, Taxidermy and the Realist Illusion; Preserving vs. Conserving Animals; Women and Animals II**

Alissa York, *Effigy*

*The Animals Reader*: Matt Cartmill, “Hunting and Humanity in Western Thought”

Supplementary: Lynda Birke, “Into the Laboratory”

*Representing Animals*: Jane Desmond, “Displaying Death, Animating Life: Changing Fictions of ‘Liveness’ from Taxidermy to Animatronics”

**Week 13: Mourning and Melancholia: Representing Threatened Species Speaking for Other Animals**

*The Animals Reader*: Pliny the Elder, “Combats of Elephants”

Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson and Susan McCarthy, “Grief, Sadness, and the Bones of Elephants”

Barbara Gowdy, *The White Bone*

**Week 14: The Human Animal**

Sandra Steingraber, *Having Faith: An Ecologist's Journey to Motherhood*