

# *Animals, People and Nature*

## *ACR 823*

**105A Berkey Hall**  
**Friday 3:00-5:50**

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### *Course Description*

This graduate course examines one of the most fiercely debated topics in contemporary science and culture: the animal question – or, what is the fitting role of animals in human culture and of humans in animal culture? Through the lens of interdisciplinary contemporary scholarship, we will examine

- animals as philosophical and ethical subjects. Are language and rational thought prerequisites for the extension of justice and/or morality? What about the assertion that there is a connection between the human treatment of animals and our treatment of marginalized human groups?
- animals as reflexive thinkers. Do some nonhuman animals possess material culture, social morality, and emotions such as grief and sadness?
- animals as domesticates, “pets” and food. What is the link between animal domestication and the spread of contagious diseases, especially zoonotic diseases? How do humans “petrify” nature? What are the social, environmental and biological consequences of using animals as food?
- animals as scientific objects. What are the issues surrounding the use of animals in scientific speculation, classification and experimentation, such as in vivisection, cloning and the human-animal relationship in technoscience?
- animals as spectacle and sport. What is the cultural meaning of pitting animals in combative struggle against humans or against other animals? Do humans have a penchant for hunting and for gazing at exotic animals in confined places? Do these activities help shape the meaning of animals in human culture, reinforcing Michel Foucault’s ideas about power and surveillance? Should humans swim with dolphins, feed stingrays, play with killer whales?
- Finally, we will examine the thorny question of the meaning of nature and its reconfiguration from a binary purified category to a fluid nature-culture network composed of actants-in-relation.

### *Books*

*The Animals Reader: The Essential Classic and Contemporary Writings*

Linda Kalof & Amy Fitzgerald, 2007

*Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*

Donna Haraway, 1991.

*Watching Wildlife*

Cynthia Chris, 2006

The basics: No exams, 3-4 written summaries of selected readings, one final paper & class presentation

This course can be used as an elective requirement for the newly established graduate specialization in **Animal Studies: Social Science & Humanities Perspectives**

see <http://animalstudies.msu.edu>

**Requirements:** Students will be responsible for all of the class readings. In addition, individual students will be assigned to write summaries of selected readings and present them to the class. Summaries are to be prepared according to the directions below, with enough copies for the professor and the students in the class. The summaries are to be written as literature review essays, not lists of bullet points or in outline format. On the date due the student must lead a class discussion on the reading. The student must prepare two questions centered by the student's assigned reading that will serve as the foundation for class discussion. The presenter should begin the summary of the reading. The discussion questions will then serve as a guide for a more thorough analysis of the material through class discussion. The course will be conducted as a seminar.

At the end of the semester, each student will have a portfolio of summaries collected from student colleagues which will be helpful in preparing the final project, the written portion is due at the time of our final exam (see the university schedule) and the oral portion will be scheduled during the last 2 weeks of class. Specific instructions for the final project will be handed out at mid-term, but you can expect to apply the material covered during the semester in a scholarly paper on the "animal question." **Evaluation:** Your grade will be based on the written summaries and class presentations = 50% and the Final paper = 50%.

**Format and Instructions for Written Summaries and Presentations:** Summaries must be typed, single spaced, two-sided copy on one sheet of paper. At the beginning of your presentation, 1) hand two copies to the instructor, 2) give presentation/lead discussion, and 3) after the discussion, distribute copies of the written summary to the students in the class.

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Your Name

Date

**Part 1:** Full Cite for the Reading: Author, Title, Source, Date

**Part 2:** Begin your summary of the reading here: 1.5 pages, single-spaced, typed. This is NOT A CRITIQUE of the reading, but rather a thorough documentation (with page number cites) that summarizes what the author had to say. All critique must be saved for class discussion, and not included in the summary.

**Part 3:** Write the two questions for class discussion here.

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***Schedule of Readings & Topics***  
***Animals, People and Nature, ACR 823***

Week 1: Introductions

Weeks 2-4: Philosophical beliefs about animals (ethics, morality, cognition)  
Reading Assignments:

*The Animals Reader Part 1*

- Aristotle
- Jeremy Bentham
- Peter Singer
- Tom Regan
- Marjorie Spiegel
- Martha Nussbaum
- Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari

Weeks 5-6: Animals as reflexive thinkers

Reading Assignments:

*The Animals Reader Part 2*

- Michel de Montaigne
- René Descartes
- Sanders and Arluke
- Bekoff
- Masson and McCarthy
- Van Schaik, et al.

Weeks 7-8: Animals as domestics, “pets” and food

Reading Assignments:

*The Animals Reader Part 3*

- Steven Mithen
- Harriet Ritvo
- Yi-Fu Tuan
- Plutarch
- Jim Mason and Mary Finelli
- Carol Adams
- David Nibert

Weeks 9-10: Animals as spectacle and sport (continued)

Reading Assignments:

*The Animals Reader Part 4*

- Pliny the Elder
- Garry Marvin
- Evans, et al.
- Randy Malamud

- Matt Cartmill

*The racialization of a debate: The charreada as tradition or torture.* (Najera-Ramirez, Olga. 1996, *American Anthropologist* 98(3): 505-511 [On Angel])

Week 11: Animals as spectacle and sport (continued)

*Reading the Trophy* (Kalof and Fitzgerald, *Visual Studies*, 2003) [On Angel]

*The Spanish Bullfight and Kindred Activities* (Julian Pitt-Rivers, *Anthropology Today*, 1993) [On Angel]

*Dead Dog Running* (on Greyhound racing) [On Angel]

Weeks 12-13: Animals as symbols

*The Animals Reader*

Part 5

- John Berger
- Claude Lévi-Strauss
- Boria Sax
- Steve Baker
- Jonathan Burt

*Beastly Sights: The Treatment of Animals as a Moral Theme in Representations of London, 1820-1850* [Diana Donald, *Art History* 22(4), 514-544] [On Angel]

Week 8: NO CLASS

Week 9: Animals as scientific objects

*The Animals Reader*

Part 6 (pages 307-374) includes:

- Coral Lansbury
- Lynda Birke
- Sarah Whatmore
- Sarah Franklin
- Donna Haraway

Weeks 10-12: Simians, Cyborgs and Women, by Donna Haraway

Weeks 13-14: Watching Wildlife, by Cynthia Chris

Weeks 15-16 Student Presentations and course evaluation

