



ERST-PHIL-SAFS-3302H-A: Animals and Society 2026WI - Peterborough Campus

Instructor:

Instructor: Benjamin Kapron

Email Address: bkapron@trentu.ca

Office: ESB (Environmental Science Building) A151

Office Hours: Fridays, 11:00 am - 12:00 pm (TBC) or by appointment.

Meeting Times:

Lectures

Fridays, 9:00-10:50 am, OCA (Otonabee College) 208

Seminars

W01 - Fridays, 12:00-12:50 pm, OCA 104

W02 - Fridays, 1:00-1:50 pm, OCA 104

W03 - Fridays, 4:00-4:50 pm, OCA 104

W04 - Fridays, 3:00-3:50 pm, OCA 104

W05 - Fridays, 2:00-2:50 pm, OCA 104

***Note:** In case of inclement weather, instructors may opt to hold synchronous remote lectures or seminars via Zoom, in lieu of in-person lectures or seminars. Students are expected to check their emails and the course Blackboard page for updates. At the start of the semester, we will collectively decide on a deadline for the instructors to make decisions, each week, regarding whether or not the lecture and seminars will proceed in-person. If no details have been posted by this deadline, you are to assume that the lecture and seminars are happening in-person as usual.

Co-instructors and Teaching Assistants:

[Redacted names of co-instructors and teaching assistants]

Department:

[Redacted department information]

Description:

An introduction to animal studies. Topics considered include the constructed divide between humans and non-human animals, societies' use of animals--for food, clothing, entertainment, companionship, research--and the implications of these relationships. The course also discusses animal rights, animal protection, and posthumanist perspectives.

Prerequisite: 1.0 ERST and/or PHIL credit at the 2000 level or beyond.

Land Acknowledgement: This course is being held on the Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg territory of Nogojiwanong, "the place at the foot of the rapids." This Land is subject to the 1818 Rice Lake Purchase, also known as Treaty 20, and the 1923 Williams Treaties.

As we gather to study human-animal relations, let us be mindful of the ways that settler colonialism has disrupted Indigenous Nations' relationships with their other-than-human relations, including the particular injustices of the Williams Treaties; recognize and acknowledge that many posthumanist and related theories and concepts find their origins in Indigenous understandings and are indebted to Indigenous knowledge; and (re)commit ourselves to dismantling settler colonialism, and supporting Indigenous sovereignty, repatriation, and caretaking of these and all Lands facing ongoing colonization.

Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Critically address historic and philosophical tendencies that separate humans from non-human animals, and how these tendencies are linked to other forms of systemic oppression.
 - Identify different means of attending to how non-human animals tend to be treated in dominant Western society, including animal welfare, animal rights, and animal liberation approaches.
 - Recognize the multitudinous roles and relationships that non-human animals hold in human societies, and critically interrogate the ethical implications of these roles and relationships.
 - Critically reflect on their own relationships with non-human animals, and the beliefs, assumptions, biases, etc. that influence these relationships.
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Texts:

No textbooks are required for this course.

Readings:

All readings will be accessible via Blackboard. See "Schedule" below for list of readings for each class. You are expected to complete the required readings *prior to* our weekly meetings.

***Note: Readings discuss violence against animals and, in some cases, humans. Students are allowed to opt out of reading any sections of the assigned readings that they may find triggering.**

Assessments, Assignments and Tests:

Seminar Participation (15%)

Participation grades will be earned by regularly attending seminar meetings, actively engaging in seminar activities and discussions, and completing readings, tasks, and assignments outside of the classroom that are required for satisfactory participation in seminar activities and discussions.

Animal Relationships Journal (15% total; 10 submissions; 1.5% per submission)

Due every Thursday, at 11:59 pm, starting in Week 2 of the course (Jan. 15) and ending in Week 11 (March 26).

Each week, students are tasked with spending intentional time with non-human animals in their lives and with creating some form of reflection based on their interactions. The purpose of this activity is to encourage students to think about their own relationships with non-human animals, in conversation with the course materials.

Students may, for instance, choose to find a specific place that they visit and return to for each of their journals—perhaps a backyard, park, or even a corner of your apartment where a spider lives—and see what animals also visit that place (and if there are weeks when no animals visit, that can be part of the journaling). Or, students may choose to spend time with an individual animal, such as visiting an animal at Riverview Park and Zoo. I ask that your journals do not focus on your own pets, as you may come to the assignment with too many presumptions about these animals given your pre-existing relationships with them. However, you are welcome to spend time with, for instance, a friend's pet if you do not have a prior relationship with the animal.

The medium of students' "journals" is open-ended. For example, students might choose to write a personal reflection or poem based on their interactions with an animal; to paint, sketch, draw, or otherwise 'journal' via a visual medium; or record an audio and/or video reflection. Students are not required to use the same medium for all of their entries—feel free to write a reflection for one, a poem for another, and paint for another, for example. Submissions must be your own original work (do not submit images or poetry that you find online, for example). Written reflections do not need to be long—a half page of writing is plenty.

Journals do not need to engage directly with course content—you are spending time reflecting on your relationships with animals; you are *not* summarizing the course readings; you do not need to cite course content. Although, I encourage you to keep the course content (and your own thoughts regarding the course content) in mind when spending time with the animals and completing your journals

Journals will be graded largely as complete or incomplete. I will read/look at/listen to your journal submissions to ensure that you are completing the assignment, but I will not be grading the content of your journal entries; so I encourage you to submit work outside of your comfort zone (i.e.

try drawing something, even if you aren't good at drawing).

This assignment takes inspiration from:

Curthoys, L. P. (2007). Finding a place of one's own: Reflections on teaching in and with place. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, 12(1), 68-79.

<https://cjee.lakeheadu.ca/article/view/626>

Assignment #1 - Profiles of Animals in Society (20%)

Due Thursday, Feb. 5, 11:59 pm

Students are tasked with writing a **~750-1000 word** profile on an animal that has a unique role or relationship with human societies. These profiles should include information related to the animal's natural history (i.e. their diet, habitat, geographic location, possibly taxonomic information, etc.) as well as information about the role they play or the relationship they have in human societies. I encourage students to focus on less well known examples of animals with unique roles in human societies—ideas for possible options will be discussed in class. Optionally, students can choose to focus on an individual animal (a specific 'celebrity' animal, rather than a species, genus, etc.). These profiles should still include natural history information as well as a discussion of the role that this individual animal plays in human societies.

Further details will be provided on Blackboard and in class.

Mid-Term, Take Home Exam (20%)

Due Thursday, Feb. 26, 11:59 pm

Following our visit to Riverview Park and Zoo in Week 6 of the class (Friday, February 13), students will write a short essay connecting their time at the zoo with course content.

The specific topic for this essay will become available on Blackboard following the visit to Riverview Park and Zoo. If you are unable to join us at the zoo on Friday, February 13, you are welcome to visit the zoo on your own time and complete the essay before the deadline on Thursday, February 26. If you have concerns about visiting the zoo, please discuss them with your instructors.

Further details will be provided on Blackboard and in class.

Assignment #2 - Animals in My Field - Research and Reflection Paper (30%)

Due Friday, Apr. 17, 11:59 pm

While I would love it if you do, I realistically don't expect that most of you will pursue a career related to animals or animal studies after taking this class. Therefore, my hope is that you take what you learn in this class and don't completely forget to take animals seriously when pursuing your future endeavours. The final assignment is designed with this aim in mind: students are tasked with writing a **~2,500 word** research paper that explores how animals are (or aren't) understood, discussed, play a role, etc. in some field of academia, career path, or hobby that they are interested in.

Further details will be provided on Blackboard and in class.

Note on Referencing: Your submitted work must include **full, accurate, and proper citations**, with both **in-text citations and a Works Cited or Bibliography**. You are welcome to use any reference style of your choice. I recommend using the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL Purdue) resources if you need assistance with formatting your citations (Google "OWL Purdue APA," "OWL Purdue MLA," etc.).

Grading:

ASSIGNMENT	WEIGHT	DUE DATE
Seminar Participation	15%	Ongoing, Weekly Seminars
Animal Relationships Journal	15%	Weekly Submissions - Thursdays, 11:59 pm
Assignment #1 - Profiles of Animals in Society	20%	Thursday, Feb. 5, 11:59 pm
Mid-Term, Take Home Exam	20%	Thursday, Feb. 26, 11:59 pm
Assignment #2 - Animals in My Field - Research & Reflection Paper	30%	Friday, Apr. 17, 11:59 pm

Grade Total by Withdrawal Date:

By March 10, 2026, the last day to drop this course without penalty, you will have received at least 30% of your grade.

Schedule:

***Note:** Readings discuss violence against animals and, in some cases, humans. Students are allowed to opt out of reading any sections of the assigned readings that they may find triggering.

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC	READINGS, DUE DATES, AND OTHER NOTES
1	Jan. 9	Introduction to Course	<p>Optional / Supplemental Reading: Tuck, E. (2009). Suspending damage: A letter to communities. <i>Harvard Educational Review</i>, 79(3), 409-427. https://pages.ucsd.edu/~rfrank/class_web/ES-114A/Week%204/TuckHEdR79-3.pdf</p> <p>NO SEMINARS THIS WEEK</p>
2	Jan. 16	What is a Human versus what is an "Animal"?	<p>Required Readings: Excerpt from Plumwood, V. (1993). Dualism: The logic of colonisation. In <i>Feminism and the mastery of nature</i> (pp. 41-68). Routledge. https://takku.net/mediagallery/mediaobjects/orig/f/f_val-plumwood-feminism-and-the-mastery-of-nature-pdf.pdf [read pages 52-66 of linked .pdf]</p> <p>SEMINARS START THIS WEEK</p> <p>DUE: First Journal Submission - 11:59 pm, Thursday, Jan. 15</p>
3	Jan. 23	Co-Constitution of Animality and Other Oppressions	<p>Required Reading: Kim, C. J. (2017). Murder and mattering in Harambe's house. <i>Politics and Animals</i>, 3, 1-15. https://journals.lub.lu.se/pa/article/view/1627</p>
4	Jan. 30	Frameworks for Considering Animals	<p>Required Readings: Casamitjana, J. (2024, July 4). Animal rights vs welfare vs protection. <i>VeganFTA</i>. https://veganfta.com/blog/2024/07/06/animal-rights-vs-welfare-vs-protection/ AND Kapron, B. J. (2016). Interrelational Ethical Relations. In Cacophonous settler grounded normativity: Interrelationality with the more-than-human world as a path for decolonial transformation (Master's Major Research Paper) (pp. 34-53). Outstanding Graduate Student Paper Series, 22(16). Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University, Toronto, ON, Canada. http://hdl.handle.net/10315/34817</p>
5	Feb. 6	Extinction	<p>Required Reading: Read at least ONE of Rose, D. B. (2013). In the shadow of all this death. In J. Johnston & F. Probyn-Rapsey (Eds.), <i>Animal Death</i> (pp. 1-20). Sydney University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1gxxpvf.7 AND / OR Smith, M. (2013). Ecological Community, the Sense of the World, and Senseless Extinction. <i>Environmental Humanities</i>, 2(1), 21-41. https://doi.org/10.1215/22011919-3610333</p> <p>DUE: Assignment #1 - Profile of Animals in Society - 11:59 pm, Thursday, Feb. 5</p>
6	Feb. 13	Field Trip: Riverview Park and Zoo	<p>Required Reading: Hribal, J. (2010). A Message from Tatiana. In <i>Fear of the animal planet: the hidden history of animal resistance</i> (pp. 21-30). CounterPunch. https://www.counterpunch.org/2011/01/18/a-message-from-tatiana/</p> <p>ALTERNATE LECTURE MEETING LOCATION FRONT GATE OF RIVERVIEW PARK AND ZOO (1300 Water St.)</p> <p>NO SEMINARS THIS WEEK</p> <p>Mid-Term, Take Home Exam will be made available after lecture</p>
	Feb. 20		READING WEEK - NO CLASS
7	Feb. 27	Pests	<p>Required Reading: Jerolmack, C. (2008). How Pigeons Became Rats: The Cultural-Spatial Logic of Problem Animals. <i>Social Problems</i>, 55(1), 72-94. https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.2008.55.1.72 *Access via Trent Library</p> <p>DUE: Mid-Term, Take Home Exam - 11:59 pm, Thursday, Feb. 26</p>
8	Mar. 6	Animal Agriculture	<p>Required Reading: Gillespie, K. (2017). Industrial slaughter. In R. S. Parennas (Ed.), <i>Gender: Animals</i> (pp. 181-195). Cengage Learning. http://kathrynagillespie.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Gillespie_Industrial-Slaughter.pdf</p>
9	Mar. 13	Fishing	<p>Required Reading: Wadiwel, D. J. (2016). Do fish resist?. <i>Cultural Studies Review</i>, 22(1), 196-242. https://doi.org/10.5130/csr.v22i1.4363</p>
10	Mar. 20	Research Subjects	<p>Required Reading: Van Norman, G. A. (2019). Limitations of animal studies for predicting toxicity in clinical trials: Is it time to rethink our current approach?. <i>JACC: Basic to Translational Science</i>, 4(7), 845-854. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jacbts.2019.10.008</p>
11	Mar. 27	Pets / Companion Animals	<p>Required Reading: Nast, H. J. (2006). Loving....whatever: Alienation, neoliberalism and pet-love in the twenty-first century. <i>ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies</i>, 5(2), 300-327. https://doi.org/10.14288/acme.v5i2.761</p>

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC	READINGS, DUE DATES, AND OTHER NOTES
			DUE: Final Journal Submission - 11:59 pm, Thursday, Mar. 26
12	Apr. 3	Beyond Animals	<p>Recommended Reading: Kapron, B. J. (2025). "So Great Was the Rush of Water": Speculative Histories of Other-than-Human Survivance Against the Trent-Severn Waterway. <i>Radical Histories of Decolonization</i>, issue of <i>Radical History Review</i>, 153, 34-59. https://doi.org/10.1215/01636545-11853764 *Posted on Blackboard page</p> <p>GOOD FRIDAY - NO LECTURE, NO SEMINARS</p> <p>DUE: Assignment #2 - Animals in My Field Research & Reflection Paper - 11:59 pm, Friday, Apr. 17 No Journal Submission required for this week.</p>

Course Guidelines:

Referencing Policy: Your submitted work must include full, accurate, and proper citations, with both in-text citations and a Works Cited or Bibliography. You are welcome to use any reference style of your choice. I recommend using the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL Purdue) resources if you need assistance with formatting your citations (Google "OWL Purdue APA," "OWL Purdue MLA," etc.).

Late Assignment Policy: Assignments received after their due date will be penalized 5% per day that the assignment is late. Exceptions to the lateness penalty for valid reasons such as illness, compassionate grounds, etc., may be entertained by the course instructors and may require supporting documentation (e.g., a doctor's letter).

Generative AI: The use of generative AI is not permitted in this course. Using generative AI to aid in or fully complete your coursework will be considered academic misconduct.

Use of Zoom for Instructional Purposes: Trent University uses a range of technologies to facilitate in-person and remote instruction. Zoom is currently used for remote course delivery, including lectures, seminars, and group office hours, which may be recorded, stored, and shared through Blackboard for access by students in the course. Instructors may require that cameras remain on during class sessions to support engagement and participation. Students who wish to use an alternative display name for privacy reasons may do so, provided they have received prior approval from the instructor. If a Zoom session is being recorded, students have the option to turn off their cameras at any time.

Recording Synchronous Classes: In cases of inclement weather, synchronous (live) class sessions will be delivered through a university-supported video platform. These class sessions may be recorded, including video, audio, and in some cases transcriptions. These recordings may be made available to students in the course via Blackboard, for the duration of the term. Recordings may capture your name, image, or voice. By attending live classes, you consent to the collection of this information for the purposes of course delivery and associated course work. You may turn off your camera at any time during a recorded session.

If you have concerns about the use or collection of your personal information in the class, please contact the instructor to identify possible alternatives.

Gender Inclusivity: This course aims to provide a respectful and supportive environment for people of all gender identities and expressions. Everyone is expected to refer to classmates using their preferred names and pronouns. Instructors have received a class roster that lists official enrollment information. If you prefer to go by a name that is different from your official enrollment information, you are welcome to let the instructors know, at your convenience.

Accommodations: See University Policy, below.

University Policies:

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty, which includes plagiarism and cheating, is an extremely serious academic offence and carries penalties varying from failure on an assignment to expulsion from the University. Definitions, penalties, and procedures for dealing with plagiarism and cheating are set out in Trent University's *Academic Integrity Policy*. You have a responsibility to educate yourself – unfamiliarity with the policy is not an excuse. You are strongly encouraged to visit Trent's Academic Integrity website to learn more: www.trentu.ca/academicintegrity.

Access to Instruction

It is Trent University's intent to create an inclusive learning environment. If a student has a disability and documentation from a regulated health care practitioner and feels that they may need accommodations to succeed in a course, the student should contact the Student Accessibility Services Office (SAS) at the respective campus as soon as possible.

Sharing and Distribution of Course Content

Students in this class should be aware that classroom activities (lecture, seminars, labs, etc.) may be recorded for teaching and learning purposes. Any students with concerns about being recorded in a classroom context should speak with their professor. If a student shares or distributes course content in any way that breaches copyright legislation, privacy legislation, and/or this policy, the student will be subject to disciplinary actions under the relevant Academic Integrity Policy, the Charter of Student Rights & Responsibilities, or the Policy on the Protection of Personal Information, at a minimum, and may be subject to legal consequences that are outside of the responsibility of the university.

Student Absenteeism, Missed Tests and Examinations

Students are responsible for completing all course requirements, including attending classes and meeting assignment deadlines as specified on their syllabus.

Adjustments and deferrals to dates for participation, assignment submissions, tests, midterms and final examinations are not automatic. It is the student's responsibility to email their instructor immediately if they are unable to fulfill academic requirements.

Courses delivered remotely may involve student participation in scheduled (synchronous) classes via web-based platforms, such as Zoom. Students unable to participate (i.e., by video and/or audio) should email their instructors to request alternative arrangements for participation in these scheduled (synchronous) classes.

Students are required to be available for all tests, midterms and exams that are listed in their course syllabus and scheduled by their instructor or the Office of the Registrar. Depending on their program, the instructor or the chair/director may decide on alternative arrangements for exams and tests. Normally a doctor's note or supporting documentation is not required; however, when a student's success in the course or program is in jeopardy as determined by the instructor or chair/director, documentation may be requested.

Specific SAS accommodations can be implemented for students registered with Student Accessibility Services (SAS), but it is the responsibility of the student to make these arrangements in advance as per SAS guidelines, and to discuss accommodations of due dates with their instructors.

Students can notify the Office of the Registrar of their wish to observe cultural or religious holidays during scheduled examination periods by the deadline set in the Academic Calendar. Personal travel plans are not acceptable reasons for missing tests or exams.

Print