

FYS 015: Animal Consciousness and Human Consciences

Fall 2019

MW 12:30-1:45

Howard Hall, Room 309

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Office Hours: Monday 2-3; Tuesday 1-3; Thursday 1-3; or by appointment

Course Overview

Many of us have strong opinions about the relationship of humans to the rest of the animal kingdom, but have never considered the source of these opinions. For some, human dominion over animals is a divinely ordained right, while others describe our relationship to the rest of the animal kingdom as dysfunctional, exploitative, and unsustainable. This course considers selected historical and contemporary issues in our relationship with non-human animals, including their use in agriculture, research, and as pets. More specifically, this course will explore the notion of how – or whether – animal sentience should inform, curtail, or even prevent these uses.

Course Objectives

The goal of all First Year Seminar (FYS) courses is to:

- Integrate first-year students into academic culture.
- Sharpen students' writing, critical thinking, verbal communication and information literacy.
- Focus on a topic, approach or theme.
- Encourage active participation by students in class.
- Focus on ways of knowing as well as content.
- Invite connections among several areas of study or disciplines.
- Establish a sense of community among members.

For this FYS, these aims will be pursued by discussing and writing about our relationships with non-human animal species from moral, legal, and scientific perspectives.

Readings

Animal Rights Without Liberation: Applied Ethics and Human Obligations (2012). Cochrane, Alasdair. Columbia University Press, New York.

Other readings will be distributed via Blackboard. See the course schedule below.

Class Expectations

Attendance and participation

This is a discussion-based class: you cannot participate if you are not there. A sizeable portion of your grade will be determined by: (a) the objective measure of your attendance; and (b) the more subjective nature of the quality of your contributions to the class discussion. Your attendance and participation are expected.

Discussion

Much of the class time will be dedicated to discussion. Many of the topics we will discuss can become emotionally charged. Remembering that your peers – just like you – have an existence separate from their opinions is a great way to keep the discussion civil (and maintain your friendships).

Writing

Writing will be used for three main purposes in this course: 1) to express your opinions on topics of discussion; 2) to develop your research skills; 3) to develop your critical thinking skills. Importantly, this class focuses more on the development and improvement of your critical thinking and writing skills than on the quality of any single paper. I respect students who take this process seriously, and take efforts to improve into account when calculating final grades.

Assignments

Reaction papers

There will be 5 short papers assigned over the course of the semester that will solicit your reactions regarding selected readings, videos, or ideas. These papers will be submitted via Blackboard by the due date assigned (see Course Schedule, below), and they will be peer reviewed in class prior to turning them in. This will give you an opportunity to incorporate comments and criticisms into your papers prior to handing them in, and give you experience evaluating the work of others constructively. More information about these papers will be provided in class.

Quizzes

There will be five quizzes given on the dates listed in the schedule below. These quizzes will be short answer in format, and designed to assess your understanding of the readings for that day.

Research Paper

Each student will prepare a scholarly paper that explores the contemporary use of an animal species in some aspect of modern agriculture, such as industrial egg production, pork production, or the like. This paper should incorporate information from the text, readings, and other sources as required, and develop a reasoned and well-supported argument for or against the animal use you have selected. In formulating your argument, you will consider the interests and positions of the human stakeholders involved in the use – the farmers, researchers, consumers, entertainers, conservationists, etc, as appropriate. – as well as the interests of the animals themselves. (Given that we will spend a fair amount of time discussing Hume's 'is-ought' problem, the argument you develop should not rely on a conservative appeal to the way things are.)

There is no official minimum or maximum length for this assignment, but I anticipate that around 2500 words (about 10 double-spaced pages with 12 point font) will be required to complete it.

You are required to submit your topic proposal, an annotated bibliography, and paper drafts by the dates listed in the schedule below. You will receive feedback on each of these parts, and will have an opportunity to revise your paper according to the feedback you receive.

Group Project and Presentation

Students will work in groups to identify one use of animals in biomedical or psychological research, such as modeling behavioral aspects of a psychiatric disorder in rats, practicing a surgical technique on pigs, or genetically modifying mice. Each group will prepare a 15-20 minute presentation that describes: (a) the use they have selected, including its underlying logic, putative application to humans, and what we have learned from studies of it; (b) a discussion of how the use might result in pain or distress to the animal; (c) ethical considerations of the use, including any regulations and/or recommendations that have resulted in changes in how the use is implemented; and (d) a utilitarian-based analysis of the use that weighs the potential for animal suffering and distress against the aggregate good for humans that might derive from it.

All members of the group are expected to contribute to the project, participate in the presentation, and answer questions.

Grading

Your final grade in this course will be calculated as a weighted average according to the following table:

Class Attendance:	10%
Participation:	15%
Quizzes (5)	20%
Reaction Papers (5):	25%
Research Paper:	20%
Group Presentation:	10%

Plagiarism Policy

Representing the work of another as your own is plagiarism. Examples of plagiarism include failing to cite direct quotes, ideas, or paraphrases in your work, as well as the wholesale recycling of papers from past or current students at this or any other institution. It is irrelevant whether the plagiarism resulted from negligence or intention.

Any work you submit that contains (or is) plagiarized material will receive a grade of 0. Repeated offences will result in more serious consequences, including earning a failing grade in the course, referral to the Academic Integrity Committee for a disciplinary hearing, and possible expulsion from the University. You have been warned. Don't do it.

Special needs

If you have a disability or medical situation such that you require special accommodations to participate in this course, please contact Drake University Student Disability Services at 515 271-3100. Any accommodations you require as directed by Student Disability Services need to be communicated to your instructor.

Course Schedule

The tentative outline for the course is shown below. This outline is subject to change. Students should come to class prepared to discuss the readings for that day.