

**A Cultural History of Animals:
The Western Perception of Animals
From Antiquity through the Present
(a.k.a. “Animals in Art and Literature”)**

ENGL 3723, sec. 201
MW 11-12:20, PY 100
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Office hours: MW 12:30-1:50, TR 11-12, and by appointment

This course will take an interdisciplinary approach to the cultural history of animals, an important branch of a new and rapidly growing field of scholarly inquiry known as Animal Studies. We will examine ways in which animals have been perceived in Western culture from antiquity to the present day through a study of history, philosophy, literature, and the arts. We will discuss questions such as how and why our view of animals has changed over the centuries, what distinguishes humans from other animals, what ethical obligations we have toward animals, and how different representations of animals relate to the historical, philosophical, and cultural backgrounds of different time periods. Students will work on a semester-long project, culminating in a presentation and a paper.

Course Objectives

1. To gain an understanding of how animals have been understood and represented in Western culture from antiquity to the present;
2. To provide an overview of the major periods of Western culture—i.e., the classical period, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, Romanticism, Realism, Modernism, and Postmodernism—through the lens of animals;
3. To practice critical thinking through an interdisciplinary approach that bridges the humanities and the sciences;
4. To discuss ethical questions relating to animals and formulate personal ethical views;
5. To develop skills in interpreting visual, literary, and other texts through the study of both form and content, including close reading;
6. To develop skills in writing academic papers, including the use of MLA style;
7. To develop skills in research, analysis, synthesis, and interpretation in a semester-long project;
8. To develop oral skills through informal class discussion and a formal presentation, and written skills through informal in-class writing and a formal final paper.

Course Requirements

1. Participation, 10%. It is essential that you participate in class discussion and activities to help you understand and master the material we cover. Please note that participation is different from attendance. Participation means talking in class.

2. In-Class Writing, 25% (approximately 1% each). At the beginning of most classes, I will give you a brief question on or a quotation from one of the texts assigned for the day to respond to. These are low-stakes assignments, and your grade for these reflections will be check plus, check, check minus, or X, which will be entered in D2L as 100, 85, 75, or 0. Your response should demonstrate critical thinking and an understanding of the text. Spelling and grammar will not count. If you miss an in-class writing, you may make it up in my office within one week of your return to class (or longer if you make special arrangements with me). You must take the initiative to schedule a time with me in person or by email to make up an assignment. The number of in-class writings as listed in the Gradebook may be subject to modification.

3. Exhibition Assignment, 10%. You will visit the exhibition *Framing Nature: Animals in Art* at the Wichita Falls Museum of Art and choose one work for this assignment. First, following Dr. Giles's instructions during his class visit, you will describe the work and its formal elements (1-2 pp., 5%). Then you will write either a creative work (poetry or prose) or a research-based academic response based on the work (at least 500 words, 5%). I highly recommend that you discuss what you plan to do for this assignment with me before you start working on it.

4. Two Responses to Visiting Lectures, 10%. We will have two additional guest lecturers come to our class: Dr. Mary Draper and Dr. Tyler Williams. After each visit, you will write 1-2 pages summarizing the lecture and discussion, then describing what you personally learned from it and how you might apply what you learned in the present or the future. If you are absent for one of these guest lectures, you will get a zero for the assignment unless you have a documented excused absence.

5. Semester-Long Project, 45%. You will work on a project related in some way to animals in Western culture. At the beginning of the semester, look through the reading list and class schedule, do a little googling, and decide what you would like to focus on. Your project should present and support an original thesis, and it may be either argumentative or analytical. Please read [this website](#) carefully as a guide to what these categories mean. You will integrate secondary sources into your presentation and paper. You must use [MLA format](#), including in-text citations. You will work on the project in several stages, as follows:

a) Proposal, not graded. You will submit a proposal of about 200 words, and I will give you feedback.

b) Annotated bibliography, 5%. You will submit an annotated bibliography of at least five peer-reviewed sources in MLA format.

c) Presentation outline, 5%. You will submit an outline of your presentation, and I will provide feedback.

d) Presentation, 10%. You will give a presentation (approximately ten minutes, followed by Q&A) on a day to be determined in advance. Those who wish to present

their paper to a larger audience, thus gaining invaluable experience and an extra line on their résumé, are strongly encouraged to participate in the annual Celebration of Scholarship on April 16, after a “practice run” in class.

e) Paper outline, 5%. You will submit an outline of your paper, and I will provide feedback.

f) Rough draft peer review, 5%. You will post a rough draft to a forum on D2L for peer review, and comment on at least three other students’ papers.

g) Rough draft, 5%. You will submit a rough draft, and I will provide feedback.

h) Final paper, 10%. Your final paper should be at least five pages long, not including the Works Cited page, and must use at least three peer-reviewed sources.

6. Attendance. You must attend class to help you master and contextualize the material. You are permitted two unexcused absences. Absences will be excused on the basis of a note from a doctor, dean, military official, or coach. However, if you believe you have a good reason for missing class but are unable to get a written excuse, please let me know, and if your excuse is valid, I will excuse you.

Your final grade will be lowered by one point for each unexcused absence in excess of the two permitted unexcused absences. In addition, three “lates” will add up to one unexcused absence unless you provide me with a valid reason for lateness.

Any student with more than four absences for any reason may be dropped from the course.

Course Policies

Individual Assistance: I will be more than happy to meet with you during my office hours or at a time arranged in advance to discuss anything at all.

Late Assignment Policy: Late assignments will be marked down one third of a letter grade per day, including weekends and holidays (i.e., A > A-), unless you have a good reason for lateness and have preferably spoken to me about it beforehand.

Academic Dishonesty: Plagiarism is the use of someone else’s thoughts, words, ideas, or lines of argument in your own work without appropriate documentation (a parenthetical citation at the end and a listing on the Works Cited page), whether you use that material in a quote, paraphrase, or summary.

Since writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills are part of the learning outcomes of this course, AI-generated submissions are not permitted and will be treated as academic dishonesty, the penalty for which is a zero on the assignment. However, you are permitted to use AI in an ethical manner, specifically:

1. You may use Grammarly and/or other spelling and grammar checkers, including those on Google Docs, but you may not use them to “rewrite” your paper or change the “tone” (that is, to “make it sound more academic,” etc.);
2. You may use AI to generate ideas. For example, you may put your topic into ChatGPT and ask for some ideas, and you may ask it follow-up questions.
3. You must always cite any AI usage in MLA style. Failure to cite AI is considered academic dishonesty.

Be aware, however, of the following drawbacks of AI:

1. AI is often inaccurate. Check everything you find through AI with other sources;
2. AI tends to “hallucinate” sources—that is, it is known to come up with sources that do not actually exist;
3. AI tends to confirm what you already believe (“confirmation bias”);
4. Grammarly and similar programs may give you suggestions that actually change the meaning of what you wrote, so always check it carefully;
5. Similarly, do not simply accept everything Grammarly suggests. You will not learn anything that way. Go over each suggested change and make sure you understand it and agree with it before you accept it;
6. AI is NOT private. Do not put any personal information into AI chats.

Cellphones: You may not use your cellphone in class except to consult the texts we are discussing, or to google a question we cannot answer. If I see you using a cellphone or a computer in class for any other reason, I may give you an unexcused absence for the day without warning.

Food: In accordance with the building policy, you may bring only bottled water to class.

Computers: You may not use a computer in class except to consult the text.

Attention: Please be alert and do not lay your head down on your desk during class, or I may mark you late or absent without warning.

Class Dismissal: Please do not start to pack up your things or leave until I have dismissed the class. If you believe I have gone over the allotted time, please raise your hand and let me know.

Email Communication: I will communicate with you through D2L email. You should set up D2L so that D2L emails are delivered to your preferred email account. You are responsible for checking your email or D2L daily for any reminders, clarifications, or other communications from me.

Safe Zone Statement: This online course is a “safe zone” in which all students will be treated and will treat one another equally, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, political beliefs, age, or ability. Diversity of thought is encouraged.

Required Books

These books are available at the bookstore and on reserve at the library. The starred ones can be found online.

Cervantes, Miguel de. *Dialogue of the Dogs*. Random House, 2008.

*Coetzee, J.M. *The Lives of Animals*. Princeton UP, 2001.

*Curley, Michael. *Physiologus*. U of Chicago P, 2009.

*Derrida, Jacques. *The Animal That Therefore I Am*. Fordham UP, 2008.

Gruen, Lori. *Animal Ethics: An Introduction*. Cambridge UP, 2011.

Hoffmann, E.T.A. *The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr*. Penguin, 1999.

*Kafka, Franz. *Collected Stories*. Everyman's Library, 1993. (You may use any translation of the stories on the syllabus, but this book contains them all.)

LePan, Don. *Animal*. Soft Skull Press, 2010.

*London, Jack. *The Call of the Wild*. Any edition, or read for free online.

Makanin, Vladimir. *Escape Hatch*. Penguin, 2009.

*Montaigne, Michel de. *Apology for Raymond Sebond*. Hackett, 2003.

Oates, Joyce Carol, ed. *The Sophisticated Cat*. Dutton Adult, 1992. (For the story "The White Cat" by Joyce Carol Oates)

Spiegelman, Art. *Complete Maus: A Survivor's Tale*. Pantheon Books, 1991. (You may purchase or borrow volumes 1 and 2 separately if you prefer.)

*Swift, Jonathan. *Gulliver's Travels*. Penguin, 2003.

Wells, H.G. *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. Broadview Press, 2009. **PLEASE USE THIS EDITION.**

*Woolf, Virginia. *Flush: A Biography*. Mariner Books, 1976.