HISTORY 468: ANIMAL HISTORIES

This course is designed to investigate the interrelationship between human and nonhuman animals in comparative historical settings, ones elucidated through the interdisciplinary approach of science, technology, cultural studies, and straight history. Increasingly, historians have begun to investigate the role of nonhuman animals in shaping human history and, even more intriguingly, the potential for nonhumans to experience and generate histories of their own. This course offers an opportunity to participate in this pioneering field of inquiry. From the calories that fuel our society to the large predators that continue to haunt our collective imaginations, nonhumans directly participate in and shape our histories, cultures, and ecologies.

In this seminar, you will tackle many cutting-edge historical studies and then write your own original paper that deals with nonhumans in some historical context, whether in the development of science, forms of “biotechnology,” class dynamics, agriculture, hunting, conservationism, industry, environmentalism, species eradication, empire building, or any other topic that suits your – and to a certain degree my – fancy. Although on the surface writing on nonhumans may seem removed from the traditional concerns of historians, it actually offers a fresh vantage point to view human history and, even more broadly, a shared natural history.

When historians write about animals and the natural world they are required to push the disciplinary envelope; that is, to cast their nets widely to include sources not traditionally used by historians. By expanding our horizons, however, new light can be shed on the human past and that is precisely what this seminar seeks to do. Section I of the seminar will be spent reading some (but certainly not all) histories on human relationships with nonhuman animals, from the metaphorically to the ecologically real. Section II of the seminar will be spent on student-research presentations. These will be about 25 minutes in length, and can involve video, overheads, PowerPoint presentations, or other forms of media. (Please let me know in advance what you require.)

Every week, moreover, student “specialists” will lead discussions on assigned readings. Caution: This does not mean a presentation or public book review. Rather, “specialists” will guide the discussion through raising issues and asking pertinent questions prompted by the assigned readings. You will be graded on this exercise.
Required books (available for purchase at the MSU bookstore).

Required articles and chapters (available at the reserve desk in the Renne Library).

Course requirements: Students are required to be a “specialist” and lead a discussion of assigned readings at least twice during the semester (20%). Attendance is mandatory and students who do
not attend seminars will have their grade adjusted accordingly. Students will also be required to give a twenty-minute presentation of their original research topic (20%). The majority of the course grade will be based on an original research paper of between twenty and twenty-five pages in length (60%). Graduate students should write a thirty-page paper.

SECTION I
ANIMALS, THE “OLD WORLD,” AND EMPIRE; or Nation-Building Pigs
Monday 8/29: Course introduction

Monday 9/05 Labor Day Holiday

Specialists: ______________________
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Monday 9/19: **Required readings**: Anderson, *Creatures of Empire*.
Specialists: ______________________
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Specialists: ______________________
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**SCIENCE, “EVOLUTIONARY HISTORY” AND “BIOTECHNOLOGIES”; or Can Living Things be Technologies?**
Monday 10/03: Discussion of student topics

Monday 10/10: **Required readings**: De Waal, “Predicting Mount Fuji and a Visit to Koshima, Where the Monkeys Salt Their Potatoes”; Asquith, “Primate Research Groups in Japan: Orientations and East-West Differences”; Haraway, “Animal Sociology and a Natural Economy
of the Body Politic: A Political Physiology of Dominance.
Specialists:

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Specialists:

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PREDATORS; or the History and Biology of Humans as Calories in Another Creature’s Stomach
Monday 10/24: Required readings: Quammen, Monster of God.
Specialists:

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Monday 10/31: Required readings: Coleman, Vicious.
Specialists:

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Specialists:

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SECTION II
STUDENT RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS
Monday 11/14
Presenters:
Monday 11/21
Presenters:

Monday 11/28
Presenters:

Monday 12/05
Presenters:

Finals papers due on Friday 12/09 before 5:00pm