

## **Course outline for RLG 227H1S, *Religion and Animals***

Department for the Study of Religion, University of Toronto

Instructor: Paul York

### **Course description**

This course examines animals in myths, legends, parables, and how animals figure into religious and cultural identities. It also examines the intersection of religious cosmologies, mythology, religious art, religious imagination, animal ethics, and environmental problems. The topic of religion and animals is a growing field of religious studies. Animals appear in numerous myths, legends and parables, as anthropomorphized symbols of human traits, as bearers of moral instruction, as agents of supernatural powers, and as divine messengers. Such questions as how to treat them properly and how human beings differ from them have helped define religious and cultural identities for millennia. In recent years scholars of religion have begun to bring together this corpus of material under a unified subject heading: religion and animals.

This course provides an overview of that field, as well as trying to address some complex social and environmental problems that animals play a significant role in. As such it engages with the theories that underpin the animal liberation movement, which has been highly critical of the positioning of the animals within religions traditions. The course also exposes students to emerging theologies within many of the major traditions that argues for animal liberation as consistent with the tradition's values. At the same time, the course provides counterviews to these theologies, and examines them through a system of ethical hermeneutics for interpreting scriptures.

A recurring theme in the course is the tension within historical traditions with regard to animal welfare, as identified by Paul Waldau (see the Addendum to the Course Description, at the end of this document, for a longer description of this topic). The course examines different religious beliefs, but emphasizes that these traditions are not fixed or coherent belief systems; rather, they are dynamic and evolving systems of thought and practice, parts of which may be inconsistent or even be in conflict with one another. The course examines these conflicts in detail.

The role that animals play in the various mythologies will also be examined. For example, the horse, because of its physical power, has been mythologized in India (as noted by Wendy Doniger) even though it is not indigenous to that region, and the mouse in Roman thought was seen as threat to the established order. Why is it that some animals have been historically demonized and scapegoated, while other animals have been fetishized, and yet others domesticated? As with race and gender "animality" has provided a vehicle for human subjectivity, through which human self-conceptions and cultural identities form and operate. It is also a concept against which philosophers and theologians such as Aristotle, Aquinas, and Descartes have positioned humanity, hierarchically. We examine the role of animals in human religious self-imaging, from Palaeolithic culture, continuing to the present time, organized according to historical religious traditions and the cultures they represent.

Students should emerge from this course able to articulate how different religious traditions view animals, and how religions have influenced modern conceptions of animals and nature, and how they may be understood as cultural resources for addressing practical issues affecting humanity. Pedagogically, the course seeks to expose students to a wide variety of topics related to the issue of religion and animals. Accordingly there are different reading options and reading response options for each class. Most of the readings are from *A Communion of Subjects*, an anthology very representative of the field. A more recent anthology, *Animals and Human Imagination* (2012), supplies

additional readings. This, and the wide latitude in terms of options to write on, provides students with the opportunity to explore areas of special interest to them.

**Required textbooks.** Waldau, Paul, and Kimberley Patton, eds. *A Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science, and Ethics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.

**Evaluation**

Five reading responses (2 pages, double-spaced) .....	15%
First major assignment (800 to 1,000 words) .....	15%
Second major assignment (2500 to 3500 words).....	30%
Test .....	25%
Attendance / Participation.....	10%
Five film responses (1 page, double-spaced) .....	5%

**Assignments**

**Five reading responses**

These are to be submitted *via* email to the instructor, every week, until you have written five of them. The purpose of this exercise is to motivate students to do the readings and to begin thinking about them, and to give students needed experience in academic writing. You will be allowed to turn reading responses into your main essays. Responses are worth 15%, or 3% per response. Please use standard academic formatting (e.g. MLA, Chicago, or another standard academic format).

Write two pages (double-spaced) on one of the assigned readings for the class that the reading is due. You will be given options in terms of readings. Summarize the readings and provide some reflection on their meaning in relation to the themes in this course. You can compare them if you wish, or treat them separately. The responses should be properly formatted to reflect a scholarly perspective. They will be graded for content and form. The instructor will provide feedback on them. An example will be provided online under Course Materials.

**First major assignment** ..... **due Feb. 14<sup>th</sup>** *via Turnitin.com*

For the first major assignment write a 1,000 to 1,200 word essay on one of the themes provided by the instructor (see list at the end of this course outline). You are permitted to use one or more of your reading responses. This is an exploratory essay, to motivate you to start thinking about and researching the connections between religion and animals.

You are encouraged to draw on the essays in the text, as resources. You must refer to at least five different scholarly sources. Any essay in the main texts count as a single source. You may draw on Internet sources where necessary, but they must be scholarly and properly cited. Please note that Internet sources that are not properly cited or that lack quotation marks adjacent to direct quotations from the site may be regarded as plagiarism.

This assignment is worth 15% of the final grade. The assignment will be discussed in more detail in class. If you are confused about what is required, please consult with the

instructor. Essays will be graded and sent back to you via email, with comments, prior to that date.

**Second major assignment**..... **due April 2** via *Turnitin.com*

For the second major assignment (final essay), analyze a specific issue related to this course (e.g. Christianity and animals; Islam and animals; animal sacrifice; animals in mythology; animals in religious art; animals in indigenous cultures; religious responses to global warming in relation to human dietary choices; human exceptionalism and religion; atheism and animals, etc.). Use the ideas discussed in one or more of the primary readings. On the basis of your readings for this course explain the issue involved, drawing on some of the analytical tools discussed in lectures.

Topics must be approved by instructor beforehand, *via* email. Send your topic, in the form of one or two paragraphs and sources you intend to use, to the instructor, no later than March 12<sup>th</sup> (and ideally before then). Length: 2500-3500 words. The assignment is worth 30% of the final grade. It cannot be on a theme that you explored in the mid-term essay. You are permitted to use reading responses. A more detailed explanation will be forthcoming in class. There is no final exam.

All written assignments should be in proper essay form, using conventional methods of citation and bibliography (e.g. MLA or Chicago or comparable system). Papers are due on the dates indicated. Major assignments must be submitted to *Turnitin.com*. Late papers will be penalized 1% a day (where the assignment counts for 100%) for every calendar day that an assignment is late, including weekends and holidays. Reading responses do not have to go through *Turnitin.com*; they should be sent *via* email to the instructor.

**Test.** The test is worth 25%. It will be held in the first hour of the ninth class, on March 5<sup>th</sup> from 6:10 to 7 p.m. It will consist primarily of essay type questions, but also some multiple choice questions. It is meant to cover everything discussed in class to that date: required readings, lecture material, and guest lectures.

You are not expected to have read all the required readings on the syllabus; I will notify you as to what you are responsible for as the date draws near, depending on what we manage to cover in class. I will not test you on readings that we don't cover in class. Supplementary readings and films will not be covered.

**Attendance / Participation.** This is worth 10%, based on class attendance and the instructor's impression of your commitment to the course.

**Film responses.** Worth 5% of the total grade (1% per response), these responses should be no more than one page double-spaced. Summarizing the film or its plot is not necessary. Rather, what I am looking for is a reflection on how the film ties into themes discussed in the course.

For example, in the film *The Cove*, discuss how Ric O'Barry's personal transformation to awareness that dolphins have complex emotional lives and minds of their own could be described as a conversion experience, or for the film *Sharkwater* describe how the filmmaker's experience of swimming with the sharks (which Rudolph Otto might describe as a *numinous* experience) becomes an ultimate concern and source of moral

conviction for him. Another example is *A River of Waste*, which assumes a holistic worldview; you could tie this into the essay on Heidegger's ontology, for example. I would also like your general impression of the film: what emotions did it evoke, what parts were most engaging, are there things about it you did not like, etc. You can go over the one page limit, if necessary (2 pages max.).

### **First class: Wed. Jan. 8<sup>th</sup>**

NB - *The powerpoint slideshow for this and future lectures will be posted under Course Materials every week.*

First hour: **Introduction.** 1) Introduction to course and review of course requirements and review of the main text. 2) Short video: *Kindness to Animals: What Religions Say*; the issue of the tension within historical religious traditions and opposing interpretations of scriptures with regard to animal welfare; a brief overview of Paul Waldau's thought. 3) Introduction to Thomas Berry's thought, biocentrism, and the idea of role of religion as a pedagogical tool for cultural transformation. 4) Introduction to Darwinism and Bekoff's thought; the implications of animal ethology for both animal ethics and religious studies. 5) Methodological issue in the exploration of historical religious traditions: the problem of referring to world traditions monolithically against the practical necessity of doing so.

Second hour: **Preview of animals in imagination; in mythology and art; animal sacrifice.** 1) Human self-conception through animality. 2) Application of the psychology and sociology to the examination of "animal consciousness" and the animal protection movement. 3) Overview of animals in mythology and art. 5) The topic of animal sacrifice.

There are no required readings for the first class, but if students wish to explore the themes discussed in further depth, please refer to the following sources:

- Thomas Berry. Prologue to COS, pp. 5-9.
- Thomas Berry website: <http://www.thomasberry.org/>
- Marc Bekoff website: <http://www.literati.net/authors/marc-bekoff/>
- Animal Rights Philosophy online: <http://www.AnimalRightsAcademy.com/>
- Paul Waldau website: <http://www.paulwaldau.com/>

---

### **Second class: Wed. Jan. 15<sup>th</sup>**

Film showing at Media Commons, 3:00 p.m. *Call of Life: Facing the Mass Extinction*

First hour: Review of introductory readings in COS, pp. xv to 57, by Waldau, and Patton.

Second hour: **Buddhism and animals; issues pertaining to the interpretation of scriptures.** 1) Comparison of two readings: engaged Buddhism and the pro-animal interpretation of Buddhism juxtaposed to the argument that Buddhism is "speciesist." 3) The question of alleged "distortion" of the canon, highlighting the crucial distinction between Waldau and Harris *vis-a-vis regulative* and *constitutive* interpretations of scriptures; Waldau's distinction between symbolic and "real" animals, which facilitates a regulative interpretation.

Reading response options:

- 1) Part I of COS, pp. 11-57 (Introduction, and both Waldau and Patton readings)
- 2) Lily de Silva. "The Buddhist Attitude towards Nature" Richard G. Botzler, Susan J. Armstrong. *Environment Ethics: Divergence and Convergence*. Second Edition. McGraw Hill, 1998, and Ian Harris. "A Vast unsupervised recycling plant: Animals and the Buddhist Cosmos" in COS, pp. 208-217.
- 3) Paul Waldau. *The Specter of Speciesism: Buddhist and Christian Views of Animals*. American Academy of Religion Book, 2001. Posted in Course Materials.

Supplementary:

- Ivette Vargas. "Snake-Kings, Boars' Heads, Deer Parks, Monkey Talk: Animals as Transmitters and Transformers in Indian and Tibetan Buddhist Narratives." In COS, pp. 218-237.
- Section on engaged Buddhism in Donald W. Mitchell. *Buddhism: Introducing the Buddhist Experience*. Second Edition. Oxford University Press, 2008. Posted in Course Materials.

**Third class: Wed. Jan. 22**

Film showing at Media Commons, 3:00 p.m. *The Witness*; clips from lecture by Tom Regan; clip from *The Story of the Weeping Camel*

First hour: **Ethical hermeneutics**. 1) Kant's distinction between regulative and constitutive interpretations of scriptures, Franklin's amendment to the *Formula of Humanity*, and the ethical assessment of scriptures and traditions according to these criteria, with examples from the Bible and the *Rg Veda*. 2) Kant's *als ob* and the moral imperative of compassion; Tillich's related concept of *moral faith*, its relation to *ontological faith*, in relation to the numinous dimension of animal consciousness present in varying degrees in religious traditions. 3) Arguments *against* the idea of an ethical assessment of historical traditions.

Second hour: **Animal ethics and ethology**. 1) Brief overview of animal rights philosophy, including an argument against it by Gary Steiner. 2) Animal ethology, and how it complicates the categorization of the animal patient; Bekoff's theory of morality in animals, and the religion of animals. 3) Carol Adams' thought, ecofeminism and animals; the issue of interlocking oppressions; the rights-care debate. 4) The religious origin of rights language, and argument that there is a moral imperative common to both historical religions and rights language; the argument against this view.

Reading response options:

- 1) Gary Steiner. "Descartes, Christianity, and Contemporary Speciesism." In COS, pp. 117-131, and Paul York. Reply to Steiner, posted in Course Materials.
- 2) Julian Franklin. *Animal Rights and Moral Philosophy*. New York: Columbia University Press: 2007, pp. 1-31. Posted in Course Materials.
- 3) Marc Bekoff. "Wild Justice, Social Cognition, Fairness, and Morality: A Deep Appreciation for the Subjective Lives of Animals." In COS, pp. 461-477.
- 4) Carol J. Adams. "A very rare and difficult thing: Ecofeminism, Attention to Animal Suffering and the Disappearance of the Subject." In COS, pp. 591-604; and Kim Roberts. "Interlocking Oppressions: The Nature of Cruelty to Nonhuman Animals and its Relationship to Violence Towards Humans." In COS, pp. 606-

## Supplementary:

- Wendy Doniger. "Making Animals Vanish." In Aaron Gross, Anne Valeley, eds. *Animals and the Human Imagination: A Companion to Animal Studies*. Columbia University Press. 2012.
- David Sztybel's website: [www.davidsztybel.info](http://www.davidsztybel.info)
- Paul Tillich. *The Dynamics of Faith*. Harper & Row, 1958.
- *The Story of The Weeping Camel. 2003.avi* (Youtube)
- Tom Regan lecture online: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fTNNJspZXA4>
- Rudolph Otto. *The Holy*. Oxford University Press, 1923.

**Fourth class: Wed. Jan. 29<sup>th</sup>**

Preceded by film showing at Media Commons, 3:00 p.m. *Peaceable Kingdom*

First hour: **Animals in mythology, and portrayed as symbols.** 1) Review of Doniger, Lawrence, McDonough, and Mortenson in COS.

Second hour: **Animals in imagination; animals in religious art.** 1) Gross readings. 2) Review of Apostolos-Cappadona in COS, and slideshow based on her essay.

## Reading response options:

- 1) Aaron Gross, "Introduction and Overview: Animal Others and Animal Studies" and "Animal Matters: Human/Animals and the Contemporary West." In Aaron Gross, Anne Valeley, eds. *Animals and the Human Imagination: A Companion to Animal Studies*. Columbia University Press. 2012, pp. 1-24, pp. 113-120.
- 2) Diane Apostolos-Cappadona. "On the Dynamis of Animals, or How Animalium Became Anthropos." In COS, pp. 440-457.
- 3) Wendy Doniger. "A Symbol in Search of an Object: The Mythology of Horses in India." In COS, pp. 336-350, and Christopher McDonough. "Ridiculus Mus: Of Mice and Men in Roman Thought." In COS, pp. 413-422.
- 4) Eric Mortenson. "Raven Augury from Tibet to Alaska: Dialects, Divine Agency, and the Bird's Eye-View." In COS, pp. 423-436, and Elizabeth Lawrence. "Hunting the Wren: A Sacred Bird in Ritual." In COS, pp. 406-412.

## Supplementary:

- Ron Broglio. "Thinking With Surfaces: Animals and Contemporary Art." In Aaron Gross, Anne Valeley, eds. *Animals and the Human Imagination: A Companion to Animal Studies*. Columbia University Press. 2012.
- Brett Buchanan. "Being with Animals: Reconsidering Heidegger's Animal Ontology." In Aaron Gross, Anne Valeley, eds. *Animals and the Human Imagination: A Companion to Animal Studies*. Columbia University Press. 2012.

**Fifth class: Wed. Feb. 5<sup>th</sup>**

Preceded by film showing at Media Commons, 3:00 p.m. *Vegucated*; lecture by Andrew Linzey; *Father Frank Mann's Awakening to Compassion for Animals*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ekOPyXGs3Q>

First hour: **Christianity and animals.** Guest lecture by Dr. Gregory Kennedy, S.J.

Second hour: **Atheism and animals.** 1) James Rachels reading, and response. 2) Peter Singer essay, in COS. 3) Beverley Kienzle's essay in COS. 4) The link between conceptions of natural and divine law and species discrimination, using two examples from American history: (i) Manifest Destiny; and (ii) the recent use of Genesis to support factory farming and climate change denial in American political culture.

Reading response options:

- 1) Jay McDaniel. "Practicing the Presence of God" in COS, pp. 132-145, and Andrew Linzey. *Animal Gospel: Christian Faith as If Animals Mattered*. London: Hodder and Stoughton, and Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1999 and 2000. Excerpt posted in Course Materials.
- 2) Introduction and excerpt from Chapter Five of James Rachels. *Created from Animals: The Moral Implications of Darwinism*. Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. 194- 223. <http://www.jamesrachels.org/CFA5.pdf> and Peter Singer. "Animal Protection and the Problem of Religion: An Interview with Peter Singer." In COS, pp. 616-618.
- 3) Beverley Kienzle. "The Bestiary of Heretics: Imaging Medieval Christian Heresy with Insects and Animals" in COS, pp. 103-116, and "The Ethics of Raising Livestock Industrial Agriculture" U of T magazine: <http://www.magazine.utoronto.ca/feature/ethics-of-raising-livestock-industrial-agriculture-animal-rights-u-of-t/>

Supplementary:

- Michael S. Northcott. "Faithful Feasting" in *A Moral Climate: The Ethics of Global Warming*. Orbis Books: MaryKnoll, NY: 2007. pp. 171-187. Posted in Course Materials.
- Paul Waldau. *The Specter of Speciesism: Buddhist and Christian Views of Animals*. American Academy of Religion Book, 2001.
- Andrew Linzey lecture online (Youtube) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J3uIWDiPlto>
- Andrew Linzey and Daniel Cohn-Sherbok. *After Noah: Animals and the Liberation of Theology*, Cassel Publisher. 1997.
- "No Meatless Mondays at the USDA" New York Times, July 31, 2012. <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/07/31/no-meatless-mondays-at-the-usda/>
- Bill Moyers. *Is God Green?* PBS (online)

---

**Sixth class: Wed. Feb. 12<sup>th</sup>**

Preceded by film showing at Media Commons, 3:00 p.m. *River of Waste*

First hour: **Environmental holism and animals.** 1) the problem of *environmental fascism*; 2) Thomas Berry and biocentrism. 3) Mother Earth religions and animals; review of Grimm in COS; Opoku in COS. 4) Albert Schweitzer's *reverence for life* ethic in contrast to pastoralism, hunting, and the locavore ethic.

Second hour: **Environment crisis and animals.** 1) Ethical holism versus ethical individualism and synthesis. 2) Factory farming, the mass extinction of species, climate change. 3) A positive vision for inclusion of animals in Berry's *communion of subjects*; the political vision for human-nonhuman cooperation in *Zoopolis*. 4) Rockefeller's Earth Charter reading.

Reading response options:

- 1) Jordan Paper. "Humans and Animals: The History from a Religio-Ecological Perspective." In COS, pp. 326-332, and Steven Rockefeller. "Earth Charter Ethics and Animals." In COS, pp. 621-628.
- 2) Thomas Berry reading in COS pp. xi-xiv; Mary Evelyn Tucker. "A Communion of Subjects and a Multiplicity of Intelligences." In COS, pp. 645-647, and Stephen Scharper. "Eco Nightmare: Culpability Responsibility, and the Environmental Crisis." *Walter Gordon Massey Symposia. Fourteenth Lecture.* 2006. pp. 35-43.
- 3) Paul York. "Animals and the Environment: ethical holism versus ethical individualism" and Paul York. "The Environmental Cost of ILOs."
- 4) Sam D. Gill. *Mother Earth: An American Story.* University of Chicago Press, 1987. excerpt posted in Course Materials, and John Grim. "Knowing and Being Known by Animals: Indigenous Perspectives in Personhood." In COS, pp. 373-390.
- 5) Kofi Opoku. "Animals in African Mythology." In COS, pp. 351-359.

Supplementary:

- Ian McIntosh. "Why Umbuka Killed His Master": Aboriginal Reconciliation and the Australian Wild Dog (*Canis lupus dingo*)." In COS, pp. 360-370.
- Chief Dan George. *My Spirit Soars.* Posted under Course Materials.
- Albert Schweitzer. "Reverence for Life." Online at <http://www1.chapman.edu/schweitzer/sch.reading4.html>
- David Fraser. "Caring for Farm Animals: Pastoralist Ideals in an Industrialized World" In COS, pp. 547-555
- Thomas Berry. "Ecology and Ethics" (1996) <http://www.earth-community.org/images/EthicsEcology1996.pdf>
- Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka. *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights.* Oxford University Press, 2011.

---

**Seventh class: Wed. Feb. 19<sup>th</sup>**

Preceded by film showing at Media Commons, 3:00 p.m. *The Cove*

First hour: **Islam and animals.** 1) Review of major concepts in previous lecture (on environmental issues and animals). 2) Guest speaker on Islam and animals, Mourad Laabdi (Phd Candidate, Department for the Study of Religion, U of T).

Second hour: **Judaism and animals.** 1) Overview of pro-animal Jewish theology and comparison with the more politically dominant anthropocentric Jewish theology and practice. 2) Review of the two different approaches taken by Cohn-Sherkbok (in COS) and Kay (Course Material). 3) Review of Kalechofsky reading, in COS. 5) Aaron Gross reading (online) and wider debate within the Jewish community regarding definitions of *kosher*.

Reading response options:

1) Dan Cohn-Sherbok. "Hope for the Animal Kingdom." In COS, pp. 81-90; and Aaron Gross. "When Kosher Isn't Kosher." March/April 2005. Vol. 20. No. 2. <http://www.jewishveg.com/media11.html/>; and Jeanne Kay. "Concepts of Nature in the Hebrew Bible." In Richard G. Botzler, Susan J. Armstrong. *Environment Ethics: Divergence and Convergence*. Second Edition. McGraw Hill, 1998.

Posted in Course Materials.

2) Richard Foltz. "This she-camel of God is a sign to you: Dimensions of Animals in Islamic Traditions and Muslim Culture." In COS, pp. 149-159, and Ali Asani. "'Oh that I could be a bird and fly, I would rush to the Beloved': Birds in Islamic Mystical Poetry." In COS, pp. 170-175.

Supplementary for Judaism:

- Roberta Kalschofsky. "Hierarchy, Kinship, and Responsibility." In COS, pp.91-99.

Supplementary for Islam:

- Zayn Kassam. "The Case of the Animals Versus Man: Towards an Ecology of Being." In COS, pp. 160-169.
- Interview with Seyed Hossein Nassr, on Islam and global warming [http://www.thefreelibrary.com/\\_/print/PrintArticle.aspx?id=164596587](http://www.thefreelibrary.com/_/print/PrintArticle.aspx?id=164596587)

---

**Eighth class: Wed. Feb. 26<sup>th</sup>**

Preceded by film showing at Media Commons, 3:00 p.m. *Jainism*

First hour: **Hinduism and animals**. 1) Review of previous lecture on Judaism and Islam. 2) Review of Chapple and Wiley essays in COS.

Second hour: **Jainism and animals**. 1) Review of Nelson and Bryant essays in COS. 2) Guest lecture by Jain practitioner Tushar Mehta.

Reading response options:

- 1) Christopher Chapple. "Inherent Value without Nostalgia: Animals and the Jaina Tradition." In COS, pp. 241-249, and Kristi Wiley. "Five-Sensed Animals in Jainism." In COS, pp. 250-255.
- 2) Lance Nelson. "Cows, Elephants, Dogs and Other Lesser Embodiments of Atman: Reflections on Hindu Attitudes Towards Nonhuman Animals." In COS, pp. 179-193, and Edwin Bryant. "Strategies of Vedic Subversion: The Emergence of Vegetarianism in Post-Vedic India." In COS, pp. 194-203.

Supplementary:

- Anand Pandian. "Pastoral Power in the Postcolony: On the Politics of the Criminal Animal in South India." In Aaron Gross, Anne Valeley, eds. *Animals and the Human Imagination: A Companion to Animal Studies*. Columbia University Press. 2012.

---

**Ninth class: Wed. Mar. 5<sup>th</sup>**

Preceded by film showing at Media Commons, 3:00 p.m. *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*

First hour: In-class test.

Second hour: Guest lecturer, Erika Ritter.

Supplementary:

- Erika Ritter. *The Dog by the Cradle, and the Serpent Beneath: Some Paradoxes of Human-Animal Relationships* (2009).

---

**Tenth class: Wed. Mar. 19<sup>th</sup>**

Preceded by film showing at Media Commons, 3:00 p.m. *Our Daily Bread* (excerpt); *The Cove* (excerpt)

First hour: **Secular religions.** 1) Ethical veganism as a religion, based on the sociology of religion (pertaining to ritual, belief, community, identity, proselytizing, etc.) and psychology of religion. 2) Review of Bron Taylor's argument. 2) Comparison of Levinas with experience of animal consciousness. 3) Review of arguments in Ontario Human Rights review.

Second hour: **The commodification and de-animalizing of animals.** 1) Consumerism and the religion of the market; the cosmology of domination. 2) Overview of the critique of technology and "faith in progress through technology." 3) The technological reduction and de-animalizing of animals in this system. 4) Re-animalizing animas: the farm sanctuary movement; liminal animals, overview of Zoopolis.

Reading response options:

- 1) Paul York. "Ethical veganism as religion." Posted in Course Materials, and review of Ontario Human Rights arguments, posted in Course Materials, and "Judge rules activist's beliefs on climate change akin to religion" UK Guardian. Nov. 3, 2009. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2009/nov/03/tim-nicholson-climate-change-belief>
- 1) Mark Hathaway and Leonardo Boff. "The Cosmology of Domination" in *The Tao of Liberation: Exploring the Ecology of Transformation*. Orbis Book, 2009. pp. 141-164; and David Loy. "The Religion of the Market" online at <http://www.religiousconsultation.org/loy.htm>
- 3) Tom Regan, *Empty Cages: Facing the Challenge of Animal Rights*. Rowman & Littlefield. 2005, pp. 1-83.
- 4) David Wulf. *The Psychology of Religion*. John Wiley & Sons. 1996.
- 5) Grey Owl. *Pilgrims in the Wild*, 1923. Entire book online here: <http://gutenberg.ca/ebooks/greyowl-pilgrims/greyowl-pilgrims-00-h-dir/greyowl-pilgrims-00-h.html>

Supplementary:

- Joel Novek. "Discipline and Distancing: Confined Pigs in the Factory Farm Gulag." In Aaron Gross, Anne Valeley, eds. *Animals and the Human Imagination: A Companion to Animal Studies*. Columbia University Press. 2012.
- Barbara Jane Davy. "An Other Face of Ethics in Levinas" in *Ethics & the Environment* – Volume 12, Number 1, Spring 2007, pp. 39-65.

- Phillip Wollen. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ApeIUzKLkuo>
- Bron Taylor. *Dark Green Religion: Nature Spirituality and the Planetary Future*. University of California Press, Berkeley, 2010. Excerpt, posted in Course Materials.
- Review of Vincent Miller's *Consuming Religion: Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture*, online at <http://www.goodreads.com/review/show/274035272>

---

**Eleventh class: Wed. Mar. 26<sup>th</sup>**

Preceded by film showing at Media Commons, 3:00 p.m.

First hour: **Sikhism; Chinese religions; emerging religions.** 1) Review of essays in COS listed below. 2) Brief guest lecture on Sikhism and animals, by Sukhvir Kaur Khalsa. 3) Emerging religions and spiritual movements that focus on animals.

Second hour: Guest lecture by Anita Krajnc, on the vegetarian philosophies of Tolstoy & Gandhi. Note: this lecture relates to the topic of ethical veganism as religion.

Reading response options:

- 1) Roel Sterckx. "Of a tawny bull we make offering: Animals in Early Chinese Religion." In COS, pp. 260-272, and E. N. Anderson and Lisa Raphals. "Daoism and Animals" In COS, pp. 276-290.
- 2) Rodney Taylor. "Of Animals and Humans: The Confucian Perspective" In COS, pp. 294-307, and Roger Ames. "Human Exceptionalism versus Cultural Elitism." In COS, pp. 311-324.
- 3) Carla Nappi. "On Yeti and Being Just: Carving the Borders of Humanity in Early Modern China." In Aaron Gross, Anne Valeley, eds. *Animals and the Human Imagination: A Companion to Animal Studies*. Columbia University Press. 2012. Posted in Course Materials.
- 4) Leo Tolstoy, "The First Step." Preface to Howard Williams, *The Ethics of Diet: An Anthology of Vegetarian Thought* (1878) [http://www.ivu.org/history/tolstoy/the\\_%20first\\_step.html](http://www.ivu.org/history/tolstoy/the_%20first_step.html), and Leo Tolstoy. "The Kingdom of God is Within You" Chapter One <http://www.kingdomnow.org/w-inyou01.html>, and review Toronto Pig Save website: <http://torontopigsave.org/>

Supplementary:

- Anthony Williams. *Inside the Divine Pattern* slideshow: <https://www.facebook.com/InsideTheDivinePattern>
- Website: Supreme Master Television <http://suprememastertv.com/SOS/>
- "Proposal Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth" Cochabamba Conference. <http://pwccc.wordpress.com/programa/>
- M. K. Gandhi. *Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth*. Beacon Press, 1992. Excerpt, posted in Course Materials.

---

**Twelfth class: Wed. Apr. 2<sup>nd</sup>**

Preceded by film showing at Media Commons, 3:00 p.m. *Maximum Tolerated Dose*

Last class; final essay due via *Turnitin.com*

First hour: **Animal sacrifice.** 1) Review of essays on the topic in COS. 2) Review of the Bryant's essay on the subversion of animal sacrifices in Hinduism; 3) Review of Girard's theory of scapegoating and religious violence. 4) Review of book *Animal Sacrifices: Religious Perspectives on the Use of Animals Science*, and the relation of animal testing to the practice of animal sacrifice.

Second hour: **Review and discussion.**

Reading response options:

- 1) Kimberley Patton. "Animal Sacrifice: Metaphysics of the Sublimated Victim." COS, pp. 391-405.
- 2) Jonathan Klawans. "Sacrifice in Ancient Israel: Pure Bodies, Domesticated Animals, and the Divine Shepherd." In COS, pp. 65-80.

Supplementary:

- Tom Regan, ed. *Animal Sacrifices: Religious Perspectives on the Use of Animals in Science*. Temple University Press, 1987. Posted in Course Materials.
- Rene Girard. *The Scapegoat*. John Hopkins University Press. tran. Yvonne Freccero. 1989.

## First assignment questions

Choose one of the following. If there are several questions being asked you are not required to answer every one of them. Rather, the questions are meant to inspire critical thought on the topic, to get you started. Please email me if you need clarification on what is expected. I will discuss the questions in class, as well.

- 1) Do historical religions have a positive role to play in terms of animal welfare or animal liberation? Describe both theological and atheist arguments on this point. This could be framed as a comparison of Linzey and Rachels or Cohn-Sherbok and Rachels, for example. You can focus on historical religions in general, or on a specific tradition. For example, you could compare different interpretations of dietary standards in Judaism or Islam, or the tension between meat-eating and observance of the First Precept, in a particular Buddhist monastic tradition, etc. You are encouraged to look at these traditions as evolving systems of thought and practice, parts of which may be inconsistent, rather than as fixed belief systems.
- 2) Describe Carol Adams' work and the ecofeminist perspective on animals, in contrast to patriarchal religious traditions. You could refer to the Kienzle reading for example. Describe the problem of interlocking oppression. You may also wish to examine criticisms of Adams' work.
- 3) Summarize one of the three chapters in Julian Franklin's book, discuss how it is applicable to farm animals and contrast this view with the instrumentalist view of animals as commodities. Refer to one or more of the course readings to help describe the instrumentalist view as a type of religious worldview. An additional related theme you might wish to explore is the fact that utilitarianism, rights theory, and Kantian ethics (all described by Franklin) are products of the Enlightenment, but so is industrialization and the instrumental use of the natural world. How might these two aspects of the Enlightenment be contrasted with holistic cosmologies or *theos-rights* for animals, for example?
- 4) A group of scientists recently predicted that by 2050 AD most of humanity would be forced to become vegetarians because there would be insufficient water to run industrial livestock operations.<sup>1</sup> Let us assume that to be the case, for the sake of argument. Describe how a specific religious tradition in 2050 might address the issue. Would they embrace this change or reject it? Would both responses occur within the tradition? Drawing on the issue of multiple possible interpretations of scripture, and divisions within traditions over environmental questions, describe what sort of debate that might occur within the tradition regarding the question of animal welfare as linked to climate change and water stress? Would the instrumental use of animals still be permitted even if factory farms were abolished? Would there be more emerging religions or movements with historical traditions that argue for some version of animal rights as part of a wider platform for greater environmental concern?
- 5) Utilizing one or more of the essays in COS, describe the use of animals as symbol used for human self-conceptions. Contrast this understanding of animals with what we know of them from the science of ethology and Waldau's concept to 'real' animals. What fascination do they hold for us, according to Patton, Tucker

---

<sup>1</sup> John Vidal. "Food shortages could force world into vegetarianism, warn scientists" in the UK Guardian, Aug. 26, 2012. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/2012/aug/26/food-shortages-world-vegetarianism>

- or Gross? Why do they become incorporated into religious worldviews? Does Bekoff's high regard for them in any way resemble the fascination and reverence of some traditions? Mary Evelyn Tucker speaks of the *numinous* in regard to animals; could this also be used to describe Bekoff's perspective? How might this be contrasted with Descartes' view of animals as machines to be used for instrumental use by science? Does Bekoff anthropomorphize animals?
- 6) Using Waldau's theory of the tension in early Buddhism and Christianity as a starting point, discuss this tension (or what Erika Ritter refers to as a 'paradox') in more depth in an historical tradition today. Has modernity amplified the tension, and if so in what way (e.g. industrialization, the influence of Enlightenment ethics)? Describe Waldau's concept of concern for "real" animals and relate it to the contrast between intrinsic rights, or *theos-rights*, and instrumental use.
  - 7) Using the first half of Regan's *Empty Cages* and the film *Peaceable Kingdom* as a starting points, as well as our initial discussion on the psychology and sociology of the religious movements, and Clifford Geertz' definition of religion, examine how the animal rights movement could be referred to as a kind of religion, or creed. You may wish to refer to arguments presently being made at the Ontario Human Rights Commission on the subject. This topic anticipates the 10<sup>th</sup> lecture, so you may wish to refer to readings for that lecture.
  - 8) In the introductory essay by Patton in COS there is reference to a Paleolithic cave painting and what it reveals about prehistoric peoples' attitudes towards animals. Apostolos-Cappadona examines the same issue in her essay on animal in art (also in COS). Compare this with the way that animals are viewed today by the industrial livestock industry and consumers of animal products. What role does religion play in this radical reduction of animals, if any? How might some elements within religious traditions, such as engaged Buddhism or Christian animal rights theology, be used to describe their use in this way, and how could this be contrasted with the traditions' more dominant views and practices?
  - 9) Waldau asks the following: "In providing moral guidance, do religions help us see other animals, or do they obscure and caricature them? What place should any religion give to discoveries that some non-human animals are far more complex than ever envisioned by the western intellectual tradition? Many religions have at least one sub-tradition that asserts, as do so many indigenous traditions, that some other living beings should be within our moral community. What might a religion that was fully informed about other animals' realities and humans' current treatment and uses of other animals say about the ethics of these practices?" Answer this question by drawing on the readings thus far. You can refer to religions in general, or to a specific tradition, if you wish.
  - 10) A topic of your choosing, but it must be approved by the instructor in writing, in advance, and must pertain to issues discussed in lectures, and must utilize readings from the text. Standard accounts of historical religions' beliefs regarding animals and the environment are insufficient; the essay must examine a more detailed topic, such as how those beliefs compare with alternative beliefs within the tradition, or how traditional cultural practices affect beliefs, for example.

## Film showings

Films will be shown just prior to class (every Wednesday), at Screening Room 1, in the Media Commons, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of Robarts Library, 3:00 p.m., starting in the second week. Because this is outside class time, attendance is *not* mandatory. Students unable to attend the showings due to time constraints may watch the films on their own time and submit critical reflections on them *via* email. All films are available through Media Commons, on reserve, or online. Here are the library call numbers for the films, or online locations:

Key: MC = Media Commons, Robarts Library, 3<sup>rd</sup> fl. All DVD, unless otherwise stated.

- Film 1: *Call of Life: Facing the Mass Extinction* (MC 758624)
- Film 2: *Vegucated* (MC \_\_\_\_); lecture by Prof. Andrew Linzey (Youtube)
- Film 3: *Speciesism, the Movie; Earthlings* (first 20 minutes)
- Film 4: *The Witness* (MC 758573); lecture by Tom Regan (Youtube)
- Film 5: *Peaceable Kingdom* (MC 751043)
- Film 6: *River of Waste* (Youtube) or *Ghost in the Machine* if it is available
- Film 7: *The Cove* (MC 755401)
- Film 8: *Jainism* (in five parts, on Youtube, posted by Publius4321)
- Film 9: *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* (MC 757656)
- Film 10: *Our Daily Bread* (MC 753479) excerpt; Koyinsquatti (MCD 750887) excerpt
- Film 11: *Maximum Tolerated Dose* [not yet in MC]

Below is an additional list of films, which you have the option to watch instead of, or in addition to the list above. Some of them are not directly about animals, but in your reflections try to see how they relate. They are all online or in the library.

- Conservation and environmental movies that relate animals in some way: *Sharkwater* (MC 753978); *The 11<sup>th</sup> Hour* (MC 752927); *Blue Planet: Deep Trouble* (MC VHS 007234); *Is God Green?* PBS (online); *Green, the movie* (Youtube); *A Delicate Balance* (Youtube); Sylvia Earle TED talk (Youtube); *Revolution* (director: Rob Stewart – uncertain re: availability); *Planet Earth* and *Blue Planet* video series (Robarts); *Food Inc.* (MC 755341); *Home* (Youtube); *Unity, the Movie* (director: Shaun Monson – uncertain re: availability).
- Fictional films that have some bearing on animals: *Dersu Uzala* (MC 753011); *Bold Native*; *Fantastic Planet* (Youtube); *District 9* (MC 755399).
- Animations: *The Lorax* (original, Youtube); *The Arkelope* (Youtube).
- Animal rights documentaries: *Earthlings* (Google Video); *A Cow at my Table* (Youtube); *I Am An Animal: The Story of Ingrid Newkirk*; *Meet Your Meat* (Youtube); *Farm to Fridge* (Youtube); *The Animals Movie* (MC 758401); *Behind the Mask*; *The Skin Trade*.
- Miscellaneous: *Native American Creation Myths.mov* (Youtube); Marc Bekoff (several videos, Youtube); The story of Shirley and Jenny in two parts on Youtube: Nature (PBS) - *Shirley the Elephant* (Part 1), Nature (PBS) *Shirley the Elephant* (Part 2); BBC *The Secret Life of Elephants* (Youtube); *The.Story.of.The.Weeping.Camel.2003.avi* (Youtube).

If you find other interesting videos and films on the theme of animals, especially those that somehow relate to religious studies, please forward them to the instruct

## **Addendum to the course description**

Philosophically, this course addresses the debate within environmental ethics regarding animal rights and how different religious worldviews have shaped that debate, or could shape it. The link between ethics and cosmologies is explored, in terms of the inclusion and exclusion of animals from moral considerability.

A recurring theme is the tension within historical religions between anthropocentrism, which sanctions the instrumental use of animals, and animal welfare, which recognizes their interests. However, students will also be exposed to worldviews that challenge this dichotomy. For example, some indigenous religions regard animals non-hierarchically as equals in Creation but still sanction their instrumental use within a subsistence economy, and we find a similar pattern in emerging holistic worldviews that draw on indigenous traditions.

Another important distinction, emerging from this examination, is the difference between the modern conception of rights and *theos-rights* in the Abrahamic traditions, which are anthropocentric and hierarchical but still give greater consideration to animals than modern science and industry. The latter are influenced by a Cartesian worldview, which regards animals as machines.

We also examine animal ethology, which emerged from Darwinism; it argues for another perspective on animals, based on their capacity for thoughts and emotions, and even speculates regarding the possibility that other animals might have religious experiences of a kind.

We review various religious responses to the crises of global warming, finite resource depletion, and biodiversity loss, and how certain views of animals, influenced by religious traditions, have exacerbated these crises, but could also ameliorate them.

**Additional texts (optional).** You are not required to purchase these texts. They are merely recommended for those who have a strong interest in this field of study. Some of the readings are from these texts.

- Aaron Gross, Anne Valeley, eds. *Animals and the Human Imagination: A Companion to Animal Studies*. Columbia University Press, 2012. This is a lengthy anthology of scholarly essays that explore different ways in which humans have collectively imagined animals as part of their own cultural self-conceptions. Aaron Gross, the co-editor, is a co-chair of the ARR's working group on animals and religion.
- Paul Waldau. *The Specter of Speciesism: Buddhist and Christian Views of Animals*. American Academy of Religion Book, 2001. Waldau provides a forensic examination of texts from Buddhism and early Christianity, to determine what the views of animals were. He concludes that for the most part they were speciesist in their views, although there are elements of consideration for them, which creates a tension within the early traditions (which we can note has continued into modernity).
- Andrew Linzey and Daniel Cohn-Sherbok. *After Noah: Animals and the Liberation of Theology*. Cassel Publisher, 1997. Written by a Christian and Jewish theologian, this book provides a populist argument for animal liberation, utilizing a pro-animal interpretation of the Bible. Both authors, prior to this collaboration, wrote more dense, theologically robust books in support of their positions, but this one is meant to be accessible for a lay audience.
- James Rachels. *Created from Animals: The Moral Implications of Darwinism*. Oxford University Press, 1990. This book argues that the moral implications of Darwin's thought have not been absorbed by our society, which is still unduly influenced by the anthropocentrism of Judeo-Christianity. Darwin's discoveries show us that we are animals of a kind, not higher or lower than other animals, despite the fact that our entire culture is built on animal exploitation. Rachels' perspective is that of a committed atheist. Accordingly, he either ignores or is unaware of animal liberation theology.
- Tom Regan, ed. *Animal Sacrifices: Religious Perspectives on the Use of Animals in Science*. Temple University Press, 1987. When an animal is killed in a laboratory the researcher uses the euphemism "sacrifice" to describe the act. There are other elements of religiosity in animal testing, if viewed from a sociological perspective. This volume is a compilation of theological arguments against animal testing on moral grounds that at the same time raises the question of whether animal testing, in itself, may be viewed as a kind of religion.