

H A&S 253C / 222E

Humans and Other Animals

Spring 2007 · 5 credits · TTh 10:30-12:20, MGH 238

<http://faculty.washington.edu/banasn/animals/>

Instructor: Neil Banas (neil@ocean.washington.edu)

office: Ocean Sciences Bldg. 311

south of Health Sciences, at the bottom of 15th Ave: walking directions on the course homepage

office phone: 221-4402 (but e-mail much better than voice mail)

paper mail address: Oceanography, Box 355351, Univ of Wash, Seattle WA 98195

office hours: Tuesdays after class, 12:30 - 1:30, at the Café Allegro

(in the alley between the Ave and 15th, at 42nd St)

(not the one by the College Inn: the other one)

Wednesdays 11:30 - 1:00, in my office (OSB 311)

Just e-mail to schedule a meeting some other time. Really!

The last few hundred years of Western history have forced non-human animals off much of their traditional range, both environmentally and psychologically. Animals now inhabit only the margins of our communities, our daily awareness, and our understanding of our own identity. This dispossession continues in spite of all we know from biology about the animal roots of human nature and the ecological ties that bind us. What would a rediscovery of these ties look like, though? Does the path lie through politics and the spirit—animal rights and vegetarianism, say—or through the flesh, as in the bloody intimacy of the family farm?

To address these questions, we will navigate a path through both the sciences and the humanities: through criticism (Paul Shepard, Mary Midgley, Jean Baudrillard), first-hand reports by naturalists and scientists (Barry Lopez with a pod of beached whales in Oregon, Penny Patterson and Koko the gorilla, conversing in sign language), and fiction by John Berger and J. M. Coetzee.

why there are two course numbers:

So that you can get either Honors civ/I&S credit (sign up for 253C) or Honors nat sci/NW credit (sign up for 222E). If you want NW credit, there should be some science in your term research project.

books: Paul Shepard, *The Others: How Animals Made Us Human*

J. M. Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals*

a course reader from the **Ave Copy Center**, 4141 Univ Way, just north of Aladdin's. You'll need the reader for the second week of class.

format: This course is 1) a forum for student discussion and 2) a writing workshop.

Each week, a few students will serve as discussion leaders during the Tuesday session. The discussion leaders might act as moderators, or as panelists, or simply as scribes: we'll try for variety. I'll set the agenda for the Thursday class more actively.

I'll lecture sometimes, but only *after* you guys have raised your questions, set an agenda, and worked as far as you can into each week's material!

The primary responsibility for bringing good questions to the table for the first class of the week is yours. If you like discussions to teach you something rather than just dither around, it's essential that you not just do the reading, but...

assignments: 1) **read, reread, and think about the readings until you have questions.**

Questions that you want to spend time on in class.

2) every week, **post a short question or comment** about the week's readings on the online discussion board **by Monday at noon.**

I hope you'll use the discussion board for more than that, but this is the minimum. These posts will be important to discussion leaders and me in planning how we use our class time on Tuesday. Tell us what you want to talk about!

3) Since this is a discussion class, **participation counts**. But that means in-class participation, online participation (see above), over-the-weekend participation.... The standard is **helpfulness**, not how much you talk.

Halfway through the course, I'll ask for a **2-page self- and course evaluation**, and in it you'll give yourself a participation grade.

4) Be a discussion leader once. See next page for details.

5) Write a **5-7 page first paper** in which you work through sensory description, the way a novelist or nature writer does, either to make a critical point, or to characterize a non-human creature in a careful, nuanced way (which is a critical point in its own right). We'll read examples of this kind of writing you can emulate.

6) Do a **research project (10-15 pages + annotated bibliography)**. Picking a topic or genre that's new and scary for you will be rewarded! Options include fiction, a first-person essay, a series of short newspaper editorials, a children's book, or a plain old term paper. The key is **independent reading and research**, not just online but **in the actual library**.

Here are the stages:

a) There will be class time to discuss topic ideas, how to find good sources, do peer review of first drafts, and more. Details TBD.

b) I would like everyone in the class to meet with me in person about their project at least once. (Or as much as you like!)

c) Before you write the text, you'll hand in an **annotated bibliography** ("annotated" means each reference for a book/article/website is followed by a few sentences *evaluating* it and explaining *how it was helpful* for your project). We'll talk about this at length.

d) Next you'll hand in a **first draft of the text**, which should be complete and stand on its own: *first draft* ≠ *rough draft*. This is the stage at which I'll make detailed comments.

e) During finals week, hand in a **final revision of the text & bibliography**.

grading:	30% participation and helpfulness (self-graded)	
	5% discussion-leader summary (C/NC)	
	20% first paper	(4/19)
	45% research project =	
	15% annotated bibliography	(5/10)
	15% first draft of text	(5/24)
	15% revision of text + bibliography	(6/4)

The grading rubric is set up to reward, not punish, experimentation in your writing. If you're working at a kind of writing that's new to you, but you don't know if the final product is a successful, standalone essay, don't despair! Don't revert to the familiar! Instead, attach a short postscript explaining your intentions and process, and I will factor process into your grade.

extensions: It's worth asking. But I expect you to do the considerate thing and *ask in advance*.

Here's a framework for the first section of the course:

Healthy, sustainable relationships with animals require that we find a middle path between over-exclusion ("animals are nothing like us"), which invites us to see animals as machines or raw material rather than beings, and over-inclusion ("animals are exactly like us"), which leads to relationships more sentimental but just as unequal, and just as disastrous. Neither of these extremes allows us to learn anything new about ourselves by watching them.

I hope that you all will look for alternatives to this framework, or argue with it, or at the very least help me find a better way of expressing it than the clunky words "over-exclusion" and "over-inclusion."

Week 1: fine animal gorilla

— *this week only: discussion board posts by 5 pm Wed 3/28* —

reading for Thur 3/29 (handouts)

Francine Patterson and Wendy Gordon, "The Case for the Personhood of Gorillas," from Cavalieri and Singer, eds., *The Great Ape Project*

Koko's web chat

Douglas Adams and Mark Carwardine, "Meeting a Gorilla," from *The Great Ape Project*

We'll spend Thursday on a close-reading project that deals with

—how Patterson and Adams *characterize* their gorillas;

—how the *humans* in each piece come across, and what kind of relationship they have with their gorillas;

—the framework written above.

There's an awful lot of other things to talk about here too, though! Please tell us on the discussion board what interests you, and we'll figure out what to talk about in class accordingly.

A very helpful thing you can do is **tell me in your discussion board post what information you need to make sense of these articles**: for example, info about the authors, about gorillas, about primate-language research, about how humans and gorillas are connected evolutionarily. This is how I will decide what to lecture on, if anything, on Thursday.



Mr. Rodgers with Penny Patterson and Koko (not in that order)

Week 2: anthropomorphism and animal-watching

reading for Tues 4/3 (all in coursepack)

Mary Midgley, "The Mixed Community," from *Animals and Why They Matter*

"What is Anthropomorphism?" from *Beast and Man*

Barry Lopez, selections from *Arctic Dreams*

Edwin Way Teale, "Dinah Was a Mantis," from *Near Horizons*

Bernd Heinrich, selections from *Ravens in Winter*

You'll be writing a paper in the same genre as Adams, Lopez, and Teale, so let's pay close attention to *technique*.

—What are they *trying to tell you* about the animals they write about, and how are they trying to portray *themselves*?

—How do they avoid falling into the twin traps of *over-exclusion* ("this animal is nothing like me") and *over-inclusion* ("this animal is just like me")? Are they successful?

—How do they establish *authority* and win your *trust*? Are they successful at that?

—When do they choose to *anthropomorphize*, and when do they stick to traditional *scientific objectivity*, and why?

I'm interested in how each of these authors, including Midgley, views the *limits of our knowledge* regarding animals. I.e.,

—where exactly do those limits lie?

—what does it feel like to run into them: frustrating? funny? awe-inspiring?

Your discussion-board posts don't have to be all-encompassing—it's probably more helpful to begin with specifics. For example: someone might write,

"Teale annoys me. I feel like he's anthropomorphizing Dinah in a really cloying way—I mean, she's a praying mantis, not a primate! But still, I can't find any specific place where he goes overboard, so I don't know where my annoyance comes from. Does anyone else feel this way?"

—zoo trip the end of this week: logistics organized in class—

Week 3: zoos and human-watching

reading for Tues 4/10:

John Berger, "Why Zoos Disappoint"

Yann Martel, selections from *Life of Pi*

Randy Malamud, selections from *Reading Zoos*

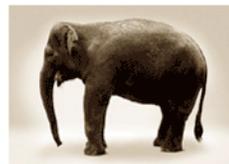
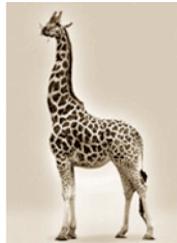
Desmond Morris, "The Stimulus Struggle," from *The Human Zoo*

Lewis Thomas, "On Societies as Organisms" and "Antaeus in Manhattan," from *The Lives of a Cell*

Berger and Martel present contrasting images of what zoos are like for their inhabitants and visitors. Is one or the other closer to your own experience at Woodland Park Zoo, or do you sympathize with both (or neither)?

Malamud and Morris are included to start us thinking about *humans* as domesticated or caged animals. We'll watch the great claymation piece *Creature Comforts*, which Malamud discusses, in class. I'll also put a copy on the website.

Finally, while Morris has us thinking about what modern city life is like from an animal-behavior point of view, I included the two Thomas essays to suggest another direction the analogy could take.



Week 4: J. M. Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals*

reading for Tues 4/17:

Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals* chapter 1, "The Philosophers and the Animals"

Warning: the Introduction is good, but it'll spoil the ending.

reading for Thur 4/19:

Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals* chapter 2, "The Poets and the Animals"

further reading (which means, no, you don't have to read it, but I included it in the coursepack for a reason):

Franz Kafka, "A Report to an Academy"

Loren Eiseley, "The Gold Wheel," from *The Night Country*

Coetzee is a southern-hemisphere English novelist, who was invited to Princeton to give a pair of lectures, presumably about his novels, but instead delivered the two chapters of *The Lives of Animals*. These two chapters are about a southern-hemisphere English novelist who has been invited to a university to give a pair of lectures, presumably about her novels, but instead starts talking about the lives of animals. What is going on? Why has Coetzee put his ideas in the mouth of a fictional character (or set of fictional characters) like this?

I also want to understand better *how our concern for animal welfare gets tied up with our fears for ourselves*, for better and for worse.

!! paper 1 due in class Thur 4/19

Week 5: Jean Baudrillard: “the animals do not speak”

reading for Tues 4/24:

Jean Baudrillard, “The Animals: Territory and Metamorphosis,” from *Simulacra and Simulation*

You will need to read this more than once.

reading for Thur 4/26:

Barry Lopez, “A Presentation of Whales,” from *Crossing Open Ground*

Annie Dillard, “Teaching a Stone to Talk,” from *Teaching a Stone to Talk*

So much to talk about in this essay by Baudrillard:

- the goals of science;
- scientific and industrial violence;
- imputing mental states and the unconscious;
- freedom and autonomy (“animals have never wandered”);
- the notion that “everything has happened to them that has happened to us”
- and finally, what does Baudrillard mean when he uses the image of *silence* (“they do not speak”)? That’s the theme that the essays for Thursday follow up on.

!! for Thur 4/26, be ready with 1-3 topic or format ideas for your research projects.

Got an idea that sounds interesting but you have no idea how to make it work? Perfect, because that gives us something to talk about as a group.

Got an idea that is workable but you have no idea how to make it interesting? That’s good too.

Week 6: cows and pigs

reading for Tues 5/1:

John Berger, "A Calf Remembered," "A Question of Place," and "The Great Whiteness," from *Pig Earth*

Michael Pollan, "This Steer's Life"

Matthew Scully, selections from *Dominion: The Power of Man, the Suffering of Animals, and the Call to Mercy*

Pollan and Scully give us nonfiction about modern cows and pigs. John Berger gives us fiction about cows and peasants in more traditional, and maybe more confusing, relationships. Yes, this is the same John Berger who wrote "Why Zoos Disappoint."

John Berger writes in "Animals as Metaphor" (next weeks' reading) that

A peasant becomes fond of his pig and is glad to salt away its pork. What is significant, and is so difficult for the urban stranger to understand, is that the two statements in that sentence are connected by an *and* and not by a *but*.

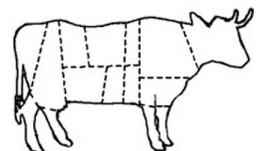
Does this comment ("A peasant becomes fond of his pig...") help us understand *the cultural change from Berger's peasants to Pollan's ranchers*? Does Baudrillard?

reading for Thur 5/3:

Susan Griffin, "Cows: The Way We Yield," from *Woman and Nature*

W. E. D. Stokes, selections from *The Right to Be Well-Born* (skimming this is fine)

I included Griffin and Stokes to follow up on the idea that "everything happened to them that happened to us." By the way, Stokes was writing in 1916, which might explain a few things.



Week 7: Paul Shepard and thinking ecologically

reading for Tues 5/8:

Shepard, *The Others*, chapters 2, 5, 7 and pp 331-3 (book)

John Berger, "Animals as Metaphor" (coursepack)

reading for Thur 5/10:

Shepard, *The Others*, chapter 23

A clear statement of Paul Shepard's thesis would be an excellent accomplishment for this week. I think Berger and Shepard think very much alike: I included Berger's "Animals as Metaphor" to make Shepard more interpretable.

We often use the word "ecological" as a general feel-good word for being nice to nature and nature being nice to us. But that isn't what Shepard has in mind. In chapter 23 (read for Thur) he seems to be arguing that thinking ecologically is somehow opposed to thinking in terms of animal rights. But how opposed? How much do Shepard and Scully (from last week) disagree on?

!! annotated bibliography due in class Thur 5/10

!! self- and course-evaluation (2 pages) also due in class Thur 5/10

Week 8: You're a BIG bear! Yes you are! You're SUCH a big bear!

for Tues 5/15:

watch *Grizzly Man*, a feature-length documentary by Werner Herzog

trailer at [youtube.com/watch?v=AKfWippJeHM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AKfWippJeHM)

read Shepard, *The Others*, chapter 11

further reading:

Barry Lopez, "Wolf Kill: Predator and Prey Engage in a Conversation of Death"

Mary Midgley, "Animals and the Problem of Evil," from *Beast and Man*

Is Timothy Treadwell the ultimate embodiment of Shepard's vision, or is he the problem Shepard is trying to solve?

Week 9: dogs, dreamworlds, and relationships

reading for Tues 5/22:

Shepard, *The Others*, chapter 20

Donna Haraway, selections from *The Companion Species Manifesto*

John Berger, "Vanishing Animals"

Shepard and Berger write about the way we modern types lose sight of real animals, our vision blocked by ideas and fantasies out of our own heads. Haraway is a feminist critical theorist who might be agreeing with them when it comes to how we fail to understand the dogs we live with (is she?)—but actually seems more interested in pointing a way toward building healthy understanding again. (Isn't it nice when critical theorists actually try to be helpful, rather than just complaining?)

This week is all about *relationships*, unhealthy and healthy. Lots of connections to past readings, from Week 1 on. And let's talk about that phrase "significant otherness."

!! first draft of research project due in class Thur 5/24

bring three copies: one for me, two for classmates, unless you have made alternate arrangements for next week's peer review

Week 10: synthesis

no new reading

!! peer review in class Thur 5/31

Finals week

!! revision of bibliography + text due Wed June 6 at 4 pm



Corey Arnold, www.coreyfishes.com