

Universität Bremen
Department for Cultural Studies (Fachbereich 9: Kulturwissenschaften)
BA Module 3 Cultural Theory/Cultural History
Course 09-50-M3-4: Animals and Cultural History
Dr. Mieke Roscher

Summer Semester 2011

Class Times:

Wednesday, 10:00 - 12:00, Room: SFG 1060,
Block course Friday, 03.06.11 14:00 - 20:00, Room: SFG 1080

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Course Description:

In 2006, the ice bear cub „Knut“ was a crowd puller at the Berlin zoo and a world-wide media success. Even CNN and the BBC sent their reporters for live coverage of the cuddly orphan. Around the same time, the so-called „problem-bear“ Bruno, who illegally crossed the Austrian-German border and was suspected to have killed several sheep, also kept the nation at a state of suspense, although for slightly different reasons. Other animal protagonists that attracted a great deal of attention at their time were, for example, Leika, the dog sent into orbit by the soviet space agency, or Dolly the clone sheep. But do we remember the tamed black bear Winnie, who, after all, was the inspiration for a popular children’s story, or Fala, Franklin D. Roosevelt’s terrier dog, who is said to have fulfilled some representative duties for the White House administration? Do we commemorate Judy, the only animal P.O.W. with military rank during WWII? Animals accompanied humans during the whole course of history, either as protectors, as fellow sufferers or as a mortal danger. Their history, however, has been at best regarded as a side note.

This course is designed as an introduction to Human-Animal Studies. Human-Animal Studies can be regarded as an interdisciplinary field located at the intersection between the Humanities, Social Sciences and Cultural Studies. HAS enjoy growing popularity, at least among English speaking academics. Taking the interdisciplinary approach of HAS, historians also have begun to look into the role that animals have played in human history and, more importantly, to investigate how the history of animals can be written. In this course, students will get to know the theoretical and conceptual foundations of a cultural historiography of animals, propagated by HAS. Problems as well as benefits of examining human-animal relationships from a cultural historical perspective will be analysed. Drawing from recent research in the cultural representation of animals, some key topics of animal history will be addressed. It will be discussed whether or not the writing of such a history implies a fundamental shift in the animals’ representation and if the theoretical and methodical framework provided by animal historians will suffice to incorporate the animal in this narrative approach. Major themes include the historical reflection of the nature and form of the animal-human relationship in the process of domestication, in animal husbandry, pet-keeping and in animal exhibitions in zoological gardens. Also, the changing representation and portrayal of animals in art, media and literature will be looked at.

Course schedule

4/5 Introduction to the Course

11/5 Topic: Why a change of perspective when looking at animals?

Read: John Berger, *Why look at Animals?* In: *About Looking*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1980, pp. 3-26

18/5 Topic: How to write animal history

Read: Erica Fudge, *A Left-Handed Blow: Writing the History of Animals*, in: Nigel Rothfels (Hrsg.), *Representing Animals*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002, pp. 3-18.

25/5 Topic: Animals as historical agents? Problems and benefits of animal-centred historiography and of the notion of agency.

Read: Aline Steinbrecher, „In der Geschichte ist viel zu wenig von Tieren die Rede“, (Elias Canetti) – *Die Geschichtswissenschaft und ihre Auseinandersetzung mit den Tieren*, in: Carola Otterstedt und Michael Rosenberger (Hrsg.), *Gefährten – Konkurrenten - Verwandte, Die Mensch-Tier-Beziehung im wissenschaftlichen Diskurs*, Göttingen, 2009, pp.264-286; Mieke Roscher, *Where is the animal in this text? Chancen und Grenzen einer Tiergeschichtsschreibung*, 2011, Script

1/6 Topic: Approaching the animal biographically

Read: Erica Fudge, *Animal Lives*, in: *History Today*, Vol.54, Nr.10, 2004, pp.21-27.

3/6 Block course

14-16.00: Animal domestication and pet keeping

Student presentation

Read: Juliet Clutton-Brock, *How Domestic Animals have shaped the Development of Human Societies*, in: *Cultural History of Animals in Antiquity*, pp.71-97.

16-18.00: Animals in rituals

Student presentation

Read: Charles Bergmann, *A Spectacle of Beasts, Hunting Rituals and Animal Rights in Early Modern England*, in: *CHOA in the Renaissance*, pp.53-74

18-20.00: A biography for Knut? A practical approach

For preparation: Please bring anything you find on Knut: news cuttings, photos, documentaries etc.

To conclude the day we will watch Nick Park's superb "Creature Comforts"

8/6 Study trip to Bremen State Archive

We meet 10.30 in front of the archive!!

Read: *Das Quellenstudium and Die Archivbenutzung* in: Erwin Faber and Imanuel Geiss, *Arbeitsbuch zum Geschichtsstudium*, 1996, pp.82-95 or *Archive, Bibliotheken, Museen*, in: Volker Selin, *Einführung in die Geschichtswissenschaften*, 2005, pp. 54-68

- 15/6 Topic: Animals as Entertainment
Student presentation
Read: Nigel Rothfels, How the Caged Bird Sings, *Animals and Entertainment*, in: *CHOA in the Age of Empire*, pp.95-111.
- 22/6 Topic: Animals in the Natural Sciences
Student presentation
Read: Narisara Murray, From Birds of Paradise to Drosophila, the Changing Role of the Scientific Specimens to 1920, in: *CHOA in the Age of Empire*, pp.113-134.
- 29/6 Topic: Animals in Art, Literature and Film
Student presentation
Read: Madelein Pinault-Sørensen, Portraits of Animals 1600-1800, in: *CHOA in the Age of Enlightenment*, pp.157-197.
- 6/7 Study Trip Focke Museum
Exhibition: Elliott Erwit. Dogs and other contemporaries
Meet 10.15 at the Focke Museum <http://www.focke-museum.de/> !
Read: Ute Eskilden, Kein Recht am Bild. Das fotografierte Tier - ein Überblick, Ute Eskilden, *Nützlich, süß und museal- Das fotografierte Tier*, 2005, pp. 11-32.
- 13/7 Evaluation of the assignment on record descriptions, please archive your description in the course wiki by 12/7!
Final discussion

Course assignments

Regular and active participation

You are asked to participate regularly and to read the texts required as well as to take an active part in the discussion.

Oral Presentation

You will present one topic of your choice in a 30 minutes presentation. You will have to use either hand outs or power point as illustration.

The topics presented should be in accordance with the overall themes presented that week.

Please check course bibliography as well as course reserve in the library for literature.

While preparing your presentations and while analysing suitable texts you could keep the following guiding questions in mind: how are the animals represented in the text? Are they treated as historical agents? Are they granted a history of their own? What options would there be to include the animals' perspective while recounting a certain historical event? Are you able to identify individual animal protagonists? What sort of sources would be worth checking out when pursuing your topic further? Is there any animal protagonist that you think would deserve a detailed biographical account and why?

Record description

Furthermore, you will order one record on animals from the Bremen State Archive (that's why we do the study trip, so that you, as future historians, know how to work the archive!) and hand in a written description. This description should follow a certain structure. In a first step, preliminary thoughts about the presumed content of the record are to be addressed.

These include the items looked for in the archive inventory and the search strategies applied. Also, I would be interested to know what you expected to find.

In a second step, put down a formal record description: title, coverage, number of pages and a short summary of the content. In the third part - the analysis - you should explain how the animals are presented and whether or not they are the main topic. Drawing from the theoretical texts discussed in class, what kind of history do you think could be written using this record as a primary source? Could one re-read the source using a different perspective and thus gain new and fresh insights into animal history?

Grading

Oral presentation 50%

Handout 20%

File Description 30%

Proposed Literature

There will be no need to buy a textbook. All required reading material will be available in the library course reserve or online. Please get back to me with any special queries. As a starting point for research I recommend:

Brantz, Dorothee und Mauch, Christof (Ed.): Tierische Geschichte: Die Beziehung von Mensch und Tier in der Kultur der Moderne, Paderborn, 2010;

Senior, Matthew (Ed.): A Cultural History of Animals in the Age of Enlightenment: Oxford, 2007;

Flynn, Clifton P. (Ed.): Social Creatures. A Human and Animals Studies Reader, New York, 2008;

Kete, Kathleen (Ed.): A Cultural History of Animals in the Age of Empire, Oxford, 2007;

Malamud, Randy (Ed.): A Cultural History of Animals in the Modern Age, Oxford, 2007;

Rothfels, Nigel (Ed.) Representing Animals, Bloomington et al., 2002;

Kalof, Linda and Fitzgerald, Amy (Ed.): The Animals Reader, Oxford, 2007;

Kalof, Linda: Looking at Animals in Human History, London, 2007

Note: Course language will be German, but since most texts will be in English, your language skills should be at B2 level so that you are able to read and understand also more complex texts.