

**California State University Long Beach**  
**American Studies 421i (#9682) / Animals in American Culture / Dr. Brett Mizelle**  
**Fall Semester 2010 / Tuesdays & Thursdays, 2:00 – 3:15 p.m. / Room TA-033**

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**Course Description:**

This interdisciplinary general education course examines the role of non-human animals in making both material and cultural contributions to human societies. More specifically, we will focus on some of the many ways in which animals, not just humans, have shaped American history and culture. Students will bring tools and perspectives from several disciplines to bear on the multidisciplinary “problem of the animal” in American society. Course lectures, readings, discussions, and student assignments, including a final research paper and presentation, are all designed to interrogate the many contradictions in Americans’ relationships with animals while prompting us, hopefully, to think beyond ourselves to include other species in both our imaginations and material existences.

**Course Objectives:**

As a general education (GE) course in category D2 (Social and Behavioral Sciences and History) with special designation as Capstone: Interdisciplinary, we will focus on both content knowledge and skill development. In terms of content, the goal of this course is to get students to think about the ways in which we use and think about non-human animals (the two are related, of course, but not always in obvious ways). We will do this by looking at how non-human animals have become of increasing interest to scholars at a time marked by two extremes, one that condemns some animals to the coercion and isolation imposed by factory farming while consigning others to an intensified and commodified intimacy in the home. In addition to looking at non-human animals as pets and as meat, we will conduct species-specific investigations that will be shared in the form of presentations and final research papers.

While learning about the history and the contemporary functions of ideas about and practices toward non-human animals in the United States, you will also further develop the skills you have built in your GE foundation courses. I have chosen to focus on three of the thirteen essential GE skills in this course: written communication, critical thinking, and synthesis and interdisciplinary methods of inquiry. Accordingly, after taking this course, you will be able to:

1. Describe the history of human-animal relationships in America, identifying change over time and summarizing key areas of interpretation and contestation.
2. Assess the impact of non-human animals on American life and culture, asking how (or whether) we should rethink, rebuild and recast our relationship with other animals.
3. Demonstrate proficiency in critical thinking by developing reasonable, clear positions and crafting conclusions based on a synthesis of appropriate evidence from a variety of sources (Critical Thinking)
4. Integrate knowledge from multiple disciplinary perspectives, methods and insights in responding to the problem of “the animal” in American history and culture. (Synthesis and Interdisciplinary Methods of Inquiry)
5. Demonstrate that they can communicate meaning to readers in written texts marked by clarity, fluency and sophistication. (Written Communication)

For more information on general education, including the complete list of GE skills and requirements, go to <http://www.csulb.edu/divisions/aa/ge/students/>.

### Required Course Materials:

The following books are required and may be purchased at the University Bookstore:

Erica Fudge, *Animal* (Reaktion Books, 2002). 978-1861891341 \$19.95  
 Jonathan Safran Foer, *Eating Animals* (Back Bay Books, 2010) 978-0316069885 \$14.99  
 Katherine C. Grier, *Pets in America: A History* (Harvest Books, 2007). 978-0156031769 \$16.00  
 Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003). 978-0971757585 \$12.95

Other required readings are available electronically via BeachBoard, J-Stor and the internet. You are responsible for downloading, printing, and reading these materials. Please bring them to class, as we will need them for our discussions.

### Course Assignments & Grading:

1. Reading responses (7)	25%
2. Formal paper	20%
3. Reflective essay on human-animal relationships	15%
4. Presentation to class of readings and supplemental materials.	10%
5. Final research paper, including preliminary assignments	30%

Additional information about these assignments will be distributed and discussed in class. Final course grades will be given in ten percentage increments, with students in the top 10% of the course receiving an A, the next 10% receiving a B, and so on. There will be opportunity for extra credit through short reaction papers on guest lectures and events and exhibitions related to the course.

### Course Policies:

*A Note for American Studies Majors:* AMST 421 is one of the core courses in the American Studies major. The remaining units of your American Studies degree program will be selected in consultation with the program advisor so that they reflect your own interests in American society and culture. For more information about the American Studies Program, please talk to me, as I am currently serving as program director and advisor.

*Attendance:* Because we cover a great deal of material in this course, prompt and regular attendance is strongly recommended. Experience has shown that good grades are strongly correlated with attendance and active participation. Please read the CSULB attendance policy carefully. It can be found on-line at: [http://www.csulb.edu/divisions/aa/grad\\_undergrad/senate/documents/policy/2001/01/](http://www.csulb.edu/divisions/aa/grad_undergrad/senate/documents/policy/2001/01/)

*University Withdrawal Policy:* It is the student's responsibility to withdraw from classes. Instructors have no obligation to withdraw students who do not attend courses, and may choose not to do so. The deadline to withdraw from a class without a 'W' for this semester is September 13th. Withdrawal from a course after that date requires the signature of the instructor and the department chair and is permissible only for serious and compelling reasons. Fear of receiving a final grade lower than desired, or change in one's work schedule are not considered serious or compelling. Important deadlines for this semester can be found at: [http://www.csulb.edu/depts/enrollment/dates/registration\\_fall.html](http://www.csulb.edu/depts/enrollment/dates/registration_fall.html)

*Classroom Environment:* Feel free to ask questions and express opinions in this course, approaching readings and ideas actively and critically. As you do so, however, please strive to be courteous to your fellow students. Despite the often difficult content of this course and the inevitable diversity of opinions about non-human animals and their treatment, I hope that you will all listen to and respect each other as we discuss issues in a calm and thoughtful manner. To help create a respectful and productive environment, please avoid unnecessary distractions (such as ringing cell phones, beeping pagers, and conspicuous consumption of snacks) during class meetings. I have no objection to your use of laptops in taking notes, but I will ask you to turn the computer off if you are surfing the web during class. Please note that I frequently ask students with laptops to look up information for me, so be prepared to use your laptop for course related research when asked.

*Papers:* Students will complete several distinct types of written assignments in this seminar. The first are short, informal *reading responses*. There are seven of these responses on the course schedule, which will need to be completed prior to coming to class so we can use them to guide our discussion of course readings. These reading responses should be two to three paragraphs long and should demonstrate your engagement with the readings. While I will provide some questions for you to consider, I am most interested in seeing each of you “grapple with” the issues raised by our study of the role of non-human animals in American culture. Accordingly, don’t hesitate to try out new thoughts or write about something you are still thinking through in these reading responses. I hope that you will find them to be an important part of how you learn—and a useful demonstration of how you think—throughout the semester. There is also one *formal paper* in this course which will center upon our readings of either Catherine C. Grier's *Pets in America* or Jonathan Safran Foer's *Eating Animals*. In these short essays (four to six pages usually is sufficient) you should shape a commentary on these readings, integrating them with other course materials and topics. I will provide specific topics for you to write upon, but I also encourage you to pursue avenues of inquiry of your own choice here. You will also draft and revise a *reflective essay* which addresses your own relationships with non-human animals, hopefully prompted by the ideas in Erica Fudge's *Animal*. Detailed guidelines for this assignment will be distributed in class, as will information about the *research paper and presentation*, which will be the culminating projects in this course.

All work written outside the classroom must be typed or word-processed in a standard 10 or 12 point font, double-spaced, with one-inch margins. At a minimum, your papers should both present and critically analyze both the interdisciplinary approaches and content of your reading. You must cite all quotations using parenthetical references, footnotes, or endnotes. I will provide guidelines about appropriate citation format along with the paper topics. All papers should have your name, the course title and number, the due date, and an appropriate title or label for the assignment at the top. I strongly recommend that you keep copies of all your work, either on paper or on disk, for your protection.

Your papers will be evaluated for earnest effort and thoughtful, coherent content. Remember to clearly state your thesis and support your arguments with examples. Usage and grammar are not the ultimate concern of grading, but a minimum mechanical competence to insure the “readability” of these papers is expected. I also expect that you will proofread your papers before handing them in. All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day assigned unless otherwise noted. Formal papers will be submitted electronically to Turn-it-In (via BeachBoard) and in hard copy for my comments. I will not, however, serve as your printer. If you know you are going to miss class on dates assignments are due you must be proactive and request an extension in advance. Late assignments will not be accepted more than one week past their due date without a previously agreed to extension.

*Plagiarism & Academic Integrity:* Students in this class will be held to a high standard of academic integrity, which is defined as “the pursuit of scholarly activity free from fraud and deception.” If I suspect all or part of an assignment may not be your own intellectual work I will ask to see your notes or drafts. I also require electronic submission of all formal papers through Turn-it-in. The policy on academic integrity, including the sanctions for violating university standards on cheating and plagiarism, is available at: <http://www.csulb.edu/divisions/aa/research/our/information/policies/cheating/>

*Disability Accommodation:* It is the student’s responsibility to notify me at the beginning of the semester about any disability that may require special accommodation. For more information on campus support services for disabled students, please check out <http://www.csulb.edu/divisions/students/dss/>.

*Student Services:* If you need help with written assignments or require guidance on note-taking and critical reading, please take advantage of the Writer’s Resource Lab (LAB-312; 985-4329) or the Learning Assistance Center (Library East 12; 985-5350). The Technology Help Desk is also available to all students. Visit them on the web at <http://helpdesk.csulb.edu> or by phone at 562-985-4959. All students should make sure that their CSULB e-mail accounts forward to their preferred e-mail accounts so that you will receive course assignments and announcements.

### **Course Schedule:**

Note: This syllabus may be changed during the semester as necessary and appropriate. Changes will be announced in class and electronically through BeachBoard. You are responsible for knowing about any changes. You are expected to have completed the day's readings prior to coming to class and to be prepared to participate in discussions. Always bring the texts we will be discussing to class.

## UNIT 1      **The Animal Question**

Aug 31 (Tu)      Course Introduction

Sep 02 (Th)      Pigeons

Reading: Jon Mooallem, "Pigeon Wars," *The New York Times*, 15 October 2006, online at <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/15/magazine/15pigeons.html>; Lydia Millet, "Tesla and Wife," from *Love in Infant Monkeys: Stories* (2009), 74-90 [BB]

Assignment: Response 1: Tell me something about the human relationship with pigeons based on today's readings. What are some of the constituencies and complexities of this lived relationship and how do they reflect knowledge of *Columbidae*?

Sep 07 (Tu)      Why Look at Animals?

Reading: John Berger, "Why Look at Animals?," in *About Looking* (1980), 1-26 [BB]; Nigel Rothfels, "Touching Animals: The Search for a Deeper Understanding of Animals," in Dorothee Brantz, ed., *Bestly Natures: Animals, Humans, and the Study of History* (2010), 38-58 [BB];

Sep 09 (Th)      Real & Represented Animals (and why this distinction might matter)

Reading: Steve Baker, "Guest Editor's Introduction: Animals, Representation, and Reality," *Society & Animals* 9.3 (2001), 189-201 [BB]; Jennifer Howard, "Creature Consciousness," *The Chronicle Review* (18 October 2009), online at <http://chronicle.com/article/Creature-Consciousness/48804/>

Assignment: Response 2: What is going on in the images by photographer Britta Jaschinski (taken from her books *Zoo*, *Wild Things*, and *Dark*, at <http://www.brittaphotography.com/animals-places.php>) in the context of our readings this week?

Sep 14 (Tu)      Our Paradoxical Relationships with Non-Human Animals

Reading: Erica Fudge, *Animal* (2002), through page 65

Sep 16 (Th)      Rethinking the Human & Our Lived Relation with Non-Human Animals

Reading: Erica Fudge, *Animal*, to conclusion

Sep 21 (Tu)      Our Relationships with Non-Human Animals

Assignment: Reflective Essay due

## UNIT 2      **Pets, Companion Animals, & Companion Species as Beings in Relation**

Sep 23 (Th)      Manufacturing the Pet

Reading: Catherine C. Grier, *Pets in America* (2007), through page 73; M.B. McMullan, "The Day the Dogs Died in London," *London Journal* 23.1 (1998), 32-40 [BB]

Sep 28 (Tu)      Domesticity and Kindness

Reading: Catherine C. Grier, *Pets in America*, through page 233; Eric Knight, "Lassie Come-Home," *The Saturday Evening Post* (17 December 1938) [BB]

Sep 30 (Th)      Learning from the Margins

Reading: Catherine C. Grier, *Pets in America*, through page 299; E.B. White, "Death of a Pig," *The Atlantic Monthly* (January 1948), 28-33 [BB]

Assignment: Response 3: What might Knight's fiction and White's memoir contribute to an understanding of the relationships between humans and animals? What difference does animal species and the social class of the human actors make?

- Oct 05 (Tu) Recent Transformations in the Human-Pet Relationship  
Reading: Catherine C. Grier, *Pets in America*, to conclusion; Clare Palmer, "Killing Animals in Animal Shelters," in *Killing Animals* (2006), pp. 170-87 [BB]
- Oct 07 (Th) No Class Meeting—Idaho History Education Conference, Boise
- Oct 12 (Tu) Training the Human as Well as the Dog  
Reading: Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (2003)  
Assignment: Formal paper on *Pets in America* due by the start of class on October 19th.
- Oct 14 (Th) Sharing Spaces with Other Species  
Reading: Julie A. Smith, "Beyond Dominance and Affection: Living with Rabbits in Post-Humanist Households," *Society & Animals* 11.2 (2003), 181-197.  
Assignment: Response 4: How do Haraway and Smith reconceptualize their relationships with dogs and rabbits? What might be the implications of their ideas and practices for human-animal relationships in general?
- UNIT 3 Eating Animals**
- Oct 19 (Tu) Meat History  
Reading: Alexander Cockburn, "A Short, Meat-Oriented History of the World, from Eden to the Mattole," *New Left Review* 215 (January-February 1996), online (in four parts) at <http://www.counterpunch.org/>. Take a look at the work of artist Sue Coe, whose book *Dead Meat* (1996) included Cockburn's essay: <http://www.graphicwitness.org/coe/enter.htm>
- Oct 21 (Th) No Class Meeting—Urban History Conference, Las Vegas
- Oct 26 (Tu) Storytelling and Language  
Reading: Jonathan Safran Foer, *Eating Animals* (2009), through page 77; Carol J. Adams, "The Sexual Politics of Meat," in *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* [BB].  
Assignment: Preliminary Paper Topic(s) due
- Oct 28 (Th) From Farm to Factory  
Reading: Jonathan Safran Foer, *Eating Animals*, through page 148; Charlie LeDuff, "At a Slaughterhouse, Some Things Never Die," *The New York Times* (16 June 2000), online at <http://partners.nytimes.com/library/national/race/061600leduff-meat.html>  
Assignment: Response 5: Based on this week's readings, what is the relationship between the treatment of non-human animals and other human groups? Given our readings so far this semester, what larger argument might you make about origin (and possible transformation) of these ideas about and practices upon human and non-human "others"?
- Nov 02 (Tu) Pigs and Pork  
Reading: Jonathan Safran Foer, *Eating Animals*, through page 200; Brett Mizelle, "The Disappearance (and Slight Return) of Pigs in American Cities," *Antennae* 12 (The Pig Issue) (2010), 79-86, online at <http://www.antennae.org.uk/ANTENNAE%20ISSUE%2012.pdf>
- Nov 04 (Th) Options?  
Reading: Jonathan Safran Foer, *Eating Animals*, to conclusion; Temple Grandin, "What Do Animals Need?," in *Animals Make Us Human: Creating the Best Life for Animals* (2009) [BB]  
Assignment: Response 6: Have our readings about meat led you to think differently, or live differently? If so, in what ways? What, if anything, in the readings and our discussions prompted this self-examination? So what?
- Field Trip: At some point to be decided during this unit we will take a field trip to Animal Acres, a farm animal sanctuary, in Acton, California. Their website is <http://www.animalacres.org/>

Nov 09 (Tu)	A Postdomestic Relationship with Animals?
Reading:	Richard Bulliet, "Postdomesticity: Our Lives with Animals," in <i>Hunters, Herders, and Hamburgers: The Past and Future of Human-Animal Relationships</i> (2005), 1-35 [BB]
Assignment:	Revised Paper Topic due Formal paper on <i>Eating Animals</i> due by the start of class on November 16th.
Nov 11 (Th)	Veterans Day—Campus Closed
<b>UNIT 4</b>	<b>Some Species-Specific Speculations</b>
Nov 16 (Tu)	Cockroach
Reading:	Natalie Angier, "There is Nothing Like a Roach," in <i>The Beauty of the Beastly</i> (1996), 116-121 [BB]; Jay Mechling, "From Archy to Archy: Why Cockroaches are Good to Think," <i>Southern Folklore</i> 48 (1991), 121-140 [BB]. Also take a look at the images and videos by artist Catherine Chalmers, available at <a href="http://www.catherinechalmers.com/cockroach.cfm">http://www.catherinechalmers.com/cockroach.cfm</a>
Nov 18 (Th)	Doing "Animal Studies" Research Class meets in the Spidell Room, University Library
Nov 23 (Tu)	Dolphin
Reading:	D. Graham Burnett, "A Mind in the Water: The Dolphin as our Beast of Burden," <i>Orion Magazine</i> (May/June 2010), online at <a href="http://www.orionmagazine.org/index.php/articles/article/5503/">http://www.orionmagazine.org/index.php/articles/article/5503/</a> ; Natalie Angier, "Save a Whale, Save a Soul, Goes the Cry," <i>The New York Times</i> (25 June 2010) [BB]
Assignment:	Research Questions and Preliminary Bibliography due
Nov 25 (Th)	No Class Meeting—Thanksgiving Holiday
Nov 30 (Tu)	Crow
Reading:	John M. Marzluff and Tony Angell, "The Social Customs and Culture of Crows," in <i>In the Company of Crows and Ravens</i> (2005), 152-195 [BB]
Assignment:	Response 7: Tell me something interesting about our readings on specific species, bringing at least one external text or image about cockroaches, dolphins, or crows into your analysis. What do we learn about the human relationship with this species? Does this investigation make our use of "human-animal relationships" problematic? Why or why not?
Dec 02 (Th)	Student Presentations
Dec 05 (Tu)	Student Presentations
Dec 09 (Th)	Student Presentations
Dec 16 (Th)	Student Presentations during Final Exam Period, 12:30-2:30 p.m.
Assignment:	Final Papers due by 5pm Friday, December 17th

We need another and a wiser and perhaps a more mystical concept of animals. Remote from universal nature, and living by complicated artifice, man in civilization surveys the creature through the glass of his knowledge and sees thereby a feather magnified and the whole image in distortion. We patronize them for their incompleteness, for their tragic fate of having taken form so far below ourselves. And therein we err, and greatly err. For the animal shall not be measured by man. In a world older and more complete than ours they move finished and complete, gifted with extensions of the senses we have lost or never attained, living by voices we shall never hear. They are not brethren, they are not underlings; they are other nations, caught with ourselves in the net of life and time, fellow prisoners of the splendor and travail of the earth.

-- Henry Beston, *The Outermost House: A Year of Life on the Great Beach of Cape Cod* (1928) (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1992), 24-25.