

LIBRLST 722-001 Special Topic Contemporary Cultural Studies: Animals in Contemporary Culture

Lane Hall, Fall 2013
R 6:00pm-8:40pm; Curtin 939
lanehall@uwm.edu

note: the url (<http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/SyllabusLinks.pdf>) contains official information on course policies and procedures according to University guidelines.

Course Description

This course will be a mixture of theoretical texts, movies, literature, and visual art and will explore how animals are represented within contemporary Western culture. We will look at institutions dedicated to such representation, and will try to see what this indicates about us. We will reflect upon these issues through creative production, discussion, presentation, reading and writing.

We will also reflect more broadly upon the role of nature within culture, especially as mediated through film, narrative, visual art and institutional spaces whose focus is the animal.

Requirements/Grading

- Regular attendance and participation in discussion (20%)
- Weekly written responses on dedicated blog (roughly ½ to 1 page, single space, multiple paragraphs, spaces between paragraphs) regarding readings (due by Tuesday evening of each week. Late if not present on Wednesday morning). Note that the questions are intended to catalyze thought, and do not have to be directly answered, though the texts in question need to be dealt with. Also note that multiple questions are suggested topics, not essay tests. (30%)
- Creative Research Project, which involves a presentation dealing with aspects of “the animal” (20%)
- A rough draft for the research paper (10%)
- A 10 page research paper (1 inch margins, double spaced, Times New Roman, not including citations) (20%)

Texts (you’ll need to order these... listed in order of course occurrence)

Flight Maps: Adventures with Nature in Modern America (Paperback)
Jennifer Price
ISBN: 0465024866
(available on kindle)

My Year of Meats (Paperback)
Ruth Ozeki
ISBN-10: 0140280464
(available on kindle)

The Postmodern Animal (paperback)
Steve Baker
(available on kindle)

Frankenstein’s Cat: Cuddling Up To Biotech’s Brave New Beasts (hard cover)
Emily Anthes
(available on kindle)

assorted readings on D2L

Films (via VHS, DVD, Netflix and the Web)

Science Is Fiction, the Films of Jean Painlevé (2 excerpts, each 13 min)
The Strength and Agility of Insects, Percy Smith
Gates of Heaven, director Errol Morris (83 minutes)
Grizzly Man, director Werner Herzog (104 minutes)
Call of Life, Monte Thompson
Studies In Locomotion, Eadward Muybridge (Dover Publications)
Mothlight, Stan Brakhage (3 minutes, 14 seconds)
Motion Studies, Eadward Muybridge (Dover Publications)
Animal Safari Films, Osa Johnson (via web)
Micro-Cultural Incidents at Zoos (25 min)
A Zed and Two Noughts, director Peter Greenaway (115 minutes)
Food Inc., Robert Kenner (93 min)
Temple Grandin, Mick Jackson (103 min)
The Falls, director Peter Greenaway (239 minutes) (excerpts)
Bats, Jim Trainor
Fast, Cheap and Out of Control, Errol Morris (80 min)
District 9, Neill Blomkamp (112 min)

Articles on D2L: note – you will need to have these printed or bring in electronic copies on the dates that we discuss the articles.

- *Cute and Anti-Cute: from Cute, Quaint, Hungry, and Romantic: The Aesthetics of Consumerism*, by Daniel Harris
- *Bitches From Brazil*, from *Representing Animals*, Nigel Rothfels, editor by Susan McHugh
- *Dog Years, Human Fears*, from *Representing Animals* Nigel Rothfels, editor by Teresa Mangum
- *Beautiful Joe (excerpts)*, from *The Gutenberg Project*, (public domain) by Margaret Marshall Saunders
- *When Species Meet* (excerpts), by Donna Haraway
- *Why Look At Animals?* from *About Looking* by John Berger
- *The End of Nature* (excerpts) by Bill McKibbin
- *Global Warming's Terrifying New Math* from Rolling Stone article by Bill McKibbin
- *Zoo Culture (excerpts)*, from *Zoo Culture* by Robert Mullan, Garry Marvin
- *Bentham's Panopticon, (Of the Power of the Gaze)* from "Rhetorics of Surveillance" by Katrin Kaschadt
- *Zoos, the Academy, and Captivity*, by Nigel Rothfels
- *Zoos and Eyes*, from *Society and Animals Forum* (web) by Ralph Acampora
- *Displaying Death, Animating Life*, from *Representing Animals* Nigel Rothfels, editor by Jane Desmond
- *At A Slaughterhouse, Some Things Never Die*, from *How Race Is Lived In America: New York Times*, June 16, 2000
By Charlie LeDuff, .pdf on D2L, 15 pp),
- *An Animal's Place* *The New York Times Magazine*, November 10, 2002
by Michael Pollan
- *Why Look at Artificial Animals?*

by Geoff Cox and Adrian Ward

• *From Extinction to Electronics: Dead Frogs, Live Dinosaurs, and Electric Sheep*, from *Zoontologies*, Cary Wolfe, editor

by Ursula Heise

Projects

Project 1: Blog Writing

Use either WordPress or Blogger to create a space dedicated to your weekly writing and posted exercises, as outlined in project descriptions. Send me the url of your blog by the end of the first weekend (Sunday evening) and I will post all urls on D2L. You will, throughout the semester, be expected to post weekly unless otherwise specified. You will find the catalyst questions for any particular week on D2L, though you are welcome to go beyond the questions, or create your own – as long as you focus on the content and ramifications of that week’s readings and presentations. Your blogs are intended to not only focus your thoughts regarding course material, but to also serve as an archive of the semester. Your posts should be ready for me to read by 8:00 a.m. Wednesday mornings.

A note on the citing of sources: even in informal writing, you still have to say where you get your information. This needn’t be formal. It can be inline (eg. “According to Wikipedia, John Berger was the progenitor of Animal Studies with his benchmark essay, “Why Look At Animals....”), or parenthetical (eg. “John Berger was a key figure in Animal Studies.” (Wikipedia, “John Berger”)...).

I will not be too strict on this when you are integrating the readings from multiple sources (the point of a course, after all!) but would consider the cutting and pasting – without citation – of informational chunks from Wikipedia a problematic act: both plagiaristic and intellectually lazy.

Blog Grading Rubric

An “A” Blog Project:

The “A” blog demonstrates a full engagement with weekly writing. Work has intellectual depth, sources are cited, and the writing is relatively free of grammatical and spelling mistakes (within reason for informal writing). The topics are addressed with insight and clarity. An “A” blog, over the semester, is consistent, on time and begins to experiment with the form and format itself through pictures, embedded video and links (within reason: content and quality of thinking should be the main focus.)

A “B” Blog Project:

The “B” blog is competent but not striking: the writer engaged analysis in a reasonable manner, and the overall effort is “good” but there has not been deeply insightful thought, or exceptional effort, put into the weekly writing. Posts are generally interesting, but could still use more depth. Writing is good, but at times unclear or fraught with grammatical and/or structural issues. Most posting, but not all, have been on time.

A “C” Blog Project:

The “C” blog has “done the assignment” but without much sustained engagement. Analysis and reflection has not been deep, and insights are infrequent. Writing is sloppy, work has not been on time, or has been too superficial.

A “D” Blog Project:

The “D” blog is incomplete and generally superficial. Real engagement with the course material is not in evidence. Work is late and/or missing and citations have not been itemized.

An “F” Blog Project:

The “F” project is not completed with work chronically late.

Project 2: Live-Animals-Live!

Using a form and strategy that fits your scholarly and creative focus, develop a creative project that reflects topics relevant to this course. This can take the form of an artistic production, a book, website, multimedia project, social intervention or cross-disciplinary collaboration. The project in some form must be presented to the class for discussion and review. This presentation should be understood to be a significant part of the project, and should be between 15 and 30 minutes long, which can include directed discussion.

This presentation should integrate visual media (projected video, or PowerPoint) within a context of “live-ness.” Content is up to you, but should be pertinent to the course material and should be based upon research. This project can lend itself to poetic, journalistic, academic, fictive, factual modes. Project must be performed to the class on Thursday, Nov 7.

Second Project Grading Rubric

An “A” Project:

The “A” project demonstrates a compelling mix of relevant factual information, poetic interpretation, and presentational verve.

The presentation has something interesting to say. It is coherent, but it is also creative in its mode: that is, it doesn't accept the "normal" academic format as default. The presentation integrates fact and performance, and is stimulating to the audience in both content, form and delivery.

A "B" Project:

The "B" project is competent but not striking: the presentation is interesting and imparts useful information, but is fairly routine. The information given is not fully coherent, or the manner of delivery is not in keeping with the subject matter. Form and delivery are interesting, but not entirely integrated.

A "C" Project:

The "C" project has "done the assignment" but without much poetic result or depth of research. Content is relevant, but limited or obvious. Delivery is adequate, but standard. Honest attempt, but not fully developed, or risks were not taken.

A "D" Project:

The "D" project is an attempt, but the writer has not understood the intent or purpose of the exercise, and has not bothered to seek clarification. The presentation is poor: not much thought or work has gone into the development of the idea. Cliché's are apparent, the author hasn't dug into the subject at all.

An "F" Project:

The "F" project is not completed, or incomplete, or totally misses the mark.

(Note: Late work will be downgraded).

Project 3: Scholarly Paper

- rough drafts for paper due **Dec 3**.
 - papers due Sunday, **Dec 15, 6:00 p.m.** posted in D2L Dropbox as a word document.
- Develop a pertinent topic that interests you for a critical focus culminating in a 10 page (single sided, double spaced, normal margins, not counting citations or title page) research paper. Your process should include research as well as reflection. The paper should be structurally sound, grammatically correct, and focused, with bibliography and all citations footnoted in MLA style

Potential Topics: animals in (specific) films (or) literature (or) visual art, Body Worlds, robotics, taxidermy, animatronics, issues surrounding zoos, science fiction and the animal, predatory beasts, animals and food, animal stories and/or mythologies, animals and language, animal empathy, vivisection and experimentation, companion animals, circuses and/or freakshows, urban species, invasive species, etc., etc.

Research Paper Grading Rubric

An "A" Paper:

The "A" essay demonstrates a detailed understanding of the topic or advances a particularly insightful reading of a text; it has something interesting to say and supports it fully; it exhibits few or no mechanical mistakes; its sentences are not only clear but lively; the essay may very well evince unusual flexibility or inventiveness with words or structures that result in an individual style or are used for particular rhetorical effects.

A "B" Paper:

The "B" essay is competent but not striking: the writer has a clear thesis and a good sense of audience; the writer is in control of the direction of the essay and uses a reasonable principle of organization to develop her ideas; the writer's ideas are reasonable, and she uses appropriate evidence to support her ideas; there are no major mechanical errors.

A "C" Paper:

The "C" essay has a weak or fuzzy thesis; there may be some disjunction between the announced thesis and the discussion which follows; the writer may rely on the readily apparent or the cliché; examples and evidence may be offered to prove that the writer has researched her topic or has read the text, not to advance an argument; the essay has no clear organizational principle or may adopt the same one used in the text; the essay may contain many mechanical errors.

A "D" Paper:

The "D" essay has no clear thesis; the student reveals serious misunderstandings of the subject or misreads the text; the student may resort to plot summaries or paraphrases of class discussion or offer comments for no apparent purpose; the essay may fail to support its claims with examples or evidence; the writer remains within realm of the superficial, either from the inability or an unwillingness to tackle the assignment; the essay is often shorter than the required length; the writer displays inability to choose appropriate words, sentence structures or punctuation.

An "F" Paper:

The "F" paper displays misconceptions or weaknesses even more serious or pervasive than a "D" paper; or the essay has been plagiarized in part or as a whole.

(Note: Late work will be downgraded).

(Essay Rubric adapted from J.C. Bean. 2001. *Engaging Ideas*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, and the University of Virginia and Florida State's Honors Programs.)

On MLA Style (for Citation only)

<http://dianahacker.com/pdfs/Hacker-Daly-MLA.pdf>

<http://dianahacker.com/pdfs/Hacker-Levi-MLA.pdf> are outlines/annotations of student papers in MLA.

http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/p04_c08_o.html contains some overview materials.

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/> is a good resource.