

# SUFFERING: ANIMALS, VIOLENCE, AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF SILENCE

University of Washington  
Comparative History of Ideas

Winter 2010  
Tuesdays and Thursdays  
11:30-1:20 (More Hall 219)  
CHID 480

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Office Hours: Wednesday 11:00-12:00 and by appointment

Take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim.  
Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.  
—Elie Wiesel

Silence can be a plan/ rigorously executed/ the blueprint  
of a life/It is a presence/it has a history a form/ Do not confuse it/  
with any kind of absence.  
—Adrienne Rich

The question is not, can they *reason*? nor can they *talk*?  
but can they *suffer*?  
—Jeremy Bentham

## Course Description

This advanced seminar invites students to engage intellectually with the idea and experiences of suffering. How do we think about suffering and, perhaps more importantly, how do we *not* think about it? Reviewing philosophical, cultural, and social questions about the nature of pain and violence, this course pays special attention to the suffering of non-human animals. In the United States, approximately 56 billion animals are killed each year in the food industry alone, although this does not include fish or other sea animals. Throughout the world, millions of animals are used in illegal fighting and trafficking circles, used in medical experiments, and killed in harrowing ways for their fur and skin. The pain and suffering that these and other animals endure in life, and during the process of death, is mostly hidden from public view. Do we consider the fate of pigs, chinchillas, or mice, in the same way that we think about the dogs or cats with whom we share a home? How do humans make decisions about the relative importance (and non-importance) of the suffering of particular animals? What are the consequences of those decisions?

In addition to considering these questions, this course also explores the ways in which some forms of violence become more and less visible. What kind of cultural work goes into the

production and understanding of these multiple forms of violence? More hopefully, what can be (and has been) done to address these forms of violence in the world?

Besides reading philosophers, anthropologists, historians, and other scholars, students will also engage visual materials (especially documentary films) in order to explore what Kathie Jenni calls the “power of the visual.” Is witnessing suffering a necessary part of confronting and mitigating it? This course will also take at least two field trips (to a farm animal sanctuary and a local animal shelter) to get a closer look into the ways in which human and non-human emotions intertwine. Together we will explore the learning that is produced from interrogating the gaps and connections between our emotional responses and our ethical commitments.

### **Course Requirements**

1) You are expected to attend all class sessions and participate actively in class discussions. As this is a seminar, it is the responsibility of all participants to make class discussion dynamic and engaging, something that will be possible only if everyone has completed the readings and has thought about the issues they raise.

2) Once each week you will write a 1-page critical essay addressing the major points raised in the readings and films that week. These are due by email on Tuesday or Thursday mornings no later than 6:00am. The point of these papers is for you to think critically about the topics for discussion *before* our class meetings, so responses should not discuss texts or films we have already discussed in class. I will not accept or read late papers. This means I will not accept a paper emailed to me at 7:00am (for example). You will turn in your first response paper on the second week of the quarter.

3) During the quarter you will lead class discussion once, and complete two writing assignments:

- a.) **Class discussion.** Each of you will lead discussion in class once during the quarter. Each student should come to class prepared with two specific questions or themes raised by the readings which will serve as guides for our conversation. Students should meet with the professor before your presentation date. You will sign up for a specific date during the second week of class.
- b.) **Animal Thoughts: A Journal/Blog Assignment.** Each student is required to write regular entries (2-3 per week) in a journal which can be an old-fashioned notebook, or a weblog (blog). These entries should detail your thoughts about interactions with animals, such as thoughts on companion animals, animals you eat or wear, interactions you might have during a visit to the zoo, etc. I will review these journals twice during the quarter: once mid-quarter, and again at the end of our course. The final entry in your journal should reflect on the arc of your thoughts about interactions with animals during the quarter. What changes have you noticed? What challenges have you faced? More detail about this assignment will be given during class.
- c.) **Field Research Paper.** Students will complete one field research paper (10-15 double-spaced pages) on a topic related to animals. I will provide a list of suggested topics, but they can range from a critical discussion of farm sanctuaries or animal shelters, to an exploration of the organic industrial complex, to the politics of companion animal sterilization or euthanasia. This research paper must include a field research component. Students will be expected to conduct at

least 2 interviews with relevant individuals, and complement those interviews with academic research. More detail on this assignment will be provided in class.

**Grades:**

- Class participation (participation and responses): 40%
- Class discussion assignment: 10%
- Journal/Blog assignment: 20%
- Field Research Paper: 30%

**Required Texts (Available at the Library and Bookstore)**

- Carol J. Adams. 2003. *The Pornography of Meat*. New York: continuum
- Tom Regan. 2004. *Empty Cages: Facing the Challenge of Animal Rights*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers
- Susan Sontag. 2003. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Picador

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**CLASS SCHEDULE**

**PART I: ABOUT SUFFERING AND WITNESSING**

**Week 1**

**January 5**

- Introduction to Course
- In class: watch *Mine*

**January 7**

- Jenni, Kathie. 2005. "The Power of the Visual." *Animal Liberation Philosophy and Policy Journal*, 3(1): pp. 1-21.
- In class: Watch *The Witness*

**Week 2**

**January 12**

- Sontag, Susan. 2003. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Picador.
- Scarry, Elaine. 1985. "Introduction." *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. New York: Oxford University Press.

**January 14**

- Morris, David B. 1997. "About Suffering: Voice, Genre, and Moral Community." In *Social Suffering*, edited by Arthur Kleinman, Veena Das, and Margaret Lock. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Wemelsfelder, Françoise. 2003. "Lives of Quiet Desperation." In *The Animal Ethics Reader*, edited by Susan J. Armstrong and Richard G. Botzler. London: Routledge.

## PART II: ANIMALS, EMOTION, JUSTICE

### Week 3

#### January 19

- Bermond, Bob. 2003. "The Myth of Animal Suffering." In *The Animal Ethics Reader*, edited by Susan J. Armstrong and Richard G. Botzler. London: Routledge.
- Masson, Jeffrey Moussaieff and Susan McCarthy. 1995. *When Elephants Weep: The Emotional Lives of Animals*. New York: Delta Trade Paperbacks. Read prologue, Chapters 1 ("In Defense of Emotions"), 2 ("Unfeeling Brutes"), and 5 ("Grief, Sadness, and the Bones of Elephants").
- Bekoff, Marc. 2007. "Ethical Choices: what we do with what we know." In *The Emotional Lives of Animals*. California: New World Library.

#### January 21

- Singer, Peter. 2002. "All Animals Are Equal." In *Animal Liberation*. New York: Ecco.
- Mayerfeld, Jamie. 2002. *Suffering and Moral Responsibility*. New York: Oxford University Press. Read Introduction and Chapter 5 ("The Duty to Relieve Suffering")
- In class: watch *Peaceable Kingdom: A Tribe of Heart Documentary*

### Week 4

#### January 26

- Regan, Tom. 2004. *Empty Cages: Facing the Challenge of Animal Rights*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. Read prologue and parts 1-4.
- In class: watch *I Am An Animal*

#### January 28

- Regan, Tom. 2004. *Empty Cages: Facing the Challenge of Animal Rights*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. Read part 5 and epilogue.
- Watch *Earthlings* ([www.earthlings.com](http://www.earthlings.com))

#### Recommended:

- Nussbaum, Martha. 2007. "Beyond 'Compassion and Humanity': Justice for Non-Human Animals." In *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

## PART III: DENATURALIZING VIOLENCE

### Week 5

#### February 2

- Kleinman, Arthur. 1997. "The Violences of Everyday Life: The Multiple Forms and Dynamics of Social Violence." In *Violence and Subjectivity*, edited by Veena Das et al. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Žižek, Slavoj. 2008. *Violence*. New York: Picador. Read Introduction (“The Tyrant’s Bloody Robe”) and Chapter 1 (“SOS Violence”).

#### **February 4**

- Baker, Steve. 2001. “From massacred cats to lucky cows: histories and *mentalités*.” In *Picturing the Beast: Animals, Identity, and Representation*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

#### **Week 6**

##### **February 9**

- Adams, Carol J. 2003. *The Pornography of Meat*. New York: continuum.

### **PART IV: KILLING ANIMALS**

#### **February 11**

- Palmer, Clare. 2006. “Killing Animals in Animal Shelters.” In *Killing Animals*, edited by The Animal Studies Group. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Watch *Shelter Dogs* (on reserve)
- TBA: Guest Speakers from Seattle Animal Shelter and Humane Society

#### **Week 7**

##### **February 16**

- Marvin, Garry. 2006. “Wild Killing: contesting the Animal in Hunting.” In *Killing Animals*, edited by The Animal Studies Group. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Wilbert, Chris. 2006. “What Is Doing the Killing? Animal Attacks, Man-Eaters, and Shifting Boundaries and Flows of Human-Animal Relations.” In *Killing Animals*, edited by The Animal Studies Group. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Watch *Sharkwater* (on reserve)

##### **February 18**

- Wallace, David Foster. 2004. “Consider the Lobster.” *Gourmet Magazine*, August.
- Watch *The Cove* (on reserve)

#### **Recommended:**

- *Farming the Seas* (on reserve)

#### **Week 8**

##### **February 23**

- Marcus, Erik. 2005. “Farmed Animal Lives.” In *Meat Market: Animals, Ethics, and Money*. Ithaca: Bio Press.
- Watch *Meet Your Meat* (available on YouTube)
- Burt, Jonathan. 2006. “Conflicts around Slaughter in Modernity.” In *Killing Animals*, edited by The Animal Studies Group. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

**February 25**

- Pollan, Michael. 2006. *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. New York: Penguin Books. Read Part II: Pastoral Grass (pp. 123-184).

**Week 9**

**March 2**

- Pollan, Michael. 2006. *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. New York: Penguin Books. Finish reading Part II: Pastoral Grass (pp. 185-276).
- Kathryn Gillespie, guest speaker: "Reconceptualizing Humane Slaughter."

**PART V: RESPONDING TO SUFFERING**

**March 4**

- Donovan, Josephine. 2007. "Attention to Suffering: Sympathy as a Basis for Ethical Treatment of Animals." In *The Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics*, edited by Josephine Donovan and Carol J. Adams. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Adams, Carol J. 2007. "Caring About Suffering: A Feminist Exploration." In *The Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics*, edited by Josephine Donovan and Carol J. Adams. New York: Columbia University Press.

**Week 10**

**March 9**

- Torres, Bob. 2007. *Making a Killing: The Political Economy of Animal Rights*. Oakland: AK Press. Read chapters 1 ("Taking Equality Seriously"), 4 ("Animal Rights and Wrongs") and 5 ("You Cannot Buy the Revolution")

**March 11: FIELD RESEARCH PAPER PRESENTATIONS**

\*\*\*\*\***Final papers due on Thursday, March 18, 2010**\*\*\*\*\*