

Spring 2020: LPHI 3046A
The Animal Question in Ethics and Politics
 Eugene Lang College
 M/W 2-3:40pm
 6 East 16th Street, Room 1108

Professor: Alice Crary
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 Off. Hrs.: M 12:15-1:45 and 3:45-4:15
 & by appointment

Syllabus

Course description and objectives

Relationships between humans, non-human animals and the rest of nature raise fundamental questions for moral and political thought. These questions, long sidelined by moral philosophers and political theorists alike, are today increasingly recognized as important and urgent. This course offers a tour of some important features of this intellectual terrain. The course has two main emphases. The first is examining the representations of animal life in mainstream animal rights theory, as well as in the work of various dissenters, and using this body of work as a reference point for asking how humans and animals should enter moral thought. The second is investigating how attention to non-human animals—and to nature more generally—is and should be reflected in contemporary social and political thought. For instance, we will explore how concern for animals can disguise colonialist and racist projects. Additionally, to mention one further example, we will ask whether it is possible to successfully combat dehumanizing ideologies—ideologies that turn on invidious comparisons between animals and members of socially vulnerable human groups—without rethinking the value of animals' lives. In addressing these sorts of ethical and political questions, we will refer to concrete cases. Our goal will be thus to breathe life into our theoretical readings, bringing them to bear on experience. Course materials are drawn from literary, philosophical and historical works, blogs, newspapers and works of political theory and documentary films.

Learning outcomes

At the end of this course, you should be able to (1) describe and assess some of the most influential theoretical approaches to animal ethics, (2) describe and assess some of the most influential theoretical approaches to questions about animals and politics, (3) recognize the bearing of ethical and political approaches to animals on a number of real-world cases, (4) develop an independent critical assessment of real-world cases that draws on existing ethical and political approaches to animals, (5) discuss your assessment clearly orally and in writing and (6) recognize its implications for meaningful moral or political action.

The seminar is listed in philosophy, and students come with different backgrounds in philosophy as well as in other fields. No particular background or knowledge of the key texts will be presupposed.

Required texts:

You should purchase or borrow copies of the following text:

J.M. Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals*

This book will be available for purchase at Barnes & Noble Union Square. All of the other required and recommended materials for this course will be available either on

our seminar Canvas site, in the public domain online or in seminar. (Copies of Timothy Pachirat, *Every Twelve Seconds* and Jonathan Safran Foer, *Eating Animals* are also available for purchase at Barnes & Noble, but we will only read selections from these books. It is not necessary to purchase them.)

Course requirements

Class participation	10%
One oral presentation, incl. 2 pp. text	20%
Two 3-4pp. double-spaced papers	40% (20% each)
A final 7-8pp., double-spaced paper	30%
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TOTAL	100%

Participation and the seminar discussions

Attendance and participation are mandatory. You should come to class having read the assignment listed for the day in question. The readings vary in length. Some are quite short – not more than 30 pages – but also dense enough to require careful thought and perhaps even rereading. Other readings are much longer. I will adjust the schedule of readings – selecting, cutting or adding material – whenever appropriate responsiveness to the dynamic of the seminar (or the schedules of outside speakers) calls for doing so. When reading, you should pay attention to your own reactions to the material, to what interests you and strikes you as right or wrong. Our seminar discussions will vary in format. The emphasis will be on finding the appropriate methods for handling different materials. There are lots of ways to contribute productively to this seminar. One is to share your own reflections and questions about the course materials. Another is to try to bring out the interest of, and connections among, things others have to say. Please do not remain silent because you have concerns about the seminar dynamics and are persuaded what you feel won't be valued. Should you feel intimidated or silenced, please let me know right away. I take classroom climate issues seriously, and I am willing and eager to work to make our shared space welcoming to all.

Presentations

During the seventh week of classes, everyone will sign up to do a class presentation some time during the semester. Presentations give you an occasion to explore in greater detail a topic of special interest to you. They also give you an opportunity to think specifically about the conversational dynamics of the seminar and how to make a helpful contribution to our larger discussion. On the day of your presentation, you will come to class having thought carefully about the pertinent course materials and their connection to larger themes of the seminar. You will lead the seminar discussion for around 7 (and no longer than 10) minutes, raising questions and moderating discussion. If you are uncomfortable with public speaking, you are welcome simply to read from a prepared text. You are also welcome to present more casually and to use any presentation-tools

that you find helpful (e.g., blackboard, handouts, projected images, movie clips, etc.). On the day of your presentation you will also submit a 2 pp., double-spaced paper with a clearly written prose discussion of the material in question that includes reflections and suggestions about implications for other themes and texts of the course. The scheduling of presentations is intended to be casual. I aim to accommodate anyone who finds themselves unexpectedly gripped by a topic and wants to switch their presentation date. I will also make myself available to correspond or meet with anyone who would like help before the presentation.

Papers

You will write three papers. (For details, see the specifications above. Note that all papers should be double-spaced.) You will receive paper topics for all of these papers. Papers should be submitted **either** by email *before the beginning of class* **or** in class. Late papers will be marked down 1/3 of a grade (e.g., from an “A” to an “A-”) for each *unexcused* day of lateness. I will be happy to read drafts of any of the papers, provided that you let me know ahead of time that you are planning to submit and draft and provided that you submit it at least three days before the paper is due. Although topics will be distributed for all papers, you will also have the option to select your own topic for the long (7-8pp.) paper, provided that you submit your intended topic to me for approval in advance.

Reaching me

My contact information is at the top of the first page of the syllabus. My regular office hours are in my office, room 1115 at 6 East 16th St. (11th floor), on Mondays before and after class (12:15-1:45pm and 3:45-4:15pm). You can sign up for an appointment through Starfish. If those times are impossible for you, we can make an arrangement to meet at a time that works for both of us. You should feel free to contact me about any course-related issue, no matter how small. I will try to respond to emails as quickly as possible. If you write to me about a substantive issue, I will most likely write back and suggest that we either meet to talk or chat on the phone, with an eye to addressing it appropriately.

Fairness, grading methods and disputes

There is good evidence to suggest that implicit or unconscious bias is a serious issue in academic settings, and that it puts members of underrepresented groups at a substantial disadvantage. One recommended strategy for combating implicit bias is to do anonymous assessment. This is not possible in a relatively small class in which I will be in close conversation with you about your individual writing projects. A second recommended strategy for combating implicit bias is to attend carefully to how one interacts with students (e.g., what form of address is used, how often speaking time is granted and to whom, and how much time individual students spend speaking). Throughout the semester, I will monitor my own practice with an eye to being fair to all. A third strategy is to get anonymous feedback on pedagogy and methods well before the end of the course, and I will arrange for an anonymous survey before midterm with an eye to making improvements in the running of the course.

If you believe that there is something amiss with the evaluation of your work, I urge you to let me know. I am open to discussion and willing to re-read papers.

Course policies

This course will adhere to New School academic policies. These include the following:

1. Policy on attendance and lateness

* Absences may justify some grade reduction and a total of four unexcused absences mandate a reduction of one letter grade for the course.

* More than four absences mandate a failing grade for the course, unless there are extenuating circumstances, such as the following:

- an extended illness requiring hospitalization or visit to a physician (with documentation)
- a family emergency, e.g. serious illness (with written explanation)
- observance of a religious holiday

The attendance and lateness policies are enforced as of the first day of classes for all registered students. If registered during the first week of the add/drop period, the student is responsible for any missed assignments and coursework.

For significant lateness, the instructor may consider the tardiness as an absence for the day. Students failing a course due to attendance should consult with an academic advisor to discuss options.

2. Policy on academic honesty and integrity. For details, you should go to the list of New School policies here <https://www.newschool.edu/Components/Wireframes/TwoColumnWireframe.aspx?pageid=591> and click on the link for “Academic Honesty and Integrity”.

3. Of particular importance is the policy on plagiarism, which you can find and click on by following the same link (i.e., <https://www.newschool.edu/Components/Wireframes/TwoColumnWireframe.aspx?pageid=591>). Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else's work as one's own in all forms of academic endeavor (such as essays, theses, examinations, research data, creative projects, etc.), intentional or unintentional. Plagiarized material may be derived from a variety of sources, such as books, journals, internet postings, student or faculty papers, etc. This includes the purchase or “outsourcing” of written assignments for a course. A detailed definition of plagiarism in research and writing can be found in the fourth edition of the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, pages 26-29.

Academic resources for students

Important resources include the *Learning Center* (66 West 12th Street, 6th floor) and the office for *Student Disability Services*. In keeping with the university's policy of providing equal access

for students with disabilities, any student with a disability who needs academic accommodations is welcome to meet with the office staff privately. All conversations will be kept confidential. Students requesting any accommodations will also need to contact Student Disability Service (SDS). SDS will conduct an intake and, if appropriate, the Director will provide an academic accommodation notification letter for you to bring to your instructors. At that point, I will review the letter with you and discuss these accommodations in relation to this course. Student Disability Services is located at 63 Fifth Avenue, room 425. The phone number is (212) 229-5626. Students and faculty are expected to review the Student Disability Services webpage. The webpage can be found at <https://www.newschool.edu/student-disability-services/>, and the office is available to answer any questions or concerns.

Comment on course readings

The readings for this course will be manageable. To be sure, a great deal is listed on the schedule (below) for many of our class meetings. However, as we proceed, I will make suggestions about where to focus attention, adjusting what is listed to suit the particular interests of members of the class and the direction of our course conversation. I will identify *an easily readable required reading or set of readings* before every class meeting, and very often this will involve treating portions of what is listed on the schedule as merely recommended. Any recommended readings for specific classes represent further resources for anyone interested in exploring a particular topic more deeply. The materials listed for each week under “further resources” serve the same purpose. If you have questions about any of the course materials or requirements, you should feel free to contact me.

Tentative schedule of classes and assignments (Please note that the schedule may be adjusted to accommodate outside speakers and other events.)

1. W, January 22nd. Course introduction—no reading. We will discuss Chapter 1 of Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (“All Animals are Equal...”), copies of which will be distributed in class.

I. Ethics

The structure of the contemporary debate about the ethical treatment of animals

2. M, January 27th. Shelly Kagan, “Introduction” to *How to Count Animals*
Clip from an interview with Peter Singer shown in class
- W, January 29th. Shelly Kagan, Chapter 1 (“Standing”) of *How to Count Animals*
Clip from an interview with Shelly Kagan shown in class

The debate continues

3. M, February 3rd. Christine Korsgaard, “Fellow Creatures: Kantian Ethics and Our Duties to Animals”
Other resources
Korsgaard, Chapter 8 of *Fellow Creatures*, “A Kantian Case for Our Obligations to Other Animals”
- W, February 5th. Cora Diamond, “Eating Meat and Eating People.”

Other resources

Alice Cary, "Ethics," in Lori Gruen, ed., *Critical Terms in Animal Studies*

Jeff McMahan, "Our Fellow Creatures"

A clip from the movie *Babe* will be shown in class, and we may also look at illustrations from Sue Coe's book *Dead Meat*.

4. M, February 10th.

J.M. Coetzee, Chapter 1 of *The Lives of Animals* ("The Philosophers and the Animals")

W, February 12th

J.M. Coetzee, Chapter 2 of *The Lives of Animals* ("The Poets and the Animals").

Other resources

Cora Diamond, "The Difficulty of Philosophy and the Difficulty of Reality"

Does it have to be a trade-off between humans and animals? Reflections on cognitive disability

M, February 17th—university closed for Presidents' Day—we will make up this class with a session involving a film screening and discussion, to be scheduled later in the term

5. W, February 19th.

Eva Feder Kittay, "The Personal is Philosophical is Political: A Philosopher and a Mother of a Cognitively Disabled Person Sends Notes from the Battlefield."

Other resources

Peter Singer, "Speciesism and Moral Status"

Jeff McMahan, "Cognitive Disability and Cognitive Enhancement"

Alice Cary, "The Horrific History of Comparisons between Cognitive Disability and Animality (and How to Move Past it)" in Lori Gruen, ed., *Animaladies*

First short paper topics distributed

II. First set of cases studies: eating animals and the politics of the food industry

Making industrial slaughterhouses visible

6. M, February 24th.

Timothy Pachirat, *Every Twelve Seconds: Industrialized Slaughter and the Politics of Sight*, Chapters 1-2

W, February 26th.

Timothy Pachirat, *Every Twelve Seconds*, Chapter 3. Excerpts from the rest of the book are discussed in class.

Other resources

The remaining chapters of *Every Twelve Seconds*

First short papers due before class

What are we doing when we eat animals?

7. M, March 2nd. Jonathan Safran Foer, *Eating Animals*, Chapters 1-2.
- W, March 4th. Jonathan Safran Foer, *Eating Animals*, Chapter 3. Portions of the film *Food, Inc.* shown in class. **Recommended:** The remaining three chapters of *Eating Animals*
Sign up for class presentations in class
Schedule make up session/film screening

Human rights abuses in slaughterhouses

8. M, March 9th. Eric Schlosser, “The Most Dangerous Job,” Chapter 8 of *Fast Food Nation*.
- W, March 11th. Lance Compa, “Summary” of “Blood, Sweat and Fear: Workers’ Rights in US Poultry and Meat Plants,” a January 25, 2005 Human Rights Watch Report
Other resources
 Marion Nestle, “Introduction: The Food Industry and ‘Eat More’” in *The Politics of Food*.
 Excerpts from the Film *Fast Food Nation* shown in class (viz, Chapters 8, 22 and 25)
Second short paper topics distributed

March 16th-22nd—NO CLASS—New School Spring Break

What are the right—or wrong — questions?

9. M, March 23rd. Michael Pollan, “The Ethics of Eating Animals.” Excerpt from *Portlandia* (“Is this chicken local?”) shown in class.
Other resources
 Kurt Soller, “Head to Hoof: Inside the New Carnivore Movement,” *Newsweek*, January 27, 2009.
<http://www.newsweek.com/head-hoof-inside-new-carnivore-movement-77899>.
 Also take a look at the website for the Portland Meat Collective. (<https://www.pdxmeat.com/about>)
- W, March 25th. Gene Baur, *Farm Sanctuary*, “Introduction” and Chapter 1 (“The Road to Lancaster”). Excerpts from the film *Peaceable Kingdom* may be shown in class.
Second short paper due before class

III. Seeking a legal and political strategySome ideas for theoretical frameworks

10. M, March 30th. Gary Francione, “The Abolition of Animal Exploitation,” pp.1-4 and 61-102.

Other resources

Gary Francione, "Introduction" ("Legal Welfarism: The Consequences of the Property Status of Animals"); Chapter 1 ("The Problem: 'Unnecessary' Suffering and the 'Humane' Treatment of Property" in *Animals, Property and the Law*)

W, April 1st.

Claire Jean Kim, "Abolition" in Lori Gruen, ed., *Critical Terms in Animal Studies*

11. M, April 6th.

Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, excerpts from Part I ("An Expanded Theory of Animal Rights") of *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights*

W, April 8th.

Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, Chapter 4 ("Domesticated Animals within Animal Rights Theory") of *Zoopolis*

An external challenge: ag-gag laws and the demonization of animal protectionists

12. M, April 13th.

Doris Lin, "What are Ag-Gag Laws and Why Are They Dangerous?" (<https://www.thoughtco.com/what-are-ag-gag-laws-127559>) and Will Potter, "Blacklisted." Portions of the film *If a Tree Falls* will be screened in class.

W, April 15th.

Will Potter, "War at Home." Recommended: "The Green Menace"

V. Second set of cases studies: race and dehumanization via invidious comparisons to animals

13. M April 20th.

Claire Kim, "The Wonderful, Horrible Life of Michael Vick." Clip of Chris Rock on Michael Vick shown in class.

W, April 22nd.

Syl Ko, "When they say 'human', they mean 'white'" from *Aphro-ism*.

Final paper topics distributed

14. M, April 27th.

Aph Ko, excerpts from *Racism as Zoological Witchcraft*

IV. Third set of case studies: zoos and the ethics of captivity

W, April 29th.

Dale Jamieson, "Against Zoos" and "Zoos Revisited."

15. M, May 4th.

Alexandra Horowitz, "*Canis Familiaris*: Companion and Captive" and Lauren Gazzola, "Political Captivity"

W, May 6th.

Lori Gruen, "Dignity, Captivity and an Ethics of Sight"
Final papers due by 5pm