

Our Animal Past

Animals in American History and Popular Culture

History (HI) 450

Professor Robichaud
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Office: HIS 507

Office Hours:

Tuesdays 11-12, Thursdays 12:30-2:30
(and by appointment)

Class Meetings:

Thursdays 3:30-6:15

Room: HIS 504

The anthropologist Claude Lévi Strauss once wrote that animals were “good to think with.” Indeed, over the last two decades, scholars from various disciplines have demonstrated this very point, marking a period in which human-animal relationships are being reimagined, both presently and historically.

This course has two objectives. The first is to expose students to a long history of the evolving place of animals in America, from pre-colonial Native American cultures, to colonial clashes and exchanges, to modern and industrial relationships with animals in America, to twentieth-century Disney and nature films. Because interactions with animals have been a constant in human history, the intricacies and changes in these relationships offer compelling ways of understanding historical change more broadly.

The second objective is to guide students in designing and writing their own research paper. The major assignment for this course is the completion of an original 12-14 page research essay.

Over the course of the semester, students will work collaboratively with the instructor and their peers to design, research, and write original essays on topics of their choosing.

This course is a seminar, which means that classes will be conversations and *not lectures*. Thus, it is extremely important that students come prepared to speak about the readings. To receive a passing grade, students are expected to attend class and to contribute actively to

discussions. Students will also be required to meet with the instructor at least during the semester at office hours or by appointment.

This is a group effort! Some days we will devote some class time for you to conference with one another on your projects. You are expected to help one another in shaping research papers by reading each other's work and offering constructive comments, criticisms, and suggestions.

Students with Disabilities and Special Needs

Students with special needs will receive appropriate accommodations. Please speak with me. Students may also wish to contact the Office of Disability Services at (617) 353-3658. All discussions will be confidential.

Evaluation

Class Participation	30%
Discussion Lead and Reflection	15%
Proposal	10%
Bibliography and Primary Source	10%
Final Paper	25%
Final Presentation	10%

Class Participation

Please come prepared for class. Do the reading and take notes. Prior to class, spend 30 minutes to an hour writing out your thoughts to the following questions, which we will draw upon for class discussion:

1. What is one surprising or interesting thing you learned from this reading?
2. What do you see as the main arguments and takeaways from this reading?
3. What additional questions does it raise for you?
4. What is one thing you think the author did well?
5. What is one thing the author did not do well?
6. What, if anything, do you see as least convincing?
7. What did this reading make you wish you could learn more about?

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory and essential to this class. For every unexcused absence, students will be marked down 3.5 points in their participation grade (out of 100 points). You are allowed one unexcused absence without penalty. Up to one unexcused absence can be made up by submitting a 2-3 page reflection essay on the readings for the class you missed.

Discussion Lead and Reflection

Each week 1-2 students will be assigned to lead discussion and write a reflection essay (2-3 pages) on the readings for that week. In addition to submitting their reflection on the essay, students will prepare a set of discussion questions for the class and use those questions to

lead discussion. Dates will be assigned early in the semester. When it is your day to lead discussion, please come prepared with several questions and ideas about what important issues and questions these readings raise. Your reflection essay and questions must be emailed to the professor by 10pm the night before class.

Final Paper (and Final Paper Proposal)

Students will become experts on a particular historical topic related to animals in North America. You will present their findings two ways. The first will be a presentation in the last two weeks of the semester, and the second as a 12-14 page paper due at the end of the semester. Students will meet with the professor to have their final essay topics approved, and will be required to submit a two-page proposal early in the semester.

Bibliography and Primary Source Assignment

On this day, students will bring in two things:

- (1) A bibliography of works they plan to use as “secondary sources” for their research paper
- (2) A copy of one “primary source” they intend to use for their final paper.

We will spend class time presenting and discussing these materials.

Presentation

Students will present a 10-15 minute (depending on class size) presentation about their findings, to be delivered at the end of the semester. Students are not required to have a PowerPoint presentation (or slideshow), though it is highly encouraged.

Books for Purchase:

These books are not available in digital format and should be purchased at the bookstore:

1. Virginia Anderson, *Creatures of Empire*

Other readings –marked with an asterisk (*) will be posted to Blackboard or provided in class.

SCHEDULE

September 7

Introductions

In class reading and short conversation:

How to Read a Book: <http://pne.people.si.umich.edu/PDF/howtoread.pdf>

A Beaver’s Perspective on North American History

September 14

Overview and Introduction

- John Berger, “Why Look at Animals?”*
- Harriet Ritvo, “Animal Planet” in *Journal of Environmental History* (December, 2005)*
- Richard Bulliet, *Hunters, Herders, and Hamburgers* (pp 1-35) – Available via BU Library Online Access (see Blackboard for link)

September 21

Native American Indians: Animal Relations, Ideas, and Practices

- Virginia DeJean Anderson, *Creatures of Empire*, Intro, Chapters 1-2
- Richard White, *The Organic Machine*, pp. 15-24*
- Elliot West, *Contested Plains*, pp. 54-57, 49-53, 39-41, 69-73*

September 28

Native-White Contact: Contrasts, Conflict, Synthesis

- Virginia Anderson, *Creatures of Empire*, pp. 116-246.
- Thomas Morton, selections on animals*
- Richard White, “Animals and Enterprise,” (article)*

October 5

Animals in Unexpected Places: The Nineteenth-Century City

- Catherine McNeur, “The Swinish Multitude” in *Journal of Urban History* (2012)*
- Etienne Benson, “The Urbanization of the Eastern Grey Squirrel in the United States,” in *Journal of American History* (Fall, 2013)*
- Clay McShane, “Gilded Age Boston,” article *

As you prepare your own essay, pay attention to the structure of each of these journal articles—and, for that matter, all the articles we read for this course.

*****TWO PAGE RESEARCH PAPER PROPOSAL DUE**

Bring your topic proposal to class on October 5 for discussion and also to hand in.

October 12

Pets

- Grier, *Pets in America: A History* (selections)
- Ambrose Bierce, “Dog”*
- Additional readings TBA

October 19

Political Animals

- Susan Pearson, *The Rights of the Defenseless*, selection *
- Jessica Wang, “Dogs and the Making of the American State,” *Journal of American History*, 2012*
- Additional readings TBA

October 26

Zoos and Animal Entertainments

- Vernon Kisling, “The Origin and Development of American Zoological Parks to 1899.”*
- Robert Schofield, “The Science Education of an Enlightened Entrepreneur: Charles Willson Peale and His Philadelphia Museum, 1784-1827.” *American Studies* 30, no. 2, (Fall 1989): 21-40.*
- Bondeson, *The Feejee Mermaid and Other Essays* (selections)*
- Harris, *Humbug*, pp.62-67*
- Hanson, *Animal Attractions* (selections)

November 2

Killing Animals: Hunting and Fishing

- “Hunting” in *Sports in America**
- Tina Loo “Of Moose and Men: Hunting for Masculinities in British Columbia, 1880-1939”*
- Rotundo, *American Manhood*, selections *
- Burroughs, “Real and Sham Natural History”*
- Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization*, selections *

*****BIBLIOGRAPHY AND PRIMARY SOURCE ASSIGNMENT DUE**

Students will prepare short (3-4 pp.) annotated bibliographies, identifying and evaluating some of their most important sources. These bibliographies will be handed in at the beginning of class. In addition, each student will bring a copy of one primary source they intend to use for their project. Students should write one page about the source and come prepared to introduce their classmates to the source and the challenges of interpretations they may face.

November 9

Animals and the Moving Image: Walt Disney, Animals, and Nature

- Walt Disney Productions, “Bambi”
- Gregory Mittman, *Reel Nature: America’s Romance with Wildlife on Film* (selections)*
- Johnston and Matlin*

November 16

Animals and Documentary Films

- “Grizzly Man”
- *The Atlantic*, Review of Grizzly Man*
- Mittman, *Reel Nature* (selections)*
- Palmer, *Shooting in the Wild* (selections)*

November 23 – No Class – Thanksgiving

November 30

Student Presentations and Discussion

Eating Animals

- Michael Pollan, “Power Steer” and *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*, selections (“Chapter 17: “The Ethics of Eating Meat”)*
- Additional readings on Blackboard TBD*

December 7

Student Presentations and Discussion

Conclusions

- “The Animal Rights Debate”*
- Kolbert and Foer on *Eating Animals**
- David Foster Wallace, “Consider the Lobster”*