

## Humane Society University

AS306/AS606

### The Literary Animal: Raising Consciousness Through Fiction

#### SYLLABUS

##### Course Description

In a talk given at Thinking With Animals: A Minding Animals Pre-Conference Event held at NYU's Animal Studies Initiative in January 2013, philosopher Alice Cary observed that "Many thinkers who contribute to the animal protectionist movement start from—sometimes unwittingly—philosophical assumptions that block appreciation of how imaginative works can contribute to an ethically relevant understanding of animals' lives." She described her talk as an intervention aimed at dislodging such assumptions. This course also aims to counter such assumptions and to replace them with an appreciation "of the sort of imaginative thought about animals that these assumptions exclude." Literature provides insight into human attitudes toward nonhuman animals; it also uses nonhumans as a means of examining and understanding what it means to be human. More significantly for Animal Studies, literature can provide a lens through which human animals may learn more about their nonhuman neighbors, offering insights into their biology, behavior, and culture, as well as into the difficulties they encounter while surviving in the evolving habitats all living beings contribute to and share. Works of animal literature have been shown to raise consciousness about animals as well as to encourage both empathy with nonhumans and active participation in animal welfare and animal rights movements<sup>1</sup>. The four thematic areas into which the course is divided reflect these concerns. When literary portraits of the lives of nonhumans are accurate and empathetic, they allow humans to use the powers of their metamorphic imaginations, the basis of our ability to "pretend," to inhabit nonhuman worlds. Such narrative imaginings should provide, according to legal scholar Martha Nussbaum, the basis of human behavior toward others, human and nonhuman.

##### Required Texts

Daniel Quinn. 1992. Ishmael: An Adventure of the Mind and Spirit. Bantam, 1995. ISBN: 978-055337 5 404

David Garnett. 1922. Lady Into Fox. Etext: (<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/10337> ; <http://www.xepher.net/~tsat/stories/lady.into.fox.html> )

Mordicai Gerstein. 2005. The Old Country. New Milford, CT: Roaring Brook Press. ISBN: 1-59643-047-8

Anna Sewell. 1877. Black Beauty. Afterword by Lucy Grealy. Signet Classics, 2002. ISBN: 0-19-282812-6

Virginia Woolf. 1933. Flush. Mariner Books, 1976. ISBN: 978-0156319522

Laurence Gonzales. 2010. Lucy: A Novel. New York: Vintage. ISBN 978-0-06-307473905.

Donald Harington. 1989. The Cockroaches of Stay More. Toby Press, 2004. ISBN 1-592646-072-9

Melinda Worth Popham. 1990. Skywater Iuniverse, 2001. ISBN 0-595-18449-9

Barbara Gowdy. 1998. The White Bone. New York: Picador, 2000. ISBN 0-8050-6036-7

Brian K. Vaughan. 2006. Art by Niko Henrichon. Pride of Baghdad. VERTIGO. ISBN 978 1-4012 0315-3

All books are either in print and available at bookstores and libraries or on-line.

## COURSE READINGS AND SCHEDULE

### I. Raising Consciousness

#### Week 1 – Date

#### The Primate Culture Story and Animal Story

How Western Culture's history, religious traditions, philosophy, and art have shaped the way in which nonhuman animals and human animals are viewed and valued. Us and Them (dualism, the Other)? Humane Education: Animal as Teacher. The student's (human's) limited point of view and the theme of captivity. Given that humans are animals, aren't all stories animal stories?

#### **Required Reading:**

Daniel Quinn. 1992. Ishmael. Bantam, 1995.

Marion W. Copeland and Kenneth Shapiro. 2005. "Toward a Critical Theory." Society and Animals. 13:4 343-346 ([www.psyeta.org/sa/sa13.4/shapiro.pdf](http://www.psyeta.org/sa/sa13.4/shapiro.pdf))

D. L. Pughe. 2007. "The Near and Far of Dogness: A Friendly Pack is Scaling Ivory Towers." The Bark December: ([http://thebark.com/ezine/features\\_specialFeatures/Canines\\_Higher\\_Education.html](http://thebark.com/ezine/features_specialFeatures/Canines_Higher_Education.html)) The 2<sup>nd</sup> article on "Studying Dogs: A Friendly Pack is Scaling Ivory Towers..." (<http://www.thebark.com/content/studyingdog>)

#### **Recommended Reading:**

Coetzee, J. M. 2003. Elizabeth Costello. New York: Viking.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1999. The Lives of Animals. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Copeland Marion W.. "Apes of the Imagination: a Bibliography."

<http://www.h-net.org/~nilas/bibs/ape.html>

\_\_\_\_\_ and Heidi O'Brien. 2003. "Toward Biophilia: The Role of Children's Literature in the Development of Empathy and Compassion." The State of the Animals II. Eds. Deborah J. Salem and Andrew Rowan. Washington, D. C.: Humane Society Press. See especially pp. 51-52 and 61-63.

Dawn Prince-Hughes. 2004. Songs of the Gorilla Nation. New York: Harmony Books.

Susan McHugh and Robert McKay, Guest Editors. "Being and Seeing Literary Animals." Antennae 24:

<http://www.antennae.org.uk/Antennae%20Issue%2024.pdf>

[www.antennae.org.uk](http://www.antennae.org.uk)

Quinn's website <http://www.ishmael.org>

Marian Scholtmeijer. 2000. "Animals and Spirituality: A Skeptical Animal Rights Advocate Examines Literary Approaches to the Subject." Special issue of LIT (Literature, Interpretation, Theory). 10:4: 371-394.

### **Writing Assignment**

**Assignment #1:** Ishmael's narrator (the voice telling the story), concerned with finding a teacher, gives little thought to his own qualifications as a student in general or, in particular as a student of Ishmael. Basing your insights on the text of the novel, discuss how Ishmael might judge the narrator's qualifications as a student and also how he might judge your own. Due this week.

### **Week 2 – date**

#### **Boundaries Broken: Animism and Shapeshifting**

How pre-Christian and Classical Western and non-Western cultures viewed, valued, and devalued human and nonhuman animals. Are myth, fairy and folk tales and folklore for children?

#### **Required Reading:**

David Garnett. Lady Into Fox. Etext (<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/10337>)

Mordicae Gerstein. 2005. The Old Country. New Milford, CT: Roaring Brook Press.

#### **Recommended Reading:**

Dave Aftandilian and Marion W. Copeland. 2007. "Shapeshifting." In Encyclopedia of Human-Animal Relationships: A Global Exploration of Our Connections with Animals. Marc Bekoff, ed. Westport, CT and London: Greenwood Press. 607-611.

\*Marion W. Copeland. "Shapeshifting Foxes East and West.: A Bibliography."

\*\_\_\_\_\_. 2005. "Once We Were Shapeshifters." In M. W. Copeland, ed.  
*Experiencing Animal Presence: Totemism, Shapeshifting*. NILAS Newsletter  
3:1-2.

Cathy Mosley. Fox Bibliography <http://www.h-net.org/~nilas/bibs/foxbib.html>

Martin Wallen. 2006. Fox. London: Reaktion Books.

### **Writing Assignment**

**Assignment #2:** Though both The Old Country and Lady Into Fox are shapeshifting novels and focus on the fox, they have distinctly different narrators, settings, protagonists, and themes. Supporting your claims with textual evidence, properly documented, discuss what you see as the most significant of these differences and clarify why you see them as significant.

## **II. The Anthropocentric Ethic and Animal Movements**

### **Week 3 – date**

#### **Animal Biography and Auto-Biography**

The anthropocentric (mechanism and property) vs. the zoocentric or animal-centric (sentient and individual) point-of-view (object or subject?). Black Beauty has been referred to as "the equine Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852). Dog-focused equivalents, beginning with Margaret Marshall Saunders' Beautiful Joe: An Autobiography (1893), Elizabeth Stuart Phelps' Trixy (1904), Mark Twain's A Dog's Tale (1903), and Jack London's Jerry of the Islands (1916) and Michael, Brother of Jerry (1917), precede the publication of Woolf's Flush (1933).

#### **Required Reading:**

Anna Sewell. 1877. Black Beauty. Signet Classics, 2002. (reissued by Boston: American Humane Society, 1890.

Virginia Woolf. 1933. Flush. Harcourt Brace, 1976.

#### **Recommended Reading:**

Carolyn Thompson's 1994 film *Black Beauty* (Warner Brothers 88 min).

Maureen Adams. 2007. "Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Flush" and "Virginia Woolf and Garth, Grizzle, and Pinka" in Shaggy Muses: The Dogs Who Inspired Virginia Woolf, Elizabeth Barrett Browning.... New York: Ballentine. 5-47 and 195-248.

Diane L. Beers. 2006. Excerpts from For the Prevention of Cruelty: The History and

Legacy of Animal Rights Activism in the United States. Athens: Ohio State University Press.

\*Copeland, Marion W. 2011. “‘Straight from the horse’s mouth’: Equine Memoirs and Autobiographies.” In *Speaking in Tongues: Writing Animal Autobiographies*. Ed. Margo DeMello. Tbp. You’ll find this on the class site.

Lucy Grealy. 2002. “Afterword.” *Black Beauty*. Signet Classics, 2002 (You may also want to read \*Bill Collins. 2004 essay “You and Your Dumb Friends: How Autobiographies of Animals and Inanimate Objects Reveal the Human Capacity for Empathy and Decency.” *The Believer* March).

Peter Hollindale. 1992. “Introduction” to *Black Beauty*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Craig Smith. 2004. “Across the Widest Gulf: Nonhuman Subjectivity in Virginia Woolf’s *Flush*.” *Twentieth Century Literature* Fall  
[http://findarticles.com/mi\\_m0403/is\\_3\\_48/ai\\_102274349](http://findarticles.com/mi_m0403/is_3_48/ai_102274349)

Peter Wylie. 2002. “The Anthropomorphic Ethic: Fiction and the Animal Mind in Virginia Woolf’s *Flush* and Barbara Gowdy’s *The White Bone*.” *ISLE* 9:2 (Summer): 115-131.

### **Writing Assignment**

**Assignment #3:** How do the forms of the two novels, autobiography and biography, effect the reader’s perception of and relation to the animal protagonists (*Beauty* and *Flush*)?

### **Week 4 – date**

### **Allegory and Satire from Animism to Bioengineering: The Narrative Voice.**

Does the sympathetic imagination make hybrids of us all?

### **Required Reading:**

Laurence Gonzales. 2010. *Lucy: A Novel*. New York: Vintage.

### **Recommended Reading:**

Why Some Wild Animals Are Becoming Nicer  
<http://www.wired.com/wiredscience/2012/02/self-domestication/>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bonobo>

<http://www.bonobo.org/>

<http://www.physorg.com/news/2011-03-peaceful-bonobos-humans.html>

Dorothy L. Cheney and Robert M. Seyforth. 2007. Baboon Metaphysics: Evolution of the Social Mind. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press

Savage-Rumbaugh, Sue. 2011. "Human Language—Human Consciousness:" <http://onthehuman.org/2011/01/human-language/human-consciousness/>

### **Writing Assignment**

**Assignment #4:** It is essential that Gonzales' reader empathize and identify with Lucy if his satiric view of contemporary American attitudes is to be read correctly. How does he assure that reaction? Due at end of week 4,

## **III. Our Animal Neighbors: Living with "The Other."**

### **Week 5 – date**

#### **"Animal Fantasy." Voices of the Least Loved**

How appropriate does it seem to classify works in which nonhumans are speaking or even narrating characters as "fantasies"? Why do we consider certain creatures pest species and/or invasive species/weeds? What does it mean to demonize "the other"?

#### **Required Reading:**

Donald Harington. 1989. The Cockroaches of Stay More. Toby Press, 2004.

#### **Recommended Reading:**

Marion W. Copeland. 2003. Cockroach. London: Reaktion Press..

\_\_\_\_\_. "Introduction." Cockroach Bibliography (<http://www.h-net.org/~nilas/bibs/cockroach.html>)

\_\_\_\_\_. 2006. "Voices of the Least Loved: the Cockroach in the Contemporary American Novel." Insect Poetics. Ed. Eric C. Brown. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2006. 153-175.

Franz Kafka. 1915. "The Metamorphosis." In Franz Kafka: The Complete Stories. Ed. Nahum Glazer. Trans. Joachim Neugroschel. New York, 1971.

Tyler Knox. 2007. Kockroach. New York: William Morrow.

Josie Glausiusz. Buzz: The Intimate Bond Between Humans and Insects. Chronicle.

Joanne Luack. 1998. The Voice of the Infinite in the Small: Revisioning the Insect-Human Connection. Boston: Shambala Press, 2002.

### **Writing Assignment**

**Assignment #5:** In his New York Times Book Review review of The Cockroaches of Stay More in 1989, Harry Middleton writes that Harington's "cockroaches, or 'roosterroaches,' as they prefer to be called...bring...fascinating news,...insights into the day-to-day business of survival." To his mind "There hasn't been such useful news from the natural world since E. B. White gave us Charlotte, the spider who spun messages into her web" (23 April: 17). What "news from the natural world" do you think The Cockroaches if Stay More brings us?

**Week 6 – date**

### **Biocommunities**

#### **Required Reading:**

Melinda Worth Popham. 1990. Skywater Iuniverse, 2001.

#### **Recommended Reading:**

Copeland Marion W. and Heidi O'Brien. 2003. "Toward Biophilia: The Role of Children's Literature in the Development of Empathy and Compassion." The State of the Animal II. Ed. Deborah J. Salem and Andrew N. Rowan. Washington, D. C.: Humane Society Press. 51-65 (see esp. 60-61).

Ellen Datlow and Terri Wilding, eds. 2007. The Coyote Road: Trickster Tales. New York: Viking.

### **Writing Assignment**

**Assignment #6:** In "Beyond Just-So Stories: Narrative, Animals, and Ethics," Linda Vance theorizes "about the kind of narratives we [humans] might construct to take into account the realities of animals' lives" (176) and concludes that such narratives should satisfy four criteria: (1) they should be ecologically appropriate to a given time and place; (2) they should be ethically appropriate in that time and place; (3) they should give voice to those whose stories are being told; and (4) they should make us care. (179) To what extent does Skywater (we might ask this about all of the novels considered in this course) meet Vance's expectations?

## **IV. Coexisting in Our Neighbors' Worlds**

**Week 7 – date**

### **Animal Fantasy: The Threatened Among Us.**

Unlike most of the previous novels, Gowdy takes us not only into the mind and feeling of another species but into a world or habitat, highly endangered and alien at least to Western humans.

#### **Required Reading:**

Barbara Gowdy. 1998. The White Bone. New York: Picador.

### **Recommended Reading:**

Marion W. Copeland. 2003. "Crossover Animal-Fantasy Series: Crossing Cultural and Species as Well as Age Boundaries." Society and Animals. 11. 3  
(<http://www.psyeta.org/sa/sa11.3/copeland.shtml>)

Greg Mitman. "Pachyderm Personalities: The Media of Science, Politics, and Conservation." <http://pages.slc.edu/~krader/animals/Mitman%20essay.htm>

Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson with Susan McCarthy. 1995. When Elephants Weep: The Emotional Lives of Animals. New York: Delacourt.

Eric Scigliano. 2002. Love, War, and Elephants: The Age-Old Relationship Between Elephants and Humans. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin.

Scholtmeijer, Marian. 2000. "Animals and Spirituality: A Skeptical Animal Rights Advocate Examines Literary Approaches to a Subject." Special issue of LIT (Literature, Interpretation, Theory). 10:4: 371-394.

Dan Wylie. 2002. "The Anthropomorphic Ethic: Ficyion and the Animal Mind in Virginia Woolf's Flush and Barbara Gowdy's The White Bone." ISLE 9:2 (Summer): 115-131.

[www.elephantsanctuary.com](http://www.elephantsanctuary.com)

### **Writing Assignment**

**Assignment #7:** "When Date Bed is separated from her family, she discovers that the Domain has been warped by the violence of man. Because these are 'abnormal times,' she's not quite certain of animals' behaviors anymore. It's clear that the arrival of man not only alters the elephants' world, but the animal kingdom at large. In what ways are [Date Bed's, Mud's and Tall Times'] perspectives altered, both through direct circumstance and spiritually?"  
([www.henryhold.com/readingguides/gowdy.htm](http://www.henryhold.com/readingguides/gowdy.htm))

### **Week 8 – date**

#### **Animal in the Graphic Novel: Seeing with other Eyes, Living in Other Worlds**

Respecting and empathizing with the views and needs of domestic farm animals, many of whom we consume, is particularly complicated and challenging.

### **Required Reading:**

Brian K. Vaughan. 2006. Pride of Baghdad. VERTIGO.

### **Recommended Reading:**



\*Marion W. Copeland. 2011. "Animal-Centric Graphic Novels: an annotated bibliography." In *The Illustrated Animal: Antennae* 16 (Spring): 82-98.

\*\_\_\_\_\_. 2011. "Pride of Baghdad: Interview with Brian K. Vaughan and Niko Henrichon." In *The Illustrated Animal: Antennae* 16 (Spring): 46-54.

### **Writing Assignment**

**Assignment #8:** The genre of literary texts determines how the work is valued and where the works are shelved in libraries (and on line) and, probably more important, how they are accessed through research tools. Given that, explain how a graphic novel like *Pride of Baghdad* relates to the other, more conventional novels read earlier in the course and how you might make use of such a novel in your animal advocacy efforts.

### **V. Research Paper**

**Assignment #9:** The required research essay allows a fuller exploration of the interdisciplinary nature of Animal Studies than is possible in the four short writing assignments (each of which focuses on a literary topic such as narrator, theme, form or genre, technique, etc.). The research essay asks that you consider how animal-centric literature can actually be used to benefit nonhuman animals: How it may educate the public about these animals and the issues that effect their lives and well being, how it allows audiences to feel what it would be like to be that animal, in the process creating an empathetic bond between the human reader and the animal protagonist that may, in turn, become the basis for that reader's advocacy for the welfare and rights of that particular animal. In considering this (and acknowledging Animal Studies' essentially interdisciplinary nature), give attention to what other disciplines (history, ethology or animal behavior, human-animal studies, sociology, art, popular culture, environmental studies, political science, public policy, etc.) have to contribute to the reading of any animal (zoocentric) novel. Course lectures provide models.

The first step is to select from the assigned novels at least one species other than the dog or horse and at least one of the issues affecting its well-being suggested by that novel. For instance in Quinn's novel, Ishmael, a captive gorilla, takes "captivity" as his main theme, raising questions about not only the right of humans to keep other animals in captivity (zoos, circuses, domesticity, etc.), but how to treat them ethically and morally if they do. As a lowland gorilla in the wild, Ishmael, like Gowdy's elephants, raises other, though related, issues and concerns (hunting and poaching, habitat destruction, and extinction, for example). Your challenge is to enrich and illuminate the novel's vision of its animal protagonist's subjectivity and to illuminate the techniques the author uses to encourage readers to identify and empathize with both the animal character and the conflicts he or she faces (challenges to well-being and rights) through research in nonfiction secondary sources (You will need to include both internal documentation, Endnotes, and a Bibliography). Be sure to keep your focus on interpreting the novel(s) since this is, first, a literature course and, second, an Animal Studies. 10-15 pages depending on whether you are an undergraduate or graduate student, due at end of course. 40%