

**College of Liberal Arts
American Studies Program**

STANDARD COURSE OUTLINE

I. General Information

- A. Course Number: AMST 421
- B. Title: Animals in American Culture
- C. Units: 3.0
- D. Prerequisites: G.E. Foundation; Upper-division status
- E. Responsible Faculty: Brett Mizelle
- F. Prepared by: Brett Mizelle
- G. Date prepared/revised: April 2009. Revised May 21, 2009.

II. Catalog Description

Prerequisite: G.E. Foundation; Upper-division status.
Interdisciplinary examination of the role of non-human animals in making cultural meaning. Traces the many ways in which animals, not just humans, have shaped American history and culture.

III. Curriculum Justification(s)

The recently completed program review for American Studies recommended that the program develop more of its own courses that reflect the topics, theories, and methods central to the American Studies movement. AMST 421 was one of three new courses created and approved in Fall 2008 along with revisions to the curriculum for the major and minor. Because of the ongoing GE moratorium, however, the program did not pursue GE designation at the time.

This course draws upon recent scholarship in the interdisciplinary field of "animal studies," which asks us to recognize the ways in which animals, not just humans, have shaped the past and present. While early scholarship on human-animal relations tended to focus on human ideas about and attitudes towards animals in which animals were merely blank pages onto which humans wrote meaning, recent approaches no longer see animals and humans as existing in separate realms. Instead, the emphasis is on the deep entanglement of the human and animal and on the ways in which animals have an impact on the ways humans live, think, and represent their world.

The significance of ideas about and practices toward non-human animals in America in a number of registers is readily apparent. Recent studies have indicated Americans spend approximately \$41 billion per year on their pets, double the amount of a decade ago. Americans also consume vast quantities of meat, although most seldom think about the 287 chickens, 1.12 cows and 3.68 pigs slaughtered per second to meet that demand. Wild animals remain important to American identity, serving as national symbols and as indicators of the health of natural places. Animals also are ubiquitous in film, television and imaginative art and literature intended for many different audiences and purposes. Perhaps most significantly, both ideas about and uses of non-human animals in American society are increasingly contested. The contradictions in Americans' relationships with animals provide us with a way to understand larger historical shifts and ongoing struggles between social groups in the United States while prompting us, hopefully, to think beyond ourselves to include other species in our imaginations and material existences.

While this course will undoubtedly appeal to many students, GE status is important in a practical sense, for students tend to discover the American Studies major through an introduction to the interdisciplinary study of American cultural life in the past and present through one of their classes. Accordingly, we expect that this course will help us recruit students to the program, although we also strongly believe that those who take it, regardless of major, will build GE skills while gaining a better understanding of how, why and with what implications humans and animals co-exist in American life.

This course would be a GE course in the Explorations category of D2 (Social and Behavioral Sciences and History) with special designation as Capstone: Interdisciplinary. By focusing on the history as well as the contemporary functions of ideas about and practices toward non-human animals in the United States, this course would provide students with suitable breadth of knowledge, in contemporary and historical settings, for a course in the D2 designation. Emphasizing critical thinking and written communication, it would allow students to further develop the important skills developed in their GE foundation courses and apply them to a subject that is both interesting and central to everyday life in America and throughout the world.

This course also merits designation as Capstone: Interdisciplinary because it would enable students to bring knowledge and skills from many areas to bear on an intrinsically multidisciplinary topic: the problem of “the animal” in American life and culture. The well-established field of American Studies and the emergent body of scholarship known as “Animal Studies” are both profoundly interdisciplinary, employing perspectives, methodologies and insights from many disciplines. Students will be introduced to this work through course readings and lectures and will bring these disciplinary tools and perspectives to bear upon their own work. Scholarship from several disciplinary and interdisciplinary fields of study that might be grappled with includes writings by Paul Waldau (Religious Studies), Jennifer Wolch (Geography), Jacques Derrida (Philosophy), Richard Bulliet (History), Clinton Sanders (Sociology), Charles Darwin (Biology), James Serpell (Anthropology), Donna Haraway (Critical Theory), and Stephen Wise (Legal Theory). Lectures and discussions will contextualize this multidisciplinary scholarship, while written assignments will ask students to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of these diverse approaches to the study of the relationships between humans and animals in American society. As an interdisciplinary capstone, students will produce at least 5000 words of written work, in both short assignments (weekly response papers, book reviews, formal essays) and in a final research project on a topic chosen in consultation with the instructor that provide students with an opportunity to demonstrate advanced skills in both synthesis and application. Feedback on student writing will be provided starting in week three (with the return of the first response paper) and by the fifth week students will receive comments on their first formal essay with guidelines for revision where appropriate.

IV. Measurable Student Learning Outcomes, Evaluation Instruments, and Instructional Strategies for Skill Development

The following content knowledge and skill-based student learning outcomes will appear on all course syllabi:

After taking this course, students 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)

Student Performance Benchmarks, Evaluation Instruments (Assignments), and Instructional Strategies for Skill Development for each outcome are:

1. Describe the history of human-animal relationships in America, identifying change over time and summarizing key areas of interpretation and contestation.

Measurable Benchmark: Students will construct factually accurate accounts of the history of human-animal relationships in America and explain and assess key interpretations

Evaluation Instruments: In-class writing and quizzes, weekly response papers, and formal essays.

Instructional Strategies: The history of human-animal relationships in America will be conveyed through lectures, discussions and assigned readings. The instructor will prepare handouts (including graphic organizers, concept maps, and sequencing aids) to aid students in identifying key ideas and moments of contestation over the question of the animal.

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.

Measurable Benchmark: Students will construct well-reasoned arguments about the agency of non-human animals in American history and in the contemporary United States.

Evaluation Instruments: Ability to understand the practical and cultural work of non-human animals will be assessed through class discussions and in-class writing, weekly response papers, formal papers, a reflective essay and the final research paper.

Instructional Strategies: Students will be introduced to scholarly and popular accounts of the role of animals in human history through course readings, lectures and in-class discussions. These models will help students as they work toward their own assessment of how animals have both shaped American culture and helped us to understand and define the human.

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.

Measurable Benchmark: Students will analyze, criticize and advocate for particular ideas, reaching well-supported factual or judgmental conclusions by interpreting and synthesizing primary and secondary documents.

Evaluation Instruments: Class discussions and in-class writing, weekly response papers, formal essays, meetings with the instructor to discuss the research paper, and the research paper itself.

Instructional Strategies: Critical thinking skills will be modeled by the instructor in lectures through discussion leadership when working with course texts. Each assignment requires students to demonstrate critical thinking and reflection.

4. Integrate knowledge from multiple disciplinary perspectives, methods and insights in responding to the problem of “the animal” in American history and culture.

Measurable Benchmark: Students will draw on diverse perspectives and academic disciplines in their analyses of the significance of non-human animals to American history and culture.

Evaluation Instruments: Competence in synthesizing and applying interdisciplinary methods of inquiry will be assessed through in-class exercises, weekly response papers, formal essays and the final research paper.

Instructional Strategies: The instructor will use mini-lectures in class sessions to provide students with background about the disciplinary perspectives and approaches used by authors of course texts. In discussion and in-class assignments, students will be asked to reflect upon the strengths and weaknesses of these disciplinary approaches to the place of non-human animals in American life. In the final project these interdisciplinary tools and arguments will be brought to bear on a particular topic or problem chosen by the student in consultation with the instructor.

5. Demonstrate that they can communicate meaning to readers in written texts marked by clarity, fluency and sophistication.

Measurable Benchmark: Students will be able to demonstrate advanced writing processes, including developing ideas, effective note-taking and free-writing, formulating and revising thesis statements, outlines, and arguments

Evaluation Instruments: Weekly response papers, formal essays, and research papers.

Instructional Strategies: The writing strategies of authors of assigned texts, which will come from different disciplines, will be discussed in class. A writing rubric evaluating content, organization, reasoning, style and effectiveness will be used. Standards for good writing will be discussed in class before and after written assignments. Students will be required to participate in a draft and peer review process for their research papers.

V. Outline of Subject Matter

This is only an indication of possible subjects to be worked on the course of the semester. Subject matter and sequence of topics may vary depending on the instructor.

1. The Animal Question. This unit will introduce students to the rising interest, both scholarly and popular, in the ideas about and uses of non-human animals. An essay such as John Berger's "Why Look at Animals?" (1980) could be used to outline the history of human-animal relationships and introduce key questions that will structure the course.
2. Our Paradoxical Relationships with Animals. Our relationships with non-human animals are riddled with contradictions. Readings and discussions in this unit will both show how animals are limit cases of our structures of understanding and address our desire for and fear of connection with animals.
3. Animals in American History. This unit draws upon key essays and book chapters to provide an overview of the place of animals in American history. Topics may include the problems caused by colonists' livestock in the colonial period, the largely forgotten role of horses in the antebellum city, the ecological implications of the destruction of the bison in the West, and the emergence of industrial-style meat production.
4. Animal Geographies. This unit examines the spaces and places occupied by animals in American culture, exploring how social life and space is heavily populated by animals of different species in different ways. Topics may include the situation of concentrated animal feeding operations, the presence of animals in cities as pets and in zoos, and the movement of wolves throughout the West.
5. Animals and American Literature. Animals have played key roles in imaginative literature for both adults and children. In addition to providing a critical theory of animal issues in fiction, in this unit the instructor may ask students to read and respond to a book of their choice that imaginatively seeks to understand animals and/or human-animal relationships.
6. Companion Animals. This unit addresses the history of pet keeping in America, its relation to race, gender, and class and the implications of the modern pet industry for animals. Special

attention will be paid to the emergence of a “domestic ethic of kindness” towards animals in the mid-nineteenth century.

7. Representing Animals. Photography, film and video have played a major role in both the scientific knowledge of non-human animals and in the development of an outdoor leisure culture in the United States. In this unit both "hunting with the camera" and efforts to represent animals as other to us via photography will be examined, as will the cultural work of nature documentaries and television shows.

8. Animal Protection and Animal Rights. This unit charts the development of the concept of animal "rights" from an earlier interest in animal welfare, focusing on contemporary controversies and debates.

9. Meat. This unit addresses the major form of human-animal interactions in American culture. Essays on the history of meat production and consumption will be accompanied by works on the sexual politics of meat, the fast food industry, and the role of immigrant workers in food production.

10. Animal Exhibitions: From Menageries to Zoos

Explores the way Americans have looked at animals, from the early national period when individual animals were displayed to the development of the modern circus and zoo. Students will be invited to join the instructor on field trips to the Los Angeles Zoo and the Long Beach Aquarium of the Pacific that will supplement readings for this unit.

11. Wildlife Conflicts and American Identity. Why have some wild animals become synonymous with national identity? How have Americans been urged to think about and interact with wildlife at national parks? Special attention will be paid to recent controversies concerning the Endangered Species Act and the protection (or not) of particular animals.

12. Animals in Contemporary Art. Some scholars argue that contemporary artists best reveal the complicated human relationship with animals, perhaps even pointing to new ways of understanding that assemblage.

13. Individual Research Projects. This unit will be devoted to individual research and class presentation of the projects students have selected in consultation with the instructor.

VI. Methods of Instruction

This course will consist of both lectures and discussion. Lectures will provide context for the course readings and supplemental audio-visual materials. Both small group and full class discussion will be used to facilitate student engagement with course themes. Depending on the size of the course, students may be asked to facilitate discussion sessions. If so, they will meet with the instructor beforehand to prepare their presentations. Peer review writing sessions will provide students with a chance to read and comment on drafts of each other's research papers.

All students will also be asked to make a formal presentation to the class summarizing the results of their final research project.

Because animals occur frequently in the media, both as living creatures and as symbols, audio-visual materials will prove crucial to this course. They will, however, be used to enhance, not substitute for, instructor-student interaction. The use of film, video and music will not constitute more than 20 percent of classroom time. Students will be trained to critically analyze these audio-visual materials as primary sources, reading them as cultural texts. To facilitate these goals, the instructor will provide students with a background in critical media literacy.

The instructor may also invite guest speakers with special expertise on selected topics to address the class. A visit to the library to meet with a CSULB reference librarian will assist students in locating relevant primary and secondary source material for their final research project.

VII. Extent and Nature of Technology Use

The use of technology will depend on individual instructors, but may include Beach Board, an essential course communication and document distribution tool. Supplemental articles and book chapters may also be provided through E-Reserves or accessed via the internet. Given the ubiquity of animals in contemporary American life, students may need to develop familiarity with web resources specific to the course, and the instructor may include assignments that involve the evaluation of web material on the subject. Students may be made familiar, if they are not already, with relevant search databases in the library through a class meeting with a reference librarian. Film and video, as well as music, may be used in the classroom.

VIII. Information about Textbooks / Readings

The following is a short list of books that are most likely to be used in this course:

Erica Fudge, *Animal* (London, 2002).

Virginia DeJohn Anderson, *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America* (New York, 2006).

Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (Chicago, 2003).

Cynthia Chris, *Watching Wildlife* (Minneapolis, 2006).

The instructor may have students choose a novel concerning human-animal relations for a literary project. Alternatively, he or she may ask students to read one of the many short monographs on the histories of human interactions with particular species that are in the Reaktion Books "Animal Series."

Instructors may assign other texts, articles, book chapters, and audio-visual materials as well. The textbook list and course bibliography will be updated regularly to reflect both the interests of the faculty teaching the course and the explosion of new scholarship in the "animal studies" field.

IX. Instructional Policies Requirements

Instructors may specify their own policies with regard to plagiarism, withdrawal, absences, etc., as long as the policies are consistent with the University policies published in the CSULB Catalog. The course will follow University policies on Attendance (PS 01-01), Course Syllabi (PS 04-05), Final Course Grades, Grading Procedures, and Final Assessments (PS 05-07), and Withdrawals (PS 02-02 rev).

All sections of the course will have a syllabus that includes the information required by the syllabus policy adopted by the Academic Senate. Instructors will include information on how students may make up work for excused absences. When class participation is a required part of the course, syllabi will include information on how participation is assessed. When improvement in oral communication is an objective of the course, syllabi will include a rubric for how oral communication is to be evaluated.

X. Distance Learning /Hybrid Courses

This course will have no distance learning component and should not be classified as hybrid.

XI. Bibliography

This is a highly selective bibliography to provide instructors with a primary set of resource materials. For brevity, important works may be missed from this list. The list is intended to show the range of materials available to our students. Relevant course materials may also be found in periodicals, both in print and electronic form.

Adams, Carol, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (Cambridge, 1990).

Animal Studies Group, *The Killing Animals* (Urbana, IL, 2006).

Baker, Steve, *Picturing the Beast: Animals, Identity, and Representation* (Urbana, IL, 2001).

Biel, Alice Wondrak, *Do (Not) Feed the Bears: The Fitful History of Wildlife and Tourists in Yellowstone* (Lawrence, KS, 2006).

Bulliet, Richard W., *Hunters, Herders and Hamburgers: The Past and Future of Human-Animal Relationships* (New York, 2005).

Coleman, Jon, *Vicious: Wolves and Men in America* (New Haven, 2006).

Grier, Katherine C., *Pets in America: A History* (Chapel Hill, 2006).

Elizabeth Hanson, *Animal Attractions: Nature on Display in American Zoos* (Princeton, 2004).

Haraway, Donna, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis, 2007).

Horowitz, Roger, *Putting Meat on the American Table: Taste, Technology, Transformation* (Johns Hopkins, 2005).

Isenberg, Andrew C., *The Destruction of the Bison: An Environmental History, 1750-1920* (Cambridge, Mass., 2001).

Kalof, Linda, *The Animals Reader: The Classic and Essential Writings* (New York, 2007).

Malamud, Randy, *Reading Zoos: Representations of Animals and Captivity* (New York, 1998).

Mason, Jennifer, *Civilized Creatures: Urban Animals, Sentimental Culture, and American Literature, 1850-1900* (Baltimore, 2005).

McShane, Clay and Joel Tarr, *The Horse in the City: Living Machines in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore, 2007).

Mitman, Gregg, *Reel Nature: America's Romance with Wildlife on Film* (Cambridge, Mass., 1999).

Philo, Chris and Chris Wilbert, *Animal Spaces, Beastly Places: New Geographies of Human-Animal Relations* (New York, 2000).

Rothfels, Nigel, ed., *Representing Animals* (Indianapolis, 2002).

Singer, Peter, *Animal Liberation*, 2nd ed. (London, 1990).

Wolch, Jennifer and Jody Emel, eds., *Animal Geographies: Place, Politics, and Identity in the Nature-Culture Borderlands* (London, 1998).

Wolfe, Cary, *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* (Chicago, 2003).

XII. Student-Level Assessment

The exact set of course assignments will vary depending on the instructor. University policy requires that no single evaluation of student achievement may count for more than one-third of final grade. Appropriate assignments may include:

1. Weekly reading responses	25%
2. Take-home essay assignments (2 @ 10% each)	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%

XIII. Course-Level Assessment Plan

The Program in American Studies has elected to participate in the SAGE Collaborative Track course assessment and recertification system for the evaluation of shared Student Learning Outcomes in General Education. In addition to participation in GE assessment, the American Studies Program has conducted its own assessment of student learning, submitted via annual reports on assessment to the CLA dean's office. Core faculty in American Studies meet at least once-per semester to discuss student learning in AMST courses and in the major as a whole.

XIV. Consistency of SCO Standards Across Sections

It is not likely that this course will be taught by any other faculty than Professor Mizelle, who is a researcher in this field and the co-founder and current editor of the H-Animal discussion network, the on-line center for the growing number of scholars across disciplines who are engaged in the study of animals in human culture. If multiple sections are offered, Dr. Mizelle will serve as course coordinator, reviewing the SCO and offering advice and/or materials to each faculty member new to teaching the course. All future syllabi will conform to the SCO. The course coordinator may offer or require regular review of instructors' course materials as well as anonymous samples of student work.

XV. Additional Resource for Development of Syllabi

The Academic Senate has adopted a policy specifying required content for course syllabi. Instructors are encouraged to consult the Academic Senate web site for further information.