WMST BC3513 CRITICAL ANIMALS STUDIES

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R 2:10-4:00 pm
Office Location: Barnard 228
Office hours: TBD

Description:

This course is a coming to terms with the Animal Problem. We will engage with questions such as: What are non-human animals? How do we, as humans, relate to them? How do we account for our “animal nature” while at the same time reconciling our cultural aspirations? What are our primary desires with respect to non-human animals, and how have these animals been integral to human development as a species? How have women, in particular, related to animals both “domestic” and “wild”? How have parts of our humanness taken on qualities of the “animal,” particularly women’s sexuality, lust, and desire? What has it meant for women to be marginalized as animalistic, and how has this destructive link been shaped by race and ethnicity? And, could such a link between women and animality serve the interests of feminism, particularly in integrating or valuing “unfeminine” aspects of women’s lives like rage, hunger, dominance, or libidinal impulses?

We will consider these and several other emergent questions through this rigorous sociological seminar.

Learning Objectives:

• Students will gain familiarity with key concepts in Animal Studies, including non-human and human animals, speciesism, sentience, xenotransplantation, ethology, veganism, Critical Animal Studies versus Mainstream Animal Studies, interspecies ethnography, invasive species, anthropomorphism, posthumanism, companion animals, animal assisted therapy, bioethics.

• Students will be able to compare and contrast these important terms.

• Students will develop the ability to integrate sociological and cultural perspectives of the animal with feminist and sociological theories of inequality based on race, species, class, gender, sexuality, ability, age, health, geography, and citizenship status.

• Students will learn to recognize key theorists of the body including Donna Haraway, Steven Best, Jacques Derrida, and Eben Kirksey, and scholars in Animal Studies.

• Students will develop the ability to create and sustain a 20 – 30 minutes class presentation with assigned readings.

• Students will learn to think critically and analytically including the ability to use core concepts in their written work.
Course Requirements:

The success of this class depends on the intensive participation of each and every student. Attendance at every session and thoughtful contribution to each discussion based on familiarity with the materials are both critical. If you miss a class because of illness, family emergency or holiday, please inform me beforehand and turn in your discussion questions prior to our next class meeting (not in class).

Students enrolled in this course will be expected to complete the following assignments. All reading assignments are to be completed by the class of the week in which reading is assigned.

Class participation (15% of final grade):
Evaluated based on active engagement with all materials and fellow class participants. Below are the required readings for each week that I have selected. These course readings will be available on Courseworks. Please download, print and bring them to class with your close reading-notes and weekly analytic questions (see below).

In addition, your fellow classmates will be assigning reading to accompany their presentations. These readings will also be available on Courseworks and posted the Sunday before class.

Class Questions (20% of final grade):

Students will bring to class questions/summaries/responses based on their reading of weekly materials. These questions will interrogate topical areas and be used to stimulate class discussion. Students must compose questions in paragraph form. These are rhetorical questions that engage the class in a discussion. For example, a quote or summation of a paragraph from the week’s reading might be deconstructed by the student and then applied to a real life scenario. Or a student might engage with a particularly challenging passage and present their interpretation as a way of verifying their reading. These assignments consist of at least two questions but no more than five. Questions will be graded on a credit or no credit scale. (It is your responsibility to keep track of how many sets of questions you have handed in. You can always double check with me.)

Class Presentation—Animal Model Project (35% of final grade):

Animal Model Project:

This class presentation is a part one of a two part assignment. Together this presentation and the written assignment below constitute the bulk of course’s graded assignments. It is a major presentation that links directly with the final written examination.

Each student selects an animal model, e.g. pig, dolphin, whale, dog, and gorilla. Each student will teach a section of class based on her animal model.

1. The student assumes primary responsibility for additional research/reading on the topical area each week.
2. She will be responsible for co-facilitating the week’s class discussion and exercises with Dr. Moore.
3. Two weeks prior to the date of presentation, the student, in direct consultation with the instructor, will select 20 pages of scholarly reading or web-based research/ peer-review writing. These will be uploaded to Courseworks on the Sunday of the week of your
presentation. All students are responsible for this reading as well as the instructor’s assigned reading in the course schedule.

4. The student will create a power-point or other type of visual aid (Prezi, chalk board work) to organize and order the presentation and class discussion. The key terms and concepts from the course will be featured in the presentations.

The Animal Model Project is intended to bring attention to a different species (other than a human animal) that currently lives among us. After assigning the reading to fellow students, the facilitator will develop a series of questions and presentation guides to steer the class toward learning objectives that have been mutually agreed upon between the facilitator (student) and Dr. Moore. For example, if the student chooses to focus on dogs, the student will meet with me to design the class for the following week, around concepts such as petness, domestication, and companion species, or cultural relativism versus ethnocentrism. This meeting will also offer an opportunity for the student to conduct brainstorming on visual aides and/or multimedia possibilities for the class and to think about reading to assign to her classmates prior to her presentation.

On the day of class, the student will hand in all relevant references used for the presentation and will be evaluated on the ability to engage the class through a critical discussion of their animal model, the comprehensiveness of their explanation of concepts and terms, and the clarity and style of delivery of information about their animal model in relation to course terminology and readings.

Class Final Paper/Project – Animal Model Project (30% of final grade):

For the final 15-20 page typed paper, the student will examine their animal model in relation to Critical Animal Studies. In other words, instead of the final paper retreading the presentation materials, the student will apply the core concepts to consider the animal within the contemporary political, social and cultural moment.

The final paper is meant to synthesize class materials and engage with your own areas of interest and creative pursuits. Extra reading outside of those assigned by the instructor and fellow classmates is allowed but not required.

Accessibility

Students with disabilities who will be taking this course and may need disability related accommodations are encouraged to make an appointment to see me as soon as possible. Please register in advance with the Office of Disability Services (ODS) in 105 Hewitt if you required accommodations related to assignments or classroom assistance.

Late Assignments

Late coursework will be significantly penalized – one half letter grade for each day after the deadline). Work completed a week after the due date will not be accepted.

Response questions must be type written and available at the beginning of each class meeting to refer to as the class discussion proceeds.

Academic Honesty
Students affirm that all work turned in is their own, and that they have fully and accurately cited every written source, including web-based sources, used in their writing or presentations. All students taking this course must adhere to the Barnard College Honor Code. If in doubt about any of these provisions, or you would like to discuss further, please seek guidance from the instructor.

**Schedule:**
(Subject to change)

**Week 1**
Introductions


**Week 2**
Theoretical Moves/Cultural Specificity
Silvertown, Jonathan. 2010. *Fragile Web*. Chapter 4, What is a Species. 43-55.


http://www.animalsandsociety.org/about/index.php
http://www.h-net.org/~animal/

(May wish to subscribe to h-net’s animals list. It is a good way to stay abreast of compelling and cutting edge scholarship.)

**Week 3**
Companion Species


**Week 4**  
**Animals in Space/Habitat/Extinction**  
Mass Extinction

Visit and read the website as explained in class:  
[http://www.well.com/~davidu/extinction.html](http://www.well.com/~davidu/extinction.html)


**Week 5**  
**Comparisons to Human Atrocities and Violence**  


**Week 6**  
**Animals as pets**  


**Week 7**  
**Animals as human food**  


Week 8
Animals as Entertainment


Film on Elephant

Week 9
Animal Activism, Social Movements
PETA
Visit this website to see this article:


Week 10
Breeding Animals


Week 11
Animals as Medical Subjects

Visit these websites as discussed in class--
Xenotransplantation article on the issue --
http://www.xenodiaries.org/organfarm.htm

Elephant Crack Up

http://www.embracinganimal.com/

**Week 12**
Animals in Media
http://www.elve.net/panim/home.htm


Film

**Week 13**
Methodological Concerns—How to study Animals


Pachirat, Timothy. 2010. The Political in Political Ethnography: Dispatches from the Kill Floor. 143 -161.

**Week 14**
Bee Research

Possible Movies:
Grizzly Man
The Cove
http://www.earthlings.com/
The Vanishing of the Bees
Project Nim