

SOC 321: Animals and Society
Fall 2008
Dr. Flynn

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Course Description and Objectives

Other-than-human animals are an overwhelming presence in our collective and individual lives, and at the same time, are taken for granted by human animals. Until recently, sociologists had neglected the study of human-animal interaction and the role of animals in society (sometimes referred to as anthrozoology). This was true, despite the fact that animals are an integral part of our lives - in our language, food, families, economy, education, science, and recreation. Our attitudes about nonhuman animals are ambivalent and contradictory. Some species of animals we treat as children (e.g., dogs), others we eat (e.g., cows). In other cultures, the patterns are different. In China, for example, dogs are hamburgers; in India, cows are sacred. The meanings of animals can include food, clothing, members of the family, tools, commodities, and so on. This course will examine the role of animals in human society. It will examine how animals are socially constructed; it will challenge traditional representations of nonhuman animals, and study animals as minded social actors. We will apply sociological approaches to the study of human-animal relationships. Finally, we will explore the oppression of nonhuman animals, its connection to the exploitation of human beings, and consider the moral status of other animals in human society.

Texts

Flynn, C. P. (2008). *Social Creatures: A Human and Animal Studies Reader*. New York: Lantern Books. (F)

Singer, P. (2002). *Animal Liberation*. New York: HarperCollins. (S)

Course Outline

Applying the Sociological Perspective to the Study of Other Animals

Aug.	21	Introduction	
	26	A new area of scientific inquiry: Human-Animal Studies	F – Intro., Rdgs 1, 3
	28	The “Zoological Connection” in Sociology Better late than never!	F – Rdg. 2
		Research on human-animal interaction: Traditional approaches	F – Rdg. 5
Sep.	2	Studying animals as minded, social actors	F – Rdgs. 4, 6
	4	PBS video – <i>Intelligence</i>	

Historical and Cross-Cultural Views of Humans' Relations with Other Animals

	9	Religion and Philosophy	S – Ch. 5; F – Rdg. 10
	11	The Human-Animal Divide	F – Rdgs. 9, 11
	16	Speciesism in Language	F – Rdg. 12
	18	Non-Western Perspectives	F – Rdgs. 7, 8
	23	Test 1	

Attitudes toward Other Animals

	25	PBS video - <i>Emotion</i>	
	30	Socialization	F – Rdg. 14; S – Ch. 6
Oct.	2	Attitudes and social factors/issues	F – Rdgs. 13, 15
	7	PBS video – <i>Consciousness</i>	
	9	No Class – Fall Break	

Living with Other Animals

	14	Animal companions	F – Rdg. 24, 25
	16	Surrendering pets – guilt and blame-management	F – Rdgs. 26

Animal Abuse

	21	Childhood animal cruelty	F – Rdgs. 16, 17
	23	Animal abuse and family violence	F – Rdg. 18
	28	Hoarding	F – Rdg. 19
	30	Test 2	
Nov.	4	No Class – Election Day	

Animal Rights

	6	Interests vs. Rights	F – Rdgs. 28, 29
	11	Feminist perspective	F – Rdgs. 30, 31
	13	Animal Experimentation	S – Ch. 2; F - 27
	18	Factory Farming	S – Ch.3
	20	Vegetarianism	S – Ch. 4
	25	Paper due Video – <i>The Witness</i>	
	27	No Class - Thanksgiving	
Dec.	2	Interconnected oppressions: race and gender	F – Rdgs. 20, 21
	4	Interconnected oppressions: capitalism	F – Rdg. 22
	9	Test 3 – During Final Exams – 11 a.m.	

Grading

Tests. There will be three essay tests given, with the third test coming during final exams. Do not be absent for a test! If you are absent and I do not know why, you will receive a zero. In the case of an emergency, and if you have contacted me prior to the test, we will work out suitable alternative arrangements. Each test is worth 25% of your overall grade.

Paper. Each student will write a 6-8 page paper (typed, double-spaced, 12 pt. font, 1 inch margins) analyzing some aspect of human-animal relations. **Your paper must include a minimum of 4 scholarly sources.** Although not required, you may decide to analyze human-animal relationships as it relates to your area of academic interest. For example, if you are a sociology major, you may want to explore the interaction between humans and other animals, and what it teaches us about ourselves in terms of various sociological concepts: norms and culture, deviance and conformity, power and inequality, social institutions, etc. If you are an education major, you may want to write about animals in the classroom or humane education; if you are a psychology major, you may want to write about the use of animals in therapy or with nursing home residents, grief from the loss of a pet, or the psychological characteristics of people with pets vs. those without pets; if you are a criminal justice major, you may want to investigate the role of animal abuse in the background of serial killers or the changing laws with regard to animal cruelty. Other possibilities include animal images in the media (communication), the history of pet keeping (history), and animal experimentation (biology).

Another possibility is researching one of the forms of institutionalized animal use: animal experimentation (biomedical research, medical school labs, product testing), factory farming (e.g., slaughterhouse workers), entertainment (e.g., circuses, rodeos, zoos), education (e.g., dissection), clothing (e.g., fur farms, leather). How are animals viewed and treated in these settings? Do you think that humans who work in these areas are affected by how animals are used and treated? Do these practices have social, ethical, and environmental consequences for society? Based on your findings, what are the implications for how we currently think about and treat animals and whether those thoughts and actions should be changed? In other words, what are the implications for the ethical treatment of other animals? A third suggested topic involves exploring the parallels between the exploitation of animals and the oppression of certain human groups.

Whatever your topic, your analysis must be sociological. That is, how do social and cultural factors help to explain the phenomenon under study, and what are the implications of your findings for society, and for individuals – both human and nonhuman? You must incorporate into your analysis the basic sociological theories and concepts we have focused on in this course; i.e., animals as social constructions, symbolic interaction between humans and other animals, and inequality and oppression. Also, make sure that the language you use to refer to other animals is nonspeciesist.

You are to use the style guide found at the American Sociological Association's website at the following link: http://www.asanet.org/cs/root/topnav/sociology_depts/quick_style_guide. The paper is worth 25% of your final grade. **Late papers will be penalized one-half of a letter grade for each day they are late. Papers with grammatical and spelling errors are unacceptable and will be harshly penalized!**

A helpful resource for your paper is the journal *Society & Animals*. Full-text articles from all issues of the journal since its inception in 1993 through 2005 can be found on line at the *Animals & Society Institute's* website. The link to the journal is: <http://www.animalsandsociety.org/resources/index.php?pid=87&tpid=22>. A second major journal, *Anthrozoos*, is available through interlibrary loan.

Attendance and Participation. Given the nature of this course, class discussion is a very important part of the learning process. You will not only be expected to attend regularly, but also to participate in our discussions. This means coming to class having read the assigned material and having thought about it.

Grading Summary:

3 tests @ 25% each	75%
1 paper	<u>25%</u>
Total	100%

Grading scale: 90-100% - A; 87-89% - B+; 80-86% - B; 77-79% - C+; 70-76% - C; 67-69% - D+; 60-66% - D; below 60% - F.

Students with Disabilities

In keeping with University policy, any student with a disability who requests academic accommodations should contact Disability Services at 503-5195 to arrange a confidential appointment with the Disability Services Coordinator. Students are encouraged to seek an appointment as early in the semester as possible, as accommodations are not provided retroactively. Letters of accommodation must be signed and printed on letterhead from the Disability Services office. It is the student's responsibility to provide these letters to professors in a timely manner so that accommodations may be put in place.

This is a tentative syllabus and the instructor reserves the right to make changes as necessary.