Hist 181: Animals in Human History

**NB:** This syllabus is provisional. For updated class information, continue to check the course page on Blackboard.

_Tues/Thurs 11AM-12:15PM_  
_Room: King 341_

_Prof. White_  
_Office Hours: Tues 2-4PM, Wed 10-12AM_  
_303 Rice - (440)775-8337_  
_sam.white@oberlin.edu_

_Course Goals:_  
This course will explore the role of domesticated animals in human society from prehistoric times to the present. Students will learn about animals as an often ignored but vital and fascinating part of the human experience; and at the same time, we will examine how a broader historical perspective can help us approach animal-related issues in the contemporary world. Through a different topic each week, we will examine human-animal relations as a way to think critically about the dynamic interaction between nature and society over time.

_Format:_  
The course will be in a lecture-discussion format. Depending upon the topic, some weeks will involve more discussion and participation than others.

_Participation:_  
Participation will be 20% of the final grade, based on students’ attendance and class discussion. Students may also earn their participation grade by posting written discussions and current news and journal articles relevant to the class on the course Blackboard site.

_Short Papers:_  
Students must write two short reaction papers (2-3 pages each). You can choose one of the following options or propose something else, with my approval:

1) Analyze one or more historic works of art in the college museum. Explain what they reveal about human-animal relations in the past and/or how a better understanding of the history of human-animal relations could help us understand the artwork(s).

2) Follow a current news story relating to human-animal relations, describe it, and explain how it fits into the broader pattern of human-animal relations.

3) Read a work of historical or non-Western literature or watch a non-Western film that prominently features animals (such as Haruki Murakami’s _Wild Sheep Chase_ or Mo
Yan’s *Life and Death are Wearing Me Out, or The Story of the Weeping Camel*) and discuss what it reveals about the history and role of animals in that culture.

The first paper is due by 8PM Friday, 3/13. The second is due by 8PM Friday 5/1.

**Essay:**
The final essay will be 6-8 pages due on the final exam date. Students may develop their own topics with my approval. Prospectuses (including a topic, tentative thesis, and list of possible sources) are due by 8PM Friday April 17. Detailed writing guidelines will be posted on Blackboard.

**Exams:**
There will be an in-class midterm and then a quiz towards the end of the class period.

**Grades:**
20% participation
20% reaction papers
15% midterm
10% quiz
35% final project (including prospectus)

**Course Policies:**
*Attendance:* Students are expected to participate in class and complete the assigned readings each week. Much of the material in the lectures may not be covered in the readings but will be on the exams, and so students should obtain notes for any missed classes.

*Honor Code:* All course work is governed by Oberlin's Honor Code. If you have a question about how the Honor Code applies to a particular assignment, you should ask me in advance of the due date.

*E-mail:* I will answer short e-mails Mon-Fri 9-5. If you have any questions that require a long answer, please come by my office during office hours instead. I will give feedback on any draft or outline of your class work provided you send it in at least 48 hours before the deadline—the longer I have, the better the feedback.

*Grading:* A (90-100), B (80-89), C (70-79), D (60-69), F (below 60). Plus and minus grades for scores within two points of the next letter grade.

**Reading:**
Linda Kalof, *Looking at Animals in Human History*
Richard Bulliet, *Hunters Herders and Hamburgers*

**Other articles and chapters will be posted on Blackboard and/or ERes or hyperlinked from this syllabus. Please keep checking the syllabus each week, as I may add a few extra readings.**
Week 1: Introduction and Pre-Domestication (2/3-2/5)

- Kalof (chapter 1)

Week 2: Domestication (2/10-2/12)

- Bulliet (chapters 5 and 7)

Week 3: Agriculture, Technologies, and Environmental Change (2/17-2/19)

- Bulliet (chapter 6)
- Kalof (chapter 2)

Week 4: Nomadism (2/24-2/26)

  **movie, Grass**

Week 5: Animal Invasions and Diseases (3/3-3/5)


Week 6: To Eat or Not to Eat? (3/10-3/12)

- Marvin Harris (1985). Good to Eat: Riddles of Food and Culture (selections)
- Frederick Simoons (1994). Eat Not This Flesh: Food Avoidances from Prehistory to the Present (selections)

  **First reaction paper due by Friday 8PM.

Week 7: Discussion, Review, and Midterm (3/17-3/19)

Week 8 – Spring Break

Week 9: The Culture of Animals in Pre-Modern Europe (3/31-4/2)
-Kalof (chapters 3 and 4)
-Robert Darnton, “The Great Cat Massacre”

**Week 10: The Modern Transformation of Human-Animal Relations (4/7-4/9)**

-Kalof (chapters 5 and 6, up to page 144)
-passages on animals from Montaigne, Descartes, Bentham, etc.

**Week 11: The Industrialization of Animals (4/14-4/16)**

-Bulliet (chapter 9)

**Prospectus for final essay due Friday 8PM.**


-Yi-Fu Tuan “Animal Pets: Cruelty and Affection” (from The Animals Reader)


-newspaper and magazine articles (TBA)

**Second reaction paper due Friday 8PM.**

**Week 14: The Origins of Animal Rights – and Post-Modern Animals?**

**Quiz**
-Museum visit (to be scheduled)
-Selections from Peter Singer, Tom Regan, etc.