

Animal Crisis

Fall 2022, 14228, GPHI 6791-A

Seminar: Thursday 4:00-5:50, Room TBA (66 West 12th Street)

Professor: Alice Crary (she/her)

Office hours: Tuesdays 2:30-3:30pm [via zoom](#),

Thursdays 2:30-3:30pm in person at D1115. Sign up on [google calendar](#).

Course description

It is urgently necessary to change the conversation about animal ethics. That is a premise of this seminar's investigation of the ground from traditional animal ethics to critique-influenced approaches to human-animal relations. With reference to mainstream animal ethics, we will ask about limitations and costs of treating the discipline as an isolated area of study, and we will explore making it more world-oriented and politically relevant by reconceiving it as a distinctive critical theory with ties to ecofeminism, theories of racial capitalism, ecological Marxism, and theories of social reproduction. We will foreground questions about the treatment of animals in particular settings with an eye to assessing possibilities for meaningful responses, in the face of unfolding world-wide environmental catastrophe, and at a time when it is undeniable that the human use and devastation of animals, and their habitats, represent a threat to the continued existence not only of animals but of humans, and of a living earth. Seminar materials will be interdisciplinary, emphasizing work in ethics and social philosophy and including in ethology and history and also literature and narrative and documentary film.

Learning outcomes

At the end of this course, you should be able—at a graduate-level—to (1) describe the history of animal ethics and discuss the questions currently at the discipline's center, (2) describe some significant work on the animal question being done by critical social thinkers outside animal ethics, (3) describe and analyze pivotal philosophical issues both within and between animal ethics and critical animal theory, (4) discuss some of the most grievous problems affecting non-human animals in the world today, (5) discuss practical implications of different theoretical approaches to human-animal relations, (6) develop well-grounded, independent views of key issues and problems for such approaches, and (7) discuss your views clearly orally and in writing.

Required texts

With the exception of Crary and Gruen's *Animal Crisis*, which you should purchase, all required and recommended materials for this course will be available either on our seminar Canvas site, in the public domain online or in seminar. If the cost of *Animal Crisis* is prohibitive for you, or you have difficulty getting a copy, please let me know. I will lend or give you a copy of the book.

Course requirements

All enrolled students must:

- write three (no longer than) 2-page—ungraded—response papers, and
- write one (no longer than) 15-18-page seminar paper,

Response papers. At our second seminar meeting (Thursday, September 8th), you'll be assigned to one of four groups, members of which will be responsible for producing short response papers

on three occasions during the term. Response papers will be due by 8am on the day of the relevant class meeting, available to me to work your ideas into the day's presentation. You will be encouraged to comment further, in seminar, on the themes developed in your response papers. *Seminar papers*. Your seminar paper will be due before the seminar, on the day of our last meeting, Thursday, December 8th. There will be no penalty for late papers, but, if your paper is late, you will have no guarantee of having it commented on, graded and returned to you quickly.

Reaching me

My contact information is at the top of the first page of the syllabus. My office hours are, split between zoom and in-person meetings, are designed to accommodate your different schedules and preferences. My regular online office hours are Tuesdays 2:30-3:30pm [via zoom](#), and my regular in person office hours are Thursdays 2:30-3:30pm in my office, D1115, in the building at 6 East 16th Street, 10th floor. **Whether you are coming to zoom or in-person meetings, please sign up on [google calendar](#).** 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 likely write back and suggest that we meet to chat in person or on zoom.

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 research seminar 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 seminar.

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.

University-wide course-policies and resources

Academic honesty

Compromising your academic integrity may lead to serious consequences, including (but not limited to) one or more of the following: failure of the assignment, failure of the course, academic warning, disciplinary probation, suspension from the university, or dismissal from the university. Students are responsible for understanding the New School's policy on academic honesty and integrity and must make use of proper citations of sources for writing papers, creating, presenting, and performing their work, taking examinations, and doing research. It is the responsibility of students to learn the procedures specific to their discipline for correctly and appropriately differentiating their own work from that of others. The full text of the policy, including adjudication procedures, is found [here](#).

Plagiarism

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. Submission of the same work or substantially overlapping material for different assignments without prior instructor approval is plagiarism. A detailed definition of plagiarism in research and writing can be found in the 8th edition of the MLA Handbook, pages 6-10. The University Learning Center provides resources and workshops to help students understand and avoid plagiarism. Resources regarding what plagiarism is, how to avoid it, and additional information about the services provided by the Learning Center can be found on [their website](#).

Student conduct in the online learning environment

Students should familiarize themselves with the [Student Code of Conduct](#) and [other policies](#) that govern continued enrollment. Contact your [Student Success Advisor](#) for division-specific policies relevant to your degree. This class is a collective learning environment and will entail sharing and discussing beliefs, opinions, and thoughts on a spectrum of issues, including **sensitive topics**. Indeed, a productive and flourishing class-dynamic depends on such exchanges. And while we might not always agree, we should nevertheless remain respectful and courteous to one another in any format of exchanging ideas—online discussions, commenting on posts, and in giving feedback and asking questions. It is important to emphasize that the critical exchange of ideas doesn’t have to be contentious or combative. We should refrain from impolite, offensive, and rude behavior. It is, in a word, “unnecessary.”

Attendance

According to the [University Attendance Policy](#), habitual absences may justify some grade reduction.

Other Relevant Resources

The university provides many resources to help students achieve academic and artistic excellence. These resources include:

- The New School's *Intellectual Property Rights* are available [here](#).
- *Grading Policies* are available [here](#).
- [University Libraries and Archives](#), including [Reserves](#).
- [Student Disability Services](#).

If you are a student with a disability/disabled student or believe you might have a disability that requires accommodations, please contact the Student Disability Services (SDS) at studentdisability@newschool.edu, or 212-229-5626, to coordinate all reasonable accommodation requests.

- [The New School Food Assistance](#).
- [Health and Wellness](#).

Course Evaluations

During the last two weeks of the semester, students are asked to provide feedback for each of their courses through an online survey. They cannot view grades until providing feedback or officially declining to do so. Course evaluations are a vital space where students can speak about the learning experience. It is an important process which provides valuable data about the

successful delivery and support of a course or topic to both the faculty and administrators. Instructors rely on course rating surveys for feedback on the course and teaching methods, so they can understand what aspects of the class are most successful in teaching students, and what aspects might be improved or changed in future. Without this information, it can be difficult for an instructor to reflect upon and improve teaching methods and course design. In addition, program/department chairs and other administrators review course surveys. Instructions are available online [here](#).

A final comment on course readings and other materials

A great deal is listed on the schedule (below) for many of our seminar meetings. Within the readings listed for each week, I will generally let you know ahead of time where our focus will be. (I may also adjust the required readings and emphases as the semester proceeds.) Any readings listed as “other resources” for specific seminar meetings represent, as the label suggests, further resources for anyone interested in exploring a particular topic more deeply. If you have questions about any of the course materials or requirements, please reach out and talk to me.

List of seminars, readings, and assignments

Week One—Course introduction and introduction to animal ethics and critical animal theory

Th, September 1st

No required reading for our introductory meeting. *We will discuss course logistics and get started on central course themes, introducing the ideas of animal ethics and critical animal theory.*

Week Two—The idea of critical animal theory

Th, September 8th

Required reading. John Berger, “Why Look at Animals” (1980)
Alexis Pauline Gumbs, Introduction and Chs 1 and 2 of *Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Animals* (2020)

Other resources. Maneesha Dekha, “Post Colonial” in Lori Gruen, ed. *Critical Terms in Animal Studies* (2018)
Philip Armstrong, “The Postcolonial Animal” (2002)

Today in seminar, all enrolled students will be assigned to groups for response papers throughout the term

Week Three—The emergence of animal ethics as an academic discipline

Th, September 15th (Group I for response papers)

Required reading. Peter Singer, Ch1 of *Animal Liberation: A new ethics for our treatment of animals* (1975)
Tom Regan, Ch 8 of *The Case for Animal Rights* (1983)

Other resources. Jeff McMahan, “Eating Animals the Nice Way” (2008)

Tom Regan, Ch9 of *The Case for Animal Rights* (1983)

Week Four—Animal ethics and the idea of “moral status”

Th, September 22nd (Group 2 for response papers)

Required reading. Peter Singer, “Speciesism and Moral Status,” in Carlson and Kittay, eds., *Cognitive Disability and Its Challenge to Moral Philosophy* (2010)
Eva Kittay, “The Personal is Philosophical is Political: A Philosopher and Mother of a Cognitively Disabled Person Sends Notes from the Battlefield,” in Carlson and Kittay, eds (2010)

Other resources. Jeff McMahan, “Our Fellow Creatures” (2005)
Alice Crary, “Ethics” in Lori Gruen, ed., *Critical Terms in Animal Studies* (2018)

Week Five—Ideological barriers to registering the animal crisis

Th, September 29th (Group 3 for response papers)

Required reading. Chs 1 and 2 (“**Crisis**/Orangutans” and “**Ethics**/Pigs”) of *Animal Crisis* (2022)
Timothy Pachirat, Chs 1 and 9 of *Every Twelve Seconds: Industrialized Slaughter and the Politics of Sight* (2011)

Other resources. Jan Dutkiewicz, “Transparency and the Factory Farm” (2018)
Danielle Celermajer, “grief” and “presence” in *Summertime: Reflections on a Vanishing Future*

Week Six—Animal suffering and how to respond to it

Th, October 6th (Group 4 for response papers)

Required readings. Ch3 (“**Suffering**/Cows”) of *Animal Crisis* (2022)
Cora Diamond, “Eating Meat and Eating People” (1978)

Other resources. Philippa Foot, “Utilitarianism and the Virtues” (1985)

Week Seven—Animal minds and questions of method

Th, October 13th (Group 1 for response papers)

Required readings. Ch4 (“**Minds**/Octopuses”) of *Animal Crisis* (2022)
Amia Srinivasan, “The Sucker, the Sucker” (2017)

Other resources. Peter Godfrey-Smith, Chs 1 and 6 of *Other Minds: The Octopus, the Sea, Deep Origins of Consciousness* (2016)
You might also find it helpful to watch My Octopus Teacher (2020) on Netflix or read Sophie Lewis, “My Octopus Girlfriend” (2021)

Today in seminar we’ll do a brief, anonymous mid-term course assessment

Week Eight—The oppression of human beings through “animalization”

Th, October 20th (Group 2 for response papers)

Required readings. Ch5 (“**Dignity/Rats**”) of *Animal Crisis* (2022)
Syl Ko, “By ‘Human’, Everyone Just Means ‘White’” in Aph and Syl Ko, *Aprbo-Ism* (2017)

Other resources. Claire Jean Kim, Ch2 (“Animals, Nature, and the Races of Man”) of *Dangerous Crossings: Race, Species, and Nature in a Multicultural Age* (2015)
Jennifer Morgan, Ch1 of *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery*
You may also want to look at Joshua Bennett’s Being Property Once Myself: Blackness and the End of Man (2020), *Bénédicte Boisseron’s Afro-Dog: Blackness and the Animal Question* (2018), and *Zakiyyah Iman Jackson’s Becoming Human: Matter and Meaning in an Antiracist World* (2020)

Week Nine—Animal dignity: discussion and defense of the notion

Th, October 27th (Group 3 for response papers)

Required readings. Again: Ch5 (“**Dignity/Rats**”) of *Animal Crisis* (2022)
Christine Korsgaard, Chs 1 and 8 (“Are People More Important Than the Other Animals?” and “A Kantian Case for Our Obligations to the Other Animals”) of *Fellow Creatures: Our Obligations to the Other Animals* (2018)

Other resources. Will Kymlicka, “Human Rights without Human Supremacism” (2017)
Lori Gruen, “Dignity, Captivity, and an Ethics of Sight” (2014)

Week Ten—Seeing animals: questions of ideology critique

Th, November 3rd (Group 4 for response papers)

Required readings. Ch6 (“**Seeing/Parrots**”) of *Animal Crisis* (2022)
Dale Jamieson, “Against Zoos” (1985)

Other resources. Dale Jamieson, “Zoos Revisited” (2003)
Anat Pick, “Vegan Cinema” (2018)

Week Eleven—The “political turn” in animal ethics, Part I

Th, November 10th (Group 1 for response papers)

Required readings. Ch7 (“**Politics/Ticks**”), pp.120-130 of *Animal Crisis* (2022)
Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, *Zoopolis* (2011)
Robert Garner and Siobhan O’Sullivan, “Introduction” to *The Political Turn in Animal Ethics* (2016)

Other resources. Gary Francione, “The Abolition of Animal Exploitation” (2010)
Dinesh Wadiwel, “Introduction: the Live Hang” in *The War Against Animals* (2015)

Today at the seminar’s end, we will discuss which film to analyze during Week 13

Week Twelve—The “political turn” in animal ethics, Part II

Th, November 17th (Group 2 for response papers)

Required readings. Ch7 (“Politics/Ticks”), pp.130-146 of *Animal Crisis* (2022)
John Bellamy Foster, Ch2 (“The Ecological Tyranny of the Bottom Line: the Environmental and Social Consequences of Economic Reductionism”) of *Ecology Against Capitalism* (2002)

Other resources. Johanna Oksala, “Feminism, Capitalism, and Ecology” (2018)
Ariel Salleh, “Epistemology and the Metaphors of Production: An Eco-Feminist Reading of Critical Theory” (1988)

Today at the seminar’s end, we will discuss which topics or issues to discuss during Week 14—I will then email the seminar with appropriate readings

Week Thirteen—Interlude: critical animal theory on film

Th, November 24th (Group 3 for response papers)

Required and materials. Instead of discussing assigned readings, today we will discuss one or two films that are usefully interpreted as engaging some of the main themes of our seminar. Although the particular film or films to be considered will be left up to participants in the seminar, candidates might include—just to get everyone started thinking—Bong June-Ho’s *Okja* (2017), Hayao Miyazaki’s *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (1984), Werner Herzog’s *Grizzly Man* (2005), Allison Argo’s *Parrot Confidential* (2013), Gabriela Cowperthwaite’s *Blackfish* (2013), or James Marsh’s *Project Nim* (2011). I will work with members of the seminar in troubleshooting access to whatever film or films we select.

Other resources. One helpful place to start is the essay by Anat Pick recommended for Week 10. See also her 2013 co-edited collection, *Screening Nature: Cinema Beyond the Human*.

Week Fourteen—Pro-animal interventions: topic TBD

Th, December 1st (Group 4 for response papers)

Required and recommended readings. Readings will be announced once, as a seminar, we choose a topic for this session. Candidate topics—just to get everyone thinking—could be: sanctuaries, pro-animals effective altruism and its critics, rewilding, the legal standing of animals, or animal agency and resistance.

Week Fifteen—Course discussion and reception

Th, December 8th

No required readings. Our last session will be devoted to: (i) any further issues having to do with meaningful pro-animal interventions that seminar members want to discuss, (ii) reflections on the seminar narrative, and (iii) a reception.

Final papers are due on email before our seminar meeting today