

Animals, Philosophy, and Science

Spring 2025



Description

This seminar examines the breakthroughs in science and philosophy that provided much of the impetus for the emergence of Animal Studies, along with recent debates and future directions for this field. We begin with historical perspectives about animals and how this work has been interpreted and reinterpreted across the years. We then turn to the developments of the 20th century that lead to the modern animal protection movement. Finally, we spend the rest of the semester sampling the scientific and philosophical perspectives that have emerged in recent decades, examining what animals are like, what kind of moral and legal status they deserve, and how we should interact with them in a world reshaped by human activity.

General Information

- Time: Tue 2:00-4:25pm ET
- Place: 60 Fifth Ave Room 125
- Email: jeffsebo@nyu.edu
- Office: Zoom
- Office hours: Mon 12-2pm ET
- Course website: NYU Brightspace

Readings

All readings will be available on NYU Brightspace or online, as noted below.

Grading

Your grades will be determined as follows:

- **Paper (60%):** You will write a 5,000 word paper and submit it via Brightspace. This paper should summarize and evaluate an argument related to animals, philosophy, and science, and it should engage with multiple readings from the seminar, with appropriate notes and references. You should clear your topic with me in advance. Your paper is due anytime during the semester.
- **Responses (20%):** Starting January 28, you will write a short, informal assignment that briefly presents a question or comment about each reading. You will submit these assignments via Brightspace as well. This assignment is due noon ET on the day of class and will be graded Pass/Fail.
- **Presentation (10%):** You will give a 10-15 minute presentation about a case study related to your session (other than the ones already covered). Your presentation should include a summary and analysis that draws from course materials. You can select a date and topic on a shared Google Drive document.
- **Attendance and Participation (10%):** I expect regular attendance and thoughtful participation from all students.

Policies

- **Late Papers/Extensions/Incompletes:** Late weekly writing assignments will be accepted for half credit up until the start of class. Extensions and incompletes will be granted only in exceptional circumstances. If you want to request either, please do so in advance.
- **Academic Dishonesty:** Plagiarism results in failure in the class and referral to an academic dean. Plagiarism includes: copying sentences or fragments from any source without quotes or references; not citing every source used in your papers; citing internet information without proper citation; presenting someone else's work as your own; or copying verbatim from any source.
- **Academic Accommodations:** Academic accommodations are available to any student with a chronic, psychological, visual, mobility, learning disability, or who is deaf or hard of hearing. Please register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980. They are located at:

726 Broadway, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10003-6675
Voice/TTY Fax: 212-995-4114
Web site: <http://www.nyu.edu/csd>

Current Schedule

1. **January 21 - Introduction**

Sean Nee, “The Great Chain of Being”

David Baum et al, “The Tree Thinking Challenge”

2. **January 28 - The Problem of Other Minds**

Peter Carruthers, “The Problem of Other Minds”

Kristin Andrews, “Getting to Know Other Minds”

Clive Wynne, “The Perils of Anthropomorphism”

Frans de Waal, “Anthropomorphism and Anthropodenial”

3. **February 4 - The Science of Other Minds**

Sara Shettleworth, “Evolution, Behavior, and Cognition: A Primer”

Kristin Andrews, “Understanding Animal Behavior

Donald Griffin, “Prospects for a Cognitive Ethology”

Dale Jamieson and Marc Bekoff, “On Aims and Methods of Cognitive Ethology”

4. **February 11 - Utilitarianism and Kantianism**

Julia Driver, “Utilitarianism and Consequentialism”

Peter Singer, “All Animals Are Equal”

Julia Driver, “Kantian Ethics”

Christine Korsgaard, “A Kantian Case for Our Obligations to the Other Animals”

5. **February 25 - Virtue Ethics and Care Ethics**

Julia Driver, “Virtue Ethics”

Rosalind Hursthouse, “Applying Virtue Ethics to our Treatment of Other Animals”

Julia Driver, “Feminist Ethics”

Deane Curtin, “Toward an Ecological Ethic of Care”

6. **March 4 - Sentience and Agency**

Jonathan Birch, “The Clearest Candidates”

Jonathan Birch, “Pushing the Boundaries”

Sara Shettleworth, “Cognition and the Consequences of Behavior”

Dale Jamieson, “Animal Agency”

7. **March 11 - Interspecies Comparisons**

Tatjana Visak, “The Equality View”

Travis Timmerman, “Are All Welfare Ranges the Same?”

Shelly Kagan, “Status”

Christine Korsgaard, “The Case Against Human Superiority”

8. **March 18 - Animal Oppression**

Iris Marion Young, “The Five Faces of Oppression”

Lori Gruen, “The Faces of Animal Oppression”

Aph Ko, “Creating a New Conceptual Architecture”

Sunaura Taylor, “All Animals Are Equal (but Some Are More Equal than Others)”

9. April 1 - Animal Farming

Cleo Verkuijl et al, "Climate Change, Public Health, and Animal Welfare"
Becca Franks et al, "Animal Welfare Risks of Global Aquaculture"
Mark Budolfson, "Is It Wrong to Eat Meat from Factory Farms? If So, Why?"
Christopher Schlottmann and Jeff Sebo, "The Ethics of Food Consumption"

10. April 8 - Animal Research

Sara Green, "Animals as Models for Human Disease"
Sara Green, "The Status and Future of Animal Models"
Robert Bass, "Lives in the Balance: Utilitarianism and Animal Research"
Tom Regan, "Empty Cages: Animal Rights and Vivisection"

11. April 15 - Captive Animals

Alexandra Horowitz, "Companion and Captive"
Lori Gruen, "Dignity, Captivity, and an Ethics of Sight"
Dale Jamieson, "Against Zoos"
Stephen Bostock, "Wild Living vs Zoo Living"

12. April 22 - Wild Animals

Oscar Horta, "Debunking the Idyllic View of Natural Processes"
Heather Browning, "Positive Wild Animal Welfare"
Clare Palmer, "Against the View that We are Normally Required to Assist Wild Animals"
Martha Nussbaum, "The 'Wild' and Human Responsibility"

13. April 29 - Legal Personhood

Alasdair Cochrane, "Legal Personhood"
Alasdair Cochrane, "Membership"
Maneesha Deckha, "Beingness: A New Subjectivity for Animals"
Angela Fernandez, "Animals as Property, Quasi-Property, or Quasi-Person"

14. May 6 - Animal Advocacy

Gary Francione, "The abolition of animal exploitation"
Robert Garner, "A defense of broad animal protectionism"
Steven Best and Anthony Nocella II, "Behind the mask," pp. 23-43
Christopher Schlottmann and Jeff Sebo, "The Ethics of Illegal Food Activism"