

Research Seminar: Animals in Literature and Theory

Fall 2012 English 190 MW 4-5:30 222 Wheeler

Justin Eichenlaub
443 Wheeler Hall
Office hours: M&W 12-1p.m. and by appointment.
jeichenlaub@berkeley.edu

In this course we will engage ‘the question of the animal’ through several novels, Continental philosophy, literary theory, traditional and new media film, new architectures, a radio show, painting and a comic book. We will study the major trends in the burgeoning field of animal studies, with a particular focus on the philosophical and theoretical work on animals of Donna Harraway, Martin Heidegger, Emanuel Levinas, Jacques Derrida, and Cora Diamond. These thinkers’ accounts of animals and our relationships with them will be refracted through numerous artistic and literary works, with a particular emphasis on prose fiction.

At the center of this class is J.M. Coetzee’s *The Lives of Animals*, vital to this course because it instigates a host of fundamental questions about the relationship between literary form, (anti-)philosophical thinking, and how we understand animals.

‘Animal studies’ is by no means a settled field of study. It is an interdisciplinary field still very much in flux, a fact that adds both to the excitement and the challenge of our work in the seminar. This is an ambitious course—in class, in assignments, and in your seminar paper, close attention will and should be paid to thinking about animals, animality, and humanity on a number of levels at once—aesthetic, political, ethical, and philosophic. Going beyond just establishing genealogies of thought and representation, our gambit will be to keep all of these levels of inquiry active and arrive at new syntheses of thought drawing upon our unique arrangement of texts and our own backgrounds in humanistic study.

Required texts

<i>The Lives of Animals</i>	J.M. Coetzee	ISBN-10: 069107089X
<i>The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida</i>	Matthew Calarco	ISBN-10: 0231140231
<i>When the Killing’s Done</i>	T.C. Boyle	ISBN-10: 0670022322
<i>The Island of Dr. Moreau</i>	H.G. Wells	ISBN-10: 014144102X
<i>How the Dead Dream</i>	Lydia Millet	ISBN-10: 0156035464
<i>The Companion Species Manifesto</i>	Donna Harraway	ISBN-10: 0971757585
<i>Philosophy and Animal Life</i>	Cavell <i>et. al.</i>	ISBN-10: 0231145152
<i>Eating Animals</i>	Jonathan Safran Foer	ISBN-10: 0316069884

Reading assignments marked with an (*) are available on bspace as pdfs or will be distributed in class.

Assignments

- **Class discussion will be the centerpiece of our seminar, requiring a careful reading of all materials prior to class.** Bring all readings to class with you—both books and online PDFs as printouts. (25% of your grade)
- **Two short but important ‘thought’ papers of 3-5 pages** synthesizing *your thoughts and original reflections* (not just descriptions or summaries) on the readings we’ve done in class (see syllabus for due dates and particular texts to focus on for each paper). You may use these short papers as the germ for your final paper but you need not do so. (25% of your grade)
- **Presentation on a film with a small group on Wednesday, October 10th in class** (10%)
- **Final Seminar paper of 12-15 pages** due by Thursday, December 13, 8pm. (40%)

- Mon., Aug. 27 *Introduction to the course.*
 [Bentham|Singer|Derrida / animal studies / critical animal studies / narrative / representation / subjectivity / posthumanism / animal ‘rights’ / theory / philosophy / the ethical turn and the state of ethics / literature versus philosophy / literature as philosophy / philosophy as literature / individuals vs. collectives / individuals and species]
- Wed., Aug. 29 “Animal Studies Cross Campus to Lecture Hall,” James Gorman, *The New York Times*, January 2, 2012 *
<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/03/science/animal-studies-move-from-the-lab-to-the-lecture-hall.html?pagewanted=all>
 “Human, All Too Human: ‘Animal Studies’ and the Humanities,” Cary Wolfe, *PMLA*, March 2009. 564-575. *
 “Speaking of Animal Bodies,” Greta Gaard, *Hypatia* (July 2012) *
 “Introduction: The Question of the Animal,” Matthew Calarco, *Zoographies: The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida*. 1-14.
- Mon., Sept. 3 Labor Day holiday
- Wed., Sept. 5 *How the Dead Dream*, Lydia Millet 1-146
 John Berger, “Why Look at Animals?” *
- Mon., Sept. 10 *How the Dead Dream*, Lydia Millet 146-244
 “Lost Dogs, Last Birds, and Listed Species: Cultures of Extinction,” Ursula Heise, *Configurations*, Winter 2012. 49-72. *
- Wed., Sept. 12 *The Lives of Animals*, J.M. Coetzee. 15-69.
- Mon., Sept. 17 *The Lives of Animals*, J.M. Coetzee. 3-11, 73-120
- Wed., Sept. 19 *Philosophy and Animal Life*, ed. Cary Wolfe.
 selections: “Introduction (Wolfe)” 1-16, Chapter 2, “The Difficulty of Reality and the Difficulty of Philosophy (Diamond)” 43-89, and “Conclusion: Deflections (Hacking)” 139-172.
 [Assign film groups, see readings from Jonathan Burt (Oct 10)]
- Friday, Sept. 21 First thought paper due by 6 p.m. via email.
- Mon., Sept. 24 “The Animal is Poor in World,” Martin Heidegger *
 selection from *A Foray into the World of Animals and Humans*, Jakob von Uexküll *
 “Animal Emotions: Exploring Passionate Natures,” Marc Bekoff *Bioscience* 2000 *
Bear 71. A short, interactive documentary film. <http://bear71.nfb.ca>
 “Theriomorphous-Cyborg,” Simone Ferracina [in-class]
<http://simoneferracina.com/Theriomorphous-Cyborg>
- Wed., Sept. 26 *A Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness*.

- Mon., Oct. 1 “The name of a Dog, or Natural Rights” Emmanuel Levinas (47-50) *
 “Facing the Other Animal: Levinas,” Chapter 2 of *Zoographies*. 55-78.
 Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia* (1944-45), #68 “People are looking at you” *
- Wed., Oct. 3 *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, H.G. Wells 1-64
 “General Principles of Expression,” an excerpt from Charles Darwin’s *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* *
- Mon., Oct. 8 *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, H.G. Wells 65-131
 “Experimenting at the Threshold: Sacrifice, Anthropomorphism, and the Aims of (Critical) Animal Studies,” Kimberly W. Benston PMLA 2009 (548-555) *
- Wed., Oct. 10 In-class small group presentations on your film
 Prologue, Chapters 1 & 2 from *Animals in Film*, Jonathan Burt (7-164) *
- Mon., Oct. 15 “Eluding Capture: The Science, Culture, and Pleasure of ‘Queer’ Animals,” Stacy Alaimo, in *Queer Ecologies* *
 Chapter 1 from *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*, Carol Adams *
 “Sharing Suffering: Instrumental Relations Between Laboratory Animals and their People,” from *When Species Meet*, Donna Harraway *
- Wed., Oct. 17 “Vegetal anti-metaphysics: Learning from plants,” Michael Marder *
 ‘Michael Marder and Gary Francione debate Plant Ethics,’ on Columbia UP Blog, *
<http://www.cupblog.org/?p=6604> (read Parts 1-3, see links in first paragraph)
- Mon., Oct. 22 *The Open*, Giorgio Agamben, Chs 1-3 (1-12), Ch. 9 (33-38), Ch. 20 (89-92) *
 “Jamming the Anthropological Machine—Agamben,” Chapter 3 of *Zoographies* (79-102)
- Wed., Oct. 24 A selection of paintings and text by Sue Coe, from *Dead Meat* (1995), (36-47) *
Every Twelve Seconds: Industrialized Slaughter and the Politics of Sight, Timothy Pachirat (2012) Ch. 3 Kill Floor (38-84), Ch 9 A Politics of Sight (233-256) *
- Friday, Oct. 26 Second thought paper due by 6pm via email.
- Mon., Oct. 29 “The Animal that Therefore I Am (More to Follow),” Jacques Derrida, *Critical Inquiry*, Winter 2002, 369-418 *
- Wed., Oct. 31 “The Passion of the Animal—Derrida,” Chapter 4 of *Zoographies*, 103-149
- Mon., Nov. 5 *When the Killing’s Done*
- Wed., Nov. 7 *When the Killing’s Done*
 “Strangers in a Strange Land: The Problem of Exotic Species,” Mark Woods and Paul Moriarty, *Environmental Values*, 2001. 163-191 *
- Mon., Nov. 12 Veterans Day

Wed., Nov. 14 “What’s Behind Animal Advocacy?” Chapter 1 of Kathy Rudy’s *Loving Animals* *
“Species Trouble: Judith Butler, Mourning, and the Precarious Lives of Animals,”
James Stanescu, in *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 2012 *

Seminar paper proposals (1-2 pages) due, at start of class.

Mon., Nov. 19 Listen to Radio Lab show on zoos, <http://www.radiolab.org/2007/jun/04/>
“Zoo Spectatorship,” from *Reading Zoos: Representations of Animals and Captivity*
Randy Malamud, (219-236) *
“The Couple in the Cage: A Gautinaui Odyssey,”
Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gomez-Peña [watch in class]

Wed., Nov. 21 *We3*, a graphic novel by Grant Morrison [on reserve, and on b-space] *
Fear of The Animal Planet: The Hidden History of Animal Resistance [selection] *

Mon., Nov. 26 *Eating Animals*, Jonathan Safran Foer

Wed., Nov. 28 Student presentations of research work

Mon., Dec. 3 – Fri., Dec. 7 Reading/Review/Recitation Week

Mon., Dec. 10 – Fri., Dec. 14 Final examinations

Film presentations. Due, in class October 10.

Assignment: Prepare a 5-10 minute presentation on a film of your choosing that engages with animals, animality, or human-animal relationships in some form. Examples range from children’s films like *The Secret of NIMH*, *Babe*, and *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* to adult and avant-garde films like *Electrocuting an Elephant*, *Amores Perros*, and Matthew Barney’s *Drawing Restraint 9*.

The most important thing for this assignment is that you engage with some of the ideas in the reading by Jonathan Burt that I will provide you with copies of on Monday, September 24th in class, and with the material we’ve covered so far in class.

Questions to approach and analyze your film with: How are animals depicted in the film? How are human-animal interactions depicted? What does the film have to say about animals? What is at stake in the film’s representations of animals? Does the film come to terms with an exposure to human and animal vulnerability or does it deflect questions about manipulations of animal life into other areas, ‘supposedly in the vicinity’? (to paraphrase Cora Diamond). Is there a politics of animal representation in the film? Etc. These are just some examples.

Reading: Prologue and Chapter 1, pages 7-84 of Jonathan Burt’s *Animals in Film* [copies distributed in class]

Format for presentation: Make a handout for your talk, with a one paragraph, succinct summary of the film—its plot, formal elements, style, whatever seems most important. Write this in your own words, you don’t need to borrow from someone else’s account. The rest of your presentation focus is up to you – there are ways to do ‘screen grabs’ from a DVD on a computer for instance that I can help with, or you might be able to find images from a given film online to help with your presentation. If you want to show a short clip from your film in class, we can talk about that too. Do not exceed ten minutes!

Grading: You will be graded on the quality of your work, the focus of your analysis, and meeting the requirements above. Originality and quality of presentation will also be important. This assignment will count for 10% of your grade in the seminar.

Research questions

These are some examples of questions that these readings provoke for me; you may find that some of them are particularly interesting to you as well and you may choose to focus on those for your final seminar paper that you should start thinking about early in the course. We will add to these research questions throughout the seminar based on our conversations in class.

- What is the relationship between literary and cinematic form and how we think about and talk about animals? Coetzee's *Lives of Animals* will bring the form/content question to the forefront early in the semester, but we'll keep this question in mind during all of our readings.
- Within a literary genre like the novel, where the liberal individual and her experiences and identity are in the forefront, how does a novel like Lydia Millet's *How the Dead Dream* imagine other species and 'species being' as opposed to the being of individuals? What is the nature of T.'s relationship with animals in the novel—anthropomorphic projection, genuine engagement on the animals' terms, or something else?
- How do distinct media represent animals and 'animality' differently? Is there a medium or artistic form that is suited better than others for 'letting the animal be' as it is, or enabling it to come into its own in a mode intelligible to us? This is a particularly rich question for this course as we'll be looking at films, graphic novels, prose fiction, architecture, radio and new media.
- How have authors, filmmakers, and philosophers thought about humanity and animality in the past? How are such ideas being revised today? How should we best understand the play of similarity and difference when it comes to thinking about 'human being' and 'the being of other animals.' What happens when we begin to see not just 'the human' but also 'the animal' as overly general and essentializing taxa?
- Can figurative and literary language constitute (or make) an 'argument' about the way we treat human and nonhumans alike? A related question is raised by Robert McKay: "[C]an literature find a way to get beyond itself [and the problem of prescriptive morality in general] in order to respond ethically to the animal?" (in *Safundi* essay, see supplemental reading list).
- Much contemporary scholarship in animal studies eschews ethical dimensions of its subject. What is at stake in the difference between work that engages ethical dimensions of our relationships with other animals and work that doesn't?
- What has / can feminist and queer theory contribute to animal studies? How do feminist theorists and critics like Greta Gaard and Carol Adams differ from Donna Harraway and Kathy Rudy in their approach to animals?
- Cora Diamond and Jacques Derrida argue that we experience a pre-rational exposure to the vulnerability of others, humans and animals included, and that this exposure is a space from which to rethink the ethical implications of our relationships with other animals that avoids the pitfalls of traditional, western, 'rights-based' schemes in which pseudo-scientific notions of mental capabilities are dominant. Do their arguments for affinities and linkages under the sign of vulnerability work? How might such a vulnerable sociability function from literary, political, psychological (emotional), and social perspectives?