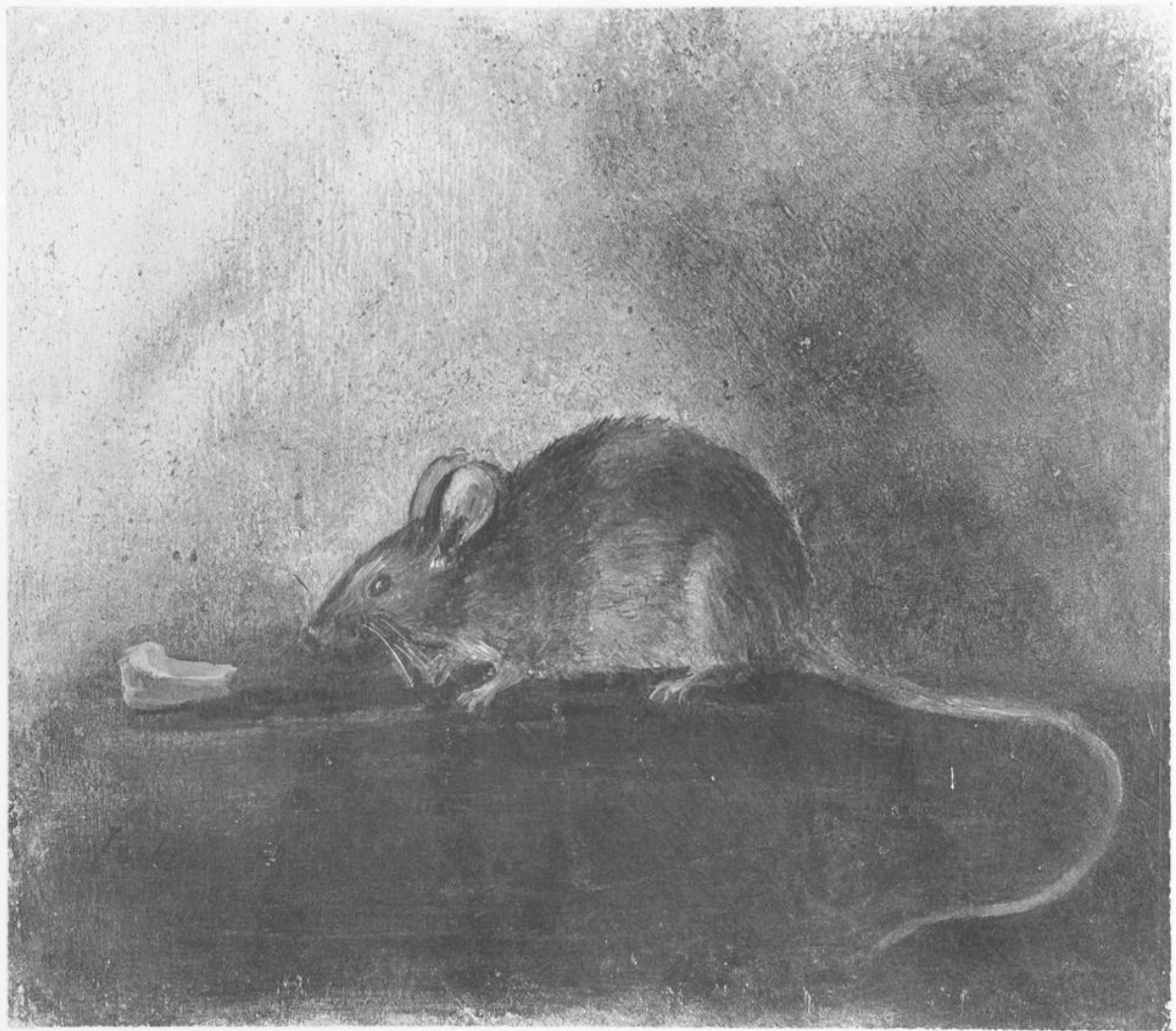


Department of Visual Arts 2010/11
Course Outline
VISA 3P98 - Special Studies in Visual Culture: Picturing Animals



John Constable, *A Mouse With Cheese* (1824)

Contact Information

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Course Description

In 1980 John Berger famously asked, "Why Look at Animals?" Berger's question serves as a launching point for this special studies seminar. In this course we will consider representations of animals in various forms of visual culture. From Albrecht Dürer's *The Rhinoceros* (1515) to Damien Hirst's *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* (1992), nonhuman species have been a consistent component of Western art. Further, the animal body has been at the forefront of many technical innovations in visual culture. For example, Edward Muybridge's photographs for his 1887 publication *Animal Locomotion* have been celebrated as both expanding the boundaries of photography and an important foundation for cinematography. Likewise, Eduardo Kac's creation of Alba the "GFP bunny" in 2000 raised numerous questions about the practice, ethics and materiality of making art. As this example demonstrates, the relationship between animals and visual culture goes beyond that of simple representation and has important implications for inter-species relationships. For instance, in recent years artists like Olly and Suzi have begun to "collaborate" with nonhuman animals in their art-making endeavours and organizations like the "Elephant Art Gallery" showcase works purportedly created by pachyderm painters.

Through directed readings, research assignments and seminar-style discussions, this course will engage with such questions as: Why do animals figure so prominently in the history of art? What are the ethical implications of picturing animals? What does it mean when artists collaborate with animals? Are animal images art or science? What can we learn from images of animals and what can these representations tell us about ourselves?

Required Texts & Resources

-Course Blog: <http://visa3p98.wordpress.com/>

-Library Resources (ARTstor, fulltext articles, etc.)

-recommended text: Sylvan Barnet, *A Short Guide to Writing About Art* (9th or 10th edition)

Note: there is no required textbook for this course. All course readings are available as fulltext journal articles through the James A. Gibson Library. Students are expected to draw on existing research and academic skills to locate these readings through the library.

Course Objectives

- to encourage critical engagement with ideas surrounding socio-political aspects of image culture and consumption
- to present students with the opportunity to think critically about how and why we represent other species
- to give students opportunities to engage in contextual and visual analysis of images beyond the introductory level
- to provide students with an opportunity to build upon existing academic research and writing skills

Schedule

-The following schedule is a guideline for this course and is subject to change.

-Attendance at all lectures, seminars, presentations and film screenings is expected in this course. The various course components are intended to complement one another but do not replace the other components of the course. You are responsible for material presented in lecture, seminars, films, and course readings.

-Please ensure you have completed the assigned reading prior to the class meeting for the week in which it is assigned.

-Students who want to get a good grade in VISA 3P98 should plan to spend an average of three hours per week (one hour for each hour of class time) outside of regularly scheduled class meetings on readings, seminar preparation, assignments and studying.

January 13: Course Introduction

January 20: Picturing Animals: A Brief History - Part I

Assigned Reading: Sarah R. Cohen, "Chardin's Fur: Painting, Materialism, and the Question of Animal Soul." *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38, no. 1 (Fall 2004): 39-61.

January 27: Picturing Animals: A Brief History - Part II

Assigned Reading: Diana Donald, "'Beastly Sights': The Treatment of Animals as a Moral Theme in Representations of London, C.1820-1850." *Art History* 22, no. 4 (1999): 514-44.

Feb 3: Animals & Contemporary Art

Assigned Reading: Ron Broglio, "'Living Flesh': Animal-Human Surfaces." *Journal of Visual Culture* 7, no. 1 (April 2008): 103-21.

February 10: A Fashion For Animals

Michelle Tolini, "'Beetle Abominations' and Birds on Bonnets: Zoological Fantasy in Late-Nineteenth-Century Dress." *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 1, no. 1 (Spring 2002): <http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/index.php/spring02/206-qbeetle-abominationsq-and-birds-on-bonnets-zoological-fantasy-in-late-nineteenth-century-dress>
AND John Sorenson, "Lady Gaga's Meat Dress." *The Mark* (Sept. 28, 2010): <http://www.themarknews.com/articles/2568-lady-gaga-s-meat-dress>.

**PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE

February 17: Animals and Anti-Modernism

Assigned Reading: Matthew Brower, "Trophy Shots: Early North American Photographs of Nonhuman Animals and the Display of Masculine Prowess." *Society and Animals* 13, no. 1 (2005): 13-31.

February 24: READING WEEK. NO CLASS MEETING

March 3: Animals and Visual Culture in Science

Carol Freeman, "Imaging Extinction: Disclosure and Revision in Photographs of the Thylacine (Tasmanian Tiger)." *Society & Animals* 15, no. 3 (2007): 241-56.

March 10: Animals in Film

Derek Bousé, "False Intimacy: Close-Ups and Viewer Involvement in Wildlife Films." *Visual Studies* 18, no. 2 (October 2003): 123-32.

March 17: The Virtual Animal

Jody Berland, "Cat and Mouse: Iconographics of Nature and Desire." *Cultural Studies* 22, no. 3-4 (July 2008): 431-54.

March 24

-student presentations

March 31

-student presentations

April 7

-student presentations

Assignments and Course Requirements

-Seminar Participation: 20%

-Book Presentation: 20%

-Project Proposal: 20%

-Project Presentation: 20%

-Research Paper: 20%

Seminar Participation

In each class we will have a seminar-style discussion based on the assigned readings for that week. Each week a small group of students (2-3 depending on final enrolment numbers) will be responsible for leading the discussion on that week's reading. These students are not expected to summarize and present the reading, rather, they will be leading a discussion that all students in the class are expected to participate in. **All students, in other words, are expected to do the readings each week and come prepared to discuss them.** The students leading the weekly discussion will come up with a list of approximately 3-5 discussion questions based on the themes of the reading. Students will be graded on their seminar participation throughout the term (in other words, it is important to participate in all seminar discussions, not just the one you are responsible for leading!)

Book Presentation

Each student will read and give a presentation on one of the books from Reaktion's "Animal" series. This book series focuses on the cultural history of a specific animal in each volume. (e.g.: cow, elephant, fox, swan). Your presentation should be approximately 15 minutes and highlight some of the ways in which the specific animal under consideration has figured in human societies, art and culture. Students are encouraged to

bring in appropriate and relevant examples of visual culture in their presentation. A full list of these titles can be found at the following website: <http://www.reaktionbooks.co.uk/series.html?id=1> The James A. Gibson Library currently has 32 of the 39 titles in this series. We will divide up these books and assign presentation dates during our first class meeting.

Reserch Project

The majority of your grade in VISA 3P98 will be based on your research project. This project is broken into three components:

- a) project proposal (worth 20%; due on February 10, 2011)
- b) project presentation (worth 20%; presentations will take place during the last 3 weeks of class)
- b) research paper (worth 20%; due on April 14, 2011)

As this class is a special topics course, students are to design a research project based on their own particular interest(s) related to the theme of "Picturing Animals." I am happy to consult with you to help shape the direction of your project, but I will not assign topics. You may choose to focus on a particular artist, theory, theme, medium or a particular type of representation of nonhuman species.

Project Proposal: The project proposal should be a minimum of 2 pages and explain the topic you wish to pursue for the research project in this course. Your proposal should include a specific topic (not just a broad theme!), and preliminary ideas about what form your research paper. Try to answer the following questions in your proposal:

- What topic do you want to focus on?
- Why have you selected this topic?
- What interests you about this topic?
- What do you hope to learn by doing this research? How do you plan to conduct your research?
- What images/artists/authors will be important for your research?
- How will you conduct your research? Be specific! Your proposal should also include a bibliography of key sources you will need to consult for this project.

*Note: students may find Sylvan Barnet's book, *A Short Guide to Writing About Art*, useful when preparing their proposal.

Proposals should be uploaded to turnitin.com by the due date. A hard-copy of your assignment is not required.

Project Presentation: During the last 3 weeks of class we will have student research presentations. Your research presentation will be on the same topic as your final research paper. Presentations should be 20 minutes in length (please rehearse your presentation ahead of time to ensure it is 20 minutes!) and describe the various aspects of your research project. Students are encouraged to bring in audio visual material where

appropriate (e.g.: slides, posters or short video clips). We will assign presentation dates during our first class meeting.

Research Paper: Your research paper should be roughly 10-12 pages long. Papers in this class can be historical or contemporary in focus, but must be supported by academic research. Your research paper should be formatted using the Chicago Manual of Style. Papers should be uploaded to turnitin.com by the due date. A hard-copy of your assignment is not required.

You are required to use a minimum of 5 academic research resources for this project. To find appropriate research resources you will need to consult the library catalogue, as well as article databases such as JSTOR, Project Muse and Academic Search Premier.

*Tip: as you are accessing course readings, take a moment to browse the issue and/or journal you are getting the weekly reading from. Often there are other articles relating to course themes in these publications.

You may wish to order books and research resources through Brock's inter-library loan service (RACER), but please remember that the delivery of these items may take some time so it is important to place your request early.

You may use websites and other electronic resources as part of your research, however, please keep the following guidelines in mind:

1) A thoroughly researched paper draws from a number of different types of sources. Papers that only rely on websites and do not consider academic books and journal articles will not be considered appropriately researched and will be marked accordingly.

2) Under no circumstances should Wikipedia be considered an academic source. Like any encyclopedia or dictionary, this is an acceptable place to get basic information about a topic, however, academic research requires the use of sources that go beyond providing basic information.

As this is a major research project, students are strongly encouraged to work on this assignment throughout the term rather than leaving it to the end of term.

Course Policies

Academic Civility

Common courtesy is expected in this course, and disruptive and disrespectful behaviour will not be tolerated. Due to the nature of the subjects covered in VISA 3P98 disagreements and debates will likely arise. While I encourage discussion and exploration of different points of view, it is absolutely essential that these discussions unfold in a professional and courteous manner. Debating different points of view is the basis of

academic inquiry, but under no circumstances will personal attacks or insults be tolerated.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is expected in this course, and students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with what constitutes appropriate behaviour in this respect. Students are strongly encouraged to read Brock University's academic integrity policy (<http://www.brocku.ca/academic-integrity>) and the relevant section of the University Calendar (<http://www.brocku.ca/webcal/2010/undergrad/areg.html#sec6>).

Plagiarism, cheating and other forms of academic dishonesty are serious academic offences. Penalties range from a warning, to failure of the course with a notation on your transcripts, or suspension from university. It is the responsibility of the student to be aware of the rules and terms governing academic honesty.

In relation to this, it is the instructor's responsibility to track and report plagiarism in the university. Turnitin.com is an anti-plagiarism tool that screens all assignments against a database of the internet, e-journals, e-books, a range of other scanned material including other assignments for this course. This ensures that all assignments are graded on a level playing field and means I can read your papers for ideas and content rather than as a police officer. I can spend my grading time providing all students with the feedback they deserve rather than spending inordinate amounts of time investigating the few papers that seem to present academic honesty issues.

Submitting your paper to Turnitin.com also means that it is time and date stamped and cannot be lost. The process of registering and submitting papers to turnitin.com is simple and the course password will be given to you in class. Students must submit written assignments through Turnitin.com by the due date.

Grading will also take place via Turnitin.com. Students will be able to access their marks via the "gradebook" function on Turnitin.com.

Students must register by going to Turnitin.com and clicking the "create a user profile" button (below the login button), and then following the on-screen instructions. Guides on how to use Turnitin.com and how to create your account are available on the Turnitin.com website.

*Please note that if you have a principled objection to Turnitin.com, you must come and speak to me by January 21st so that alternate arrangements can be made. Students who object to using Turnitin.com will instead submit research notes, drafts and photocopies of all sources along with their papers rather than uploading their papers to the website.

Accommodations

As part of Brock University's commitment to a respectful work and learning environment, the University will make every reasonable effort to accommodate all members of the University community with disabilities. If you require accommodations related to a permanent disability to participate in this course, you are encouraged to

contact the Student Development Centre Services for Students with Disabilities (4th Floor Schmon Tower ext. 3240) and also discuss these accommodations(s) with the professor.

Email

Email is often the preferred method of communication between many students and faculty members. It is a quick and efficient way of asking a question or getting information, however, it is important that we have guidelines about appropriate use of email communication in classes such as this.

1)Email exchanges about Brock courses are considered to be professional communication and should be composed accordingly. This does not mean they need to be uncomfortably formal, however, they should be polite and proofread for clarity.

2)Always sign your emails so I know who I am corresponding with. Email sent from a Brock email address does not display your name, only a jumble of letters and numbers which does not identify who you are. Likewise, an email sent from artgirl_21@hotmail.com (or other such addresses) will not automatically identify who you are.

3)Identify which course you are writing about (VISA 3P98) in either the subject line or body of your email. I am involved with several classes each year, and can not answer vague questions about “class” without knowing which course you are referring to.

4)I am happy to answer questions about class material, policies or assignments via email, however I would ask that you please consult the course outline and the course blog to see if you can find the answer to your question before you email me. Emails that ask questions which can easily be answered by consulting these resources (i.e.: What is the assigned reading for this week? When is the midterm? Does my paper have to be double-spaced?) will not receive a response.

5)I will strive to answer email relating to VISA 3P98 within 48 hours of receiving it. Please note, however, that this applies only to regular working hours – email will not be checked on weekends or holidays. Likewise, frantic emails sent in the middle of the night hours before a due date will likely not be answered in time.

Important Dates

*The last day to withdraw from a D3 course without academic penalty is Friday, March 4th.

* Your project proposal is due on the 10th of February. Your proposal is worth 20% of your final grade. Students who submit their proposal by the scheduled date will be notified of their mark on it no later than the 25th of February, one week prior to the withdrawal date listed above. Please note: The 25th of February is during Reading Week, therefore it is your responsibility to check your grades online if you wish to know your mark.

*Reading Week: February 21-25

*Last day of Winter session (D3): Friday, April 8th

*April 11th is scheduled as snow/reading day.

*Final exam period – April 12th-27th

Late Penalties and Extensions

Late assignments will be deducted 5% a day. Extensions will be given only in extreme circumstances and must be accompanied by supporting medical documentation. Extensions are only granted in extenuating circumstances and only when a student has provided appropriate documentation.

Under no circumstances will vacations, concerts, sporting events and other extra-curricular activities be considered a valid excuse for missing an exam or a due date.

Students are given assignment due dates at the beginning of term and are expected to plan their time accordingly. You are strongly encouraged to work on your assignments throughout the semester and not attempt to complete your assignment the night before it is due. Running out of time or failing to budget your time appropriately does not constitute grounds for an extension on assignments in this course. Any assignment submitted after the due date will be subject to a late penalty of 5% per day.

Requirements for Written Assignments

1. All written assignments must adhere to the Chicago Manual of Style.

2. All written assignments will be marked with attention to style, grammar, and spelling. Students who received 60% or less on a written assignment are encouraged to attend a writing workshop. For more information on these and other academic skills workshops, please visit the Student Development Centre.

Sensitive Material

Due to the nature of the themes of this course, there will occasionally be inclusion of sensitive material presented in lectures, films, readings, and discussion. By remaining in the course, a student is understood to have given their informed consent to exposure to such materials.