

Division of Humanities
Course Syllabus

Course Code: HUMA 5697
Course Title: Animals and Society: Biodiversity, Conservation, and Ethics
Course Offered in: Fall 2024
Course Instructor: Liz Chee Pui Yee

Course Description:

This course introduces students to human-animal issues such as preserving biodiversity, the wildlife trade, zoonotic diseases, animals as food and medicine, and living with animals in an urban setting. It will also provide a broad historical overview of the animal rights and conservation movements, drawing upon case studies from the US, China, and elsewhere. As this is a postgraduate-level course, students will critically engage with key concepts (biodiversity, animal ethics, etc.), and will also be encouraged to explore new ideas and methodologies for conducting research in human-animal relationships.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs):

	Course ILOs
1	Identify seminal books and articles on conservation and animal studies.
2	Recognize and discuss key concepts and ideas in human-animal relations from global and Asian perspectives.
3	Identify the varying roles of science, culture, and politics in mediating human-animal relations with an emphasis on Asia.
4	Recognize and discuss the presence, integration and representation of animals in urban settings, in particular Hong Kong and other Asian cities.
5	Assess whether current attempts and methodologies to conserve endangered animal species in Asia are adequate.
6	Exercise and demonstrate mastery of humanities research methods appropriate to the level of the course.
7	Develop analytic, writing, and presentation skills.
8	Understand the value and meaning of interdisciplinary scholarship, and different cultural and ethical perspectives.

Course Outline:

Week	
1 5th September	Week 1: Introduction: Basic introduction to the course, and expectations.

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2 12th September	Our Problematic Relationship with Other Species: Reflections on Living through the Sixth Mass Extinction: The concept of the “Sixth Mass Extinction”, and key terms such as biodiversity, zoonoses, and The Anthropocene. Introduction to the history of the animal rights and conservation movements from varying social and cultural perspectives.
3 19th September	The Wildlife Trade, Zoonotic Disease and the Concept of OneHealth: How the close proximity of humans and animals (farmed and wild) has posed a risk to human health. The illegal wildlife trade and repercussions for consuming wildlife. Bird Flu, SARS and the recent COVID-19 pandemic in China and Asia. The Nipah virus in Malaysia and industrial farming. The concept of OneHealth (creating a system of healthy co-existence between humans and animals).
4 26th September	Consuming Animals as Food and Medicine: The history of consuming animals as food and medicine both from Western and Asian cultural perspectives. Using animals for sustenance and healing. Vegetarianism and Veganism. The use of animal-based drugs in Chinese and other Asian medical traditions.
5 3rd October	Living with Wild Animals in the City: Singapore and Hong Kong as densely-populated Asian cities attempting to maintain balanced ecosystems. Urban wildlife and nature parks. Re-wilding and urban pressure. Human-animal conflict (e.g. Macaques). Documentary Wild City (Singapore). Fieldtrip to Hong Kong Biodiversity Museum
6 10th October	Student Presentations
7 17th October	Pandas: The Social, Cultural and Scientific Background to an Iconic Conservation Project: Pandas as both endangered and politically favored. Their conservation, iconography, and status as diplomatic emblems. Pandas in relation to sun bears, and the bear bile industry.
8 24th October	Culture vs. Reality: Cultural Mis/Representations of Animals. How movies represent (or misrepresent) animals and their influence on the way we see them. China’s ‘luxury’ pet industry. The Tibetan Mastiff as one example. Wolf Totem vs. Reality.
9 31st October	Taxidermy and Natural History Museums: Art, Culture, and Science: The multiple roles of natural history museums in presenting animal species. Taxidermy (the preservation and display of animal bodies after death) and its status as art, culture, and science.

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10 7th November	Zoos Past and Future: Animal Prisons or the Best Hope for Conservation?: The multiple and changing roles of zoos and the practices of displaying living wild animals. Best and worst practices. Zoos as historical and urban phenomenon. Zoos as centers of conservation.
11 14th November	Laboratory Animals: The use of animals in scientific testing. History and ethical arguments/concerns. Alternatives.
12 21st November	Emptying the Skies: The Crisis and Conservation of Avian Species: The crisis of wild bird populations. Songbirds as pets in Asian cultures. Asian flyways (migration routes) and multinational conservation efforts. [Rachel Carson's <i>Silent Spring</i> will be a main text for this week. We will discuss: 1. Reasons the author wrote the book; 2. Methods employed (e.g. who did she interview?); 3. Overall effectiveness of the book i.e. writing as a conservation tool. As this is a PG course, we want to use this book to kick-start discussions with students on conducting research in the field of animal studies.
13 28th November	Student Presentations

Planned Assessment Tasks:

4 Essays/Response Papers (500-700 words):	10% x 4 = 40%
2 Presentations:	30%
Course Participation/Discussion:	30%

Readings:

1. Matthew R. Calarco, *Animal Studies: The Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2020).
2. Liz P.Y. Chee, *Mao's Bestiary: Medicinal Animals and Modern China* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021).
3. Brett L. Walker, *The Lost Wolves of Japan* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008).
4. Ian Jared Miller, Julia Adeney Thomas, and Brett L. Walker, ed. *Japan at Nature's Edge: The Environmental Context of a Global Power* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2013).

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5. Gregory Pflugfelder and Brett L. Walker, ed. *JAPANimals: History and Culture in Japan's Animal Life* (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 2005).
6. Ian Miller, *The Nature of the Beasts: Empire and Exhibition at the Tokyo Imperial Zoo* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013).
7. Judith Shapiro, *Mao's War Against Nature: Politics and the Environment in Revolutionary China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).
8. Judith Shapiro, *China's Environmental Challenges* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012).
9. Yifei Li and Judith Shapiro, *China Goes Green: Coercive Environmentalism for a Troubled Planet* (London: John Wiley & Sons, 2020).
10. Elizabeth Kolbert, *The Sixth Mass Extinction: An Unnatural History* (NY: Henry Holt and Co., 2014).
11. Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (NY: Houghton Mifflin, 1962).
12. E. Elena Songster, *Panda Nation: The Construction and Conservation of China's Modern Icon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).
13. William Cronon, *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., c1995).
14. William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1992).
15. Nancy Jacobs, *Birders of Africa: History of a Network* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016)
16. Cary Wolfe, *Before the Law: Humans and Other Animals in a Biopolitical Frame* (Chicago: University of Chicago press, 2012).
17. Cary Wolfe, *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and the Posthumanist Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).
18. Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).
19. Tim Barnard, *Nature's Colony: Empire, Nation and Environment in the Singapore Botanic Gardens* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2016).
20. Tim Barnard, ed. *Nature Contained: Environmental Histories of Singapore* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2014).
21. Lori Gruen, *Ethics and Animals: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

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22. Abigail Woods et. al. *Animals and the Shaping of Modern Medicine: One Health and its Histories* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).
23. David Quammen, *Ebola: The Natural and Human History of a Deadly Virus* (NY: W.W. Norton & Co, 2014).
24. Daniel Vandersommers, *Entangled Encounters at the National Zoo: Stories from the Animal Archive* (University Press of Kansas, 2023).
25. Laura J. Martin, *Wild by Design: The Rise of Ecological Restoration* (MA: Harvard University Press, 2022).
26. Lyle Fearnley, *Virulent Zones: Animal Disease and Global Health at China's Pandemic Epicenter* (Duke University Press, 2020).
27. Rachel Poliquin, *The Breathless Zoo: Taxidermy and the Cultures of Longing* (University Park: Penn University Press, 2012).
28. Laura Hobgood-Oster, *A Dog's History of the World: Canines and the Domestication of Humans* (Waco, TX: Baylor UP, 2014).
29. David Quammen, *Ebola: The Natural and Human History of a Deadly Virus* (W.W. Norton & Company, 2014).
30. Thomas Fleischman, *Communist Pigs: An Animal History of East Germany's Rise and Fall* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2020).
31. Nigel Rothfels, *Savages and Beasts: The Birth of the Modern Zoo* (Baltimore, MD.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).
32. Ian Jared Miller, *The Nature of the Beasts: Empire and Exhibition at the Tokyo Imperial Zoo* (University of California Press, 2021).
33. Kevin Y.L. Tan, *Of Whales and Dinosaurs: The Story of Singapore's Natural History Museum* (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2015).
34. Chris Courtney, *The Nature of Disaster in China: The 1931 Yangzi River Flood* (Cambridge University Press, 2018).
35. Alex Blanchette, *Porkopolis: American Animality, Standardized Life, and the Factory Farm* (Duke University Press, 2020).
36. Gregory B. Lee, *China Imagined: From European Fantasy to Spectacular Power* (Hurst, 2019).
37. Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Harvard University Press, 2013).

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38. Sarah McFarland and Ryan Hediger, *Animals and Agency: An Interdisciplinary Exploration* (Brill, 2009).