

**COURSE SYLLABUS – LLCU199  
2011-2012- FALL SEMESTER  
McGill University**

**Professor:** Stephanie Posthumus  
**Department of Languages, Literature, Cultures**

**LLCU 199 - First year seminar  
LITERARY ANIMALS, A CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE**

**Course Description**

In *L'Animal littéraire*, Jacques Poirier insists that we can never really know what an animal sees when it looks at us nor can we know its' consciousness of the world or of itself. Yet literature has always been fascinated by the problem of imagining animals' experiences, thoughts, and identities. From Greek myths to Perrault's fairy tales, from La Fontaine's Fables to Kafka's "Metamorphosis," animals haunt the Western literary imagination. This course will explore the ways in which animals are represented both thematically and textually in contemporary European literature. Including French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish texts, the course reflects the Department's new focus on cross-cultural perspectives.

**Course Outcomes**

During the semester, students will individually, collectively and creatively:

- Identify the main themes that characterize literary animals
- Analyze narrative forms used to represent literary animals
- Summarize and critique the main ideas of theoretical articles
- Discuss the application of theoretical concepts to the novels studied in class

**Required Readings**

*Fiction*

\*Calvino, Italo. Excerpts from *Mr Palomar*. Trans. William Weaver. Suffolk: Picador, 1983.

Chevillard, Éric. *Palafox*. Trans. Wyatt Alexander Mason. N.Y.: Archipelago Books, 2004 (1990).

\*Cortázar, Julio. "Axolotl." *Blow-Up and Other Stories*. Trans. Paul Blackburn. N.Y.: Pantheon Books, 1967. 3-9.

Darrieussecq, Marie. *Pig Tales : A Novel of Lust and Transformation*. Trans. Linda Coverdale. N.Y. : Faber and Faber, 1998 (1996).

- \*Kafka, Franz. "The Metamorphosis." *The Complete Stories of Franz Kafka*. Trans. Willa and Edwin Muir. N.Y.: Schocken Books, 1988.
- \*Pelevin, Victor. *The Secret Life of Insects*. Trans. Andrew Bromfield. N.Y.: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1998 (1994).
- \*Tawada, Yoko. "The Bath." *Where Europe Begins*. Trans. Susan Bernofsky and Yumi Selden. N.Y.: New Directions, 2002 (1989). 3-55.

### Articles

- \*Asker, D.B.D. "Introduction – Metamorphosis as a Social Construct." *Aspects of metamorphosis: fictional representations of the becoming human*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001. 1-20.
- \*Berger, John. "Why Look at Animals?" *About Looking*. New York: Pantheon, 1980. 1-28.
- \*Clark, Timothy. "Anthropomorphism." *The Cambridge Introduction to Literature and the Environment*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011. 192-201.
- \*McHugh, Susan. "Literary Animal Agents." *PMLA* 124.2 (2009): 487-495.
- \*Ricoeur, Paul. "The Metaphorical Process as Cognition, Imagination, and Feeling." *Critical Inquiry* 5.1 (1978): 143-159.

\* These readings can be found in the two Course packs that are available for purchase at the bookstore along with the novels *Pig Tales* and *Palafox*.

### **Evaluation and Course Elements**

Attendance, participation	15%
Summary/Critiques (4 x 5%)	20%
Mid-semester Essay	25%
Final Essay	40%

#### *Attendance and participation*

It is your responsibility to arrive on time and not leave before the end of class. Absences will be penalized -1%. If you have no other choice than to miss a class, please send me an email BEFORE the class.

The participation mark includes coming to class well prepared with the readings done and a list of three questions about the literary text or article that you will ask during the discussion. Given this is a seminar class with a small number of students, you will be expected to make worthwhile comments, raise interesting questions, and critique interpretations on a regular basis.

You will also be asked to contribute once during the semester to the warm-up discussion at the beginning of class by bringing a newspaper article or some other short press article about animals to class. You will summarize the article and its pertinence at the beginning of class (5 minutes max.). This short presentation will count for 2% of your participation mark.

#### *Summary/Critiques*

Over the semester, you will hand in a summary/critique of four of the five articles we will be studying in class. You may choose which four articles you would like to summarize/critique. If you decide to do

all five summaries/critiques, the four highest grades will be used. These assignments are due at the BEGINNING of class on the day the article will be discussed.

For the summary/critique, you will type up a two page double spaced (*Times New Roman, 12pt*) summary of the article that ends with a critique of one of the article's main ideas. A week before the first assignment is due, a sample will be given in class as well as further details about this genre of writing.

#### *Mid-semester essay (Oct 11)*

The mid-semester essay consists of a five page typed double spaced (*Times New Roman, 12pt*) analysis of ONE thematic and textual element of the literary animal in ONE of the literary works studied in class.

If plagiarism is suspected, I will ask you to produce previous drafts of your essay as well as photocopies of all your sources.

#### *Final Essay (Nov 29)*

The final essay consists of a ten page typed double spaced (*Times New Roman, 12pt*) essay comparing ONE thematic and textual element of the literary animal as represented in TWO of the literary works studied in class.

If plagiarism is suspected, I will ask you to produce previous drafts of your essay as well as photocopies of all your sources.

### **Policies**

- WebCT will be used extensively in this class to post notes, important date changes, assignment descriptions, etc. You are responsible for checking the site regularly (at least twice a week) for any changes or updates.
- Assignments handed in late (including 10 minutes after the start of class) will be penalized 10%. Each day after the due date represents another 10% penalty.
- In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, you may submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded. Please be aware that impeccable grammar is required whether you choose to write in French or in English.

### **Academic Integrity**

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/) for more information).