

FYSE 134: RELIGION, ANIMALS, AND ANIMAL ETHICS

Instructor: Dr. Todd LeVasseur

Office: ECTR 206 E (in the hallway of the African American studies program)/Sustainability Literacy Institute

Office Hours: Wednesday 10am-11:30am, or by appointment

Email: levasseurjt@cofc.edu (I typically respond to emails within 24 hours, except on weekends. Emails sent on weekends will receive a response on Monday.)

Lectures: MWF 9:00am-9:50am, Education Center Room 219

Any student may email me for a copy of my teaching philosophy.

Upon announcing the Office of Faith-Based Community Initiatives (part of the State Department) at the White House in August, 2013, then Secretary of State John Kerry stated: "In fact, if I went back to college today, I think I would probably major in comparative religion because that's how integrated [religion] is in everything that we are working on and deciding and thinking about in life today."

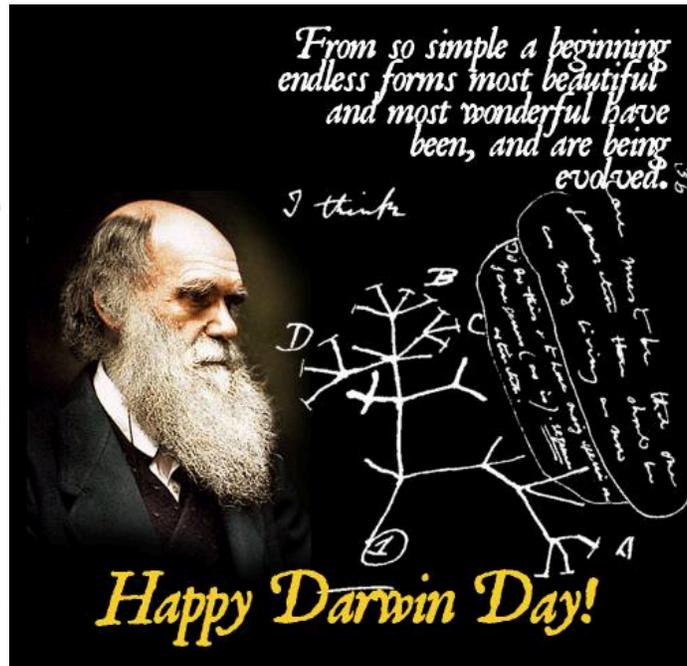
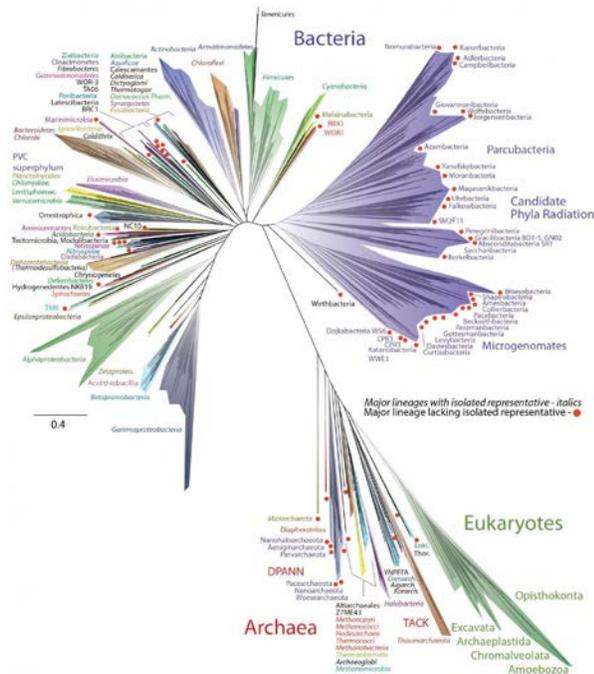
OCTOPI WALL STREET



Invertebrates are 97% of animal diversity!

Brought to you by Oregon Institute of Marine Biology, University of Oregon

Course Description and Instructional Format: This course is designed to introduce College of Charleston students to how human animals, through the vehicle of various religions, have conceived of, used, taught about, and interacted with non-human animals via ethical teachings, rituals, myths, sacred texts/narratives, and diet. The course adopts an evolutionary epistemology, tracing the development of animals and human-animal interactions from the dawn of *Homo sapiens* through the current extinction crisis with religion providing a point of entry into understanding these interactions. Students will also research and discuss ethical issues about conservation biology, intensive animal agriculture, emerging findings from animal ethology (we will cover what this term means!), and the treatment of companion animals. Methods and theories of inquiry will be comparative (between religious traditions) and interdisciplinary (ethics/philosophy, religious studies, conservation biology, cognitive ethology, ecopsychology, animal studies) in scope. The course is largely structured as a seminar; *this means students are expected to have completed all readings for the day assigned and are expected to come ready to participate in discussions about religion and animals.*



Course Goals and Objectives: Specific goals of the course are as follows:

1. To introduce students to the nascent study of religion and animals, including exposure to leading theorists and researchers within this field.
2. To gain a basic level of understanding and knowledge about how a variety of world religions, past and present, have conceived of animal others and utilized or conceived of them in religious rituals, myths, and other practices.
3. To generate familiarity with appropriate data, information, and knowledge-gathering techniques and research skills in the discipline of Religious Studies.
4. To gain an appreciation for the complex and at times contentious ways in which religions have viewed and interacted with animals, and how these views are changing (or not) given the rise of ethology, animal ethics, findings from conservation biology, and the ongoing extinction crisis.
5. To help students encounter and understand religions with which they are unfamiliar.
6. To help students understand the goals of liberal arts and sciences education and the core values of the College of Charleston.
7. To help students demonstrate the impact of production/consumption practices related to animal-based agriculture on social, economic, and/or ecological systems (this goal to be assessed on the paper).



Specific objectives of the course are as follows:

1. To facilitate the development of critical thinking skills regarding the study of religion, and more so, the study of religion and animals.
2. To facilitate the development of effective reading, writing, and speech.
3. To read historical, mythical, scientific, and theological texts critically.
4. To develop effective skills and strategies for working collaboratively.
5. To have students reflect upon, and deeply question, their own relationships with the more-than-human world, including especially relationships with animal others.
6. To gain a basic understanding of both animal studies and sustainability studies as emerging interdisciplinary academic disciplines, and thus how human-animal relations are related to sustainability.

Required Texts: Available at CofC bookstore in Barnes & Noble (and most likely used copies on-line):

- 1) Paul Waldau *Animal Studies: An Introduction*
- 2) Paul Waldau and Kimberley Patton, eds., *A Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science & Ethics*
- 3) Arran Stibbe, *Animals Erased: Discourse, Ecology, and Reconnection with the Natural World*

A variety of course readings are also on OAKS under the course tab. From there, click on the “content” tab and this will bring up .pdfs of assorted readings, all of which are required. Students should keep in mind that humanities-based classes at the College are reading-heavy compared to other classes, averaging 20 to 30 pages of reading per assignment/class meeting, even for 100 level classes. *You should bring all assigned readings (book or on-line) to class for the day they are assigned, as this is when you should raise questions about any content you did not understand; all effort will be made to discuss readings for the day they are assigned, but students should expect to also cover readings in classes after when the readings were assigned, too.*



Requirements, Expectations, and Resources:

1) Assignments:

1. Class participation—12% of total grade. This includes how often and how well you contribute to class discussions and small group discussions; your performance on reading questions; and the self-evaluation of a personal, confidential journal.
 - a. Students should purchase a journal in which they will respond privately to emailed prompts or prompts provided in class. Ideally, students should respond to out-of-class prompts at a place that contains a variety of non-human animals with which to engage/observe.
 - b. Students will be asked to take an on-line sustainability test at the beginning and end of the semester and provide proof they completed both instances of the test.
 - c. Students will be asked to briefly visit the professor during the first few weeks of class for a short one-on-one meeting.
 - d. Students must complete required assignments and participate in peer-facilitator led activities during the synthesis seminar. (This counts as 5% of the overall class participation grade.)
2. Reading Analyses—28% of total grade. You will be required to write a 500-word “reflection” for seven pre-selected readings (each analysis worth 4% of grade). This writing will contain two components:
 - a. A “Critical and Factual Analysis,” 2/3rd to 3/4th of the analysis paper, will clearly and concisely address four interrelated items:
 - i. What is the key argument/point of the reading
 - ii. What evidence is used in making this argument
 - iii. Why does the argument and data matter to the author?
 - iv. What other course readings is this reading related to/with whom is it in dialogue?

For this part of the analysis you should use relevant quotes to show you captured the main points as needed, but do not give 300 words of quotes. The audience for this part should be your parents—assume they called you and asked what you just read and what was important about reading it.

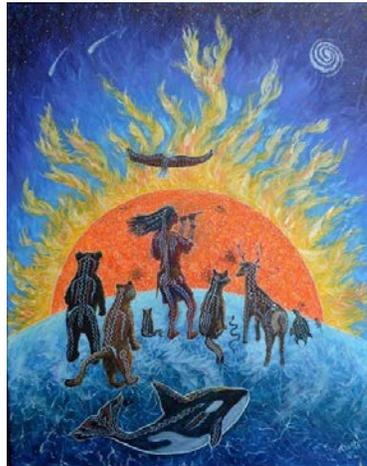
- b. A “Personal Analysis and Reflection,” 1/3rd to 1/4th of the paper—this will include your own analysis and reflection on the article, including thoughts and emotions that were triggered as you read. Overall, you should comment on how the article helped you understand either religion, or religion and animals, better, and how it fit into the course goals and objectives. This should be written in the first person and is not a rehash of the article, but your own critical thoughts or honest reflection on the reading.

Each analysis is to be printed out and turned in at the beginning of class for the day it is due/assigned.

3. Exams—40% of total grade. There will be two take home exams that are open notes, open reading. One will distributed in class on **9/29**, and the other will be distributed on **12/4** and will be due the night

before the scheduled final exam. These exams will consist of definitions, short answer questions/summary questions, comparative questions, and critical analysis essay questions. 15% for mid-term, 25% for the final, for 40% of grade.

4. Research Paper—20% of total grade. Students will generate a 1,200-word research paper based on a preselected topic provided by the Professor. The paper metric and further information will be discussed in class on 10/11. The paper is **due on 11/3**. Note: for each part of every successive 24-hour period after the paper is due that it is turned in late, 10 points will be deducted from the final score of the paper.
5. Extra Credit—There will be options for extra credit as the semester develops. Most likely these options will include attending guest lectures that relate to course objectives and goals (.5 points per lecture); watching and reviewing movies that relate to course objectives and goals (.5 points each); visiting a place where animals are displayed, such as a zoo, the aquarium, fair, etc. and writing an evaluative report of this experience, including how animals are represented (.5 points each); or undertaking a lifestyle change in regards to your own interactions with animals and writing about this experience—most likely this will be a change in diet (depending on the experience, and the length of experiment, worth .5 to 1 point). For reviews, a 1-page summary of the event/film and how it related to the course is required. For a lifestyle change, a journal tracking the changes and your thoughts/feelings on the process is required. Each student may earn 2.5 possible extra credit points added onto their final grade. The final day to turn in extra credit work is the last day of class. Each student who attends every class in its entirety automatically will earn .5 points on their final grade.



Remember, grades are not randomly assigned! When you do well (or not) on an assignment or test, reflect on the factors that made a difference—the time you committed, your awareness of the instructions, your understanding of the material, and the help you sought.

Grading Scale: A: 93-100; A-: 90-92; B+: 88-89; B: 83-87; B-: 80-82; C+: 78-79; C: 73-77; C-: 70-72; D+: 68-69; D: 63-67; D-: 61-62; F: 60.49 or below (all grades ending in .5 or higher are rounded up to the next point)

2) *Attendance*: Attendance is mandatory. Roll will be taken at the beginning of each lecture. If you are repeatedly more than 5 minutes late to class, you will begin to be counted as absent for that day, as tardiness harms your understanding of the material and disrupts the class. Keep in mind that the instructor will not provide notes or discussion of class material that have already been covered; it is your responsibility to be present and to be to class on time. After 3 unexcused absences of any kind, your grade drops by 1/3 letter (i.e. A to A-, C- to D+, etc.) for each successive absence. After your 3rd unexcused absence, you will receive a WA and be dropped from the course. An excused absence means that I receive an email from CofC saying your excuse was “documented;” if I receive an email (or no notice at all) saying your absence was “undocumented,” then it is unexcused. It is up to you to contact the Office of Student Affairs in order to find out what counts as a documented excuse. Please observe the totality of this attendance policy.

** reading summaries and also reading questions are not able to be made up or turned in late—you must be present, or must clear *in advance* with me that you will email your summary before class begins if you are unable to be in class.

If you miss 4 FYE Synthesis Seminars, you will automatically receive a WF for the course.

3) *Common Courtesy*: As stated by the Code of Conduct in the CofC Student Handbook, cell phones, personal computers, and other electronic devices must be turned off during the whole class period. The instructor also reserves the right to ask any student engaging in disruptive behavior (i.e. whispering, reading a newspaper, surfing the web, texting messages, etc.) to leave the class. Be aware that if the professor observes that a student is often, and more so, continuously texting or using their computer for activities not directly related to the course, then the student’s class participation component of the overall grade will automatically lose points. The more often this behavior occurs, then the more points will be deducted. Please stay focused and on task if you have your computer open!

4) *Honor Code*: On **all work** (this includes answers to reading questions I provide) submitted for credit by students at CofC, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The legal code of the College specifically prohibits plagiarism, cheating, bribing, conspiracy, misrepresentation, and fabrication. If it is proven that any student has committed any of the above infractions of the honor code, then that student will automatically fail the course with an XF. In addition, violations of the Academic Honesty Guidelines shall result in judicial action. Students should be aware that unauthorized collaboration (working together without permission) is a form of cheating—this is especially true on the take-home reading questions, and also exams--whereas if strong evidence appears that students collaborated, then all parties involved will automatically receive a “0” for that assignment.

5) *Accommodation for Disabilities*: To request classroom accommodation, you must first register with the Center for Disability Services at the beginning of the semester. This office will provide you with documentation that you will then provide to me when you request accommodation. For more information, please see <http://www.cof.cedu/~cds/index.htm>

6) Counseling Resources, a writing lab, and a career resource center are all available to CofC students and are staffed with trained professionals. I urge you to pay special attention to the Center for Student Learning, and I encourage you to utilize the Center for Student Learning’s (CSL) academic support services for assistance in study strategies and course content. They offer tutoring, supplemental instruction, study skills appointments, and workshops. Students of all abilities have become more successful using these programs throughout their academic career and the services are available to you at no additional cost. For more information regarding these services please visit the CSL website at <http://csl.cofc.edu> or call 843.953.5635.



Writing Lab

Students are encouraged to take advantage of the Writing Lab in the Center for Student Learning (Addlestone Library, first floor). Trained writing consultants can help with writing for all courses; they offer one-to-one consultations that address everything from brainstorming and developing ideas to crafting strong sentences and documenting sources. For more information, please call 843.953.5635 or visit <http://csl.cofc.edu/labs/writing-lab/>.



Course Schedule (except for the first day of class, all other work is due at the beginning of class for the assigned day—example: 9/8-you would turn in the reading questions for the reading assigned for that day):

W 8/23: No class as I am out of the country; to read: Animal Studies—all journal prompts and reading questions are available on OAKS; complete on-line UN Sustainability Test

F 8/25: **bring answers to reading questions to class to turn in**; introductions and review syllabus

M 8/28: Beginnings and Deep Past of *Homo sapiens*: OAKS: selections from Charles Darwin’s “On the Origin of Species;” Kirkpatrick Sale’s “Intensification and Agriculture” (reading **Summary #1 due on Sale**)

W 8/30: no reading; **proof of taking UN test due by this time**

F 9/1: Religion OAKS: chapter 1, “Religion,” by Bauman, et al; Religious Studies as a field of study from UNC-Chapel Hill

***turn in as reading questions:** answers to the study questions from Bauman; a 1-page reflection on the UNC summary of religious studies—what thoughts were triggered? Did the reading make sense? Etc.

M 9/4: no reading; continue lecture on religion and key concepts

W 9/6: sign-up sheet to visit professor; lecture on hermeneutics; no reading

F 9/8: Animal Studies see OAKS document for journal prompts and reading questions

Week of 9/11-9/15: visit Professor

M 9/11: Hinduism and Animals no reading; lecture on key concepts in Hinduism

*Animals Across Religious Traditions PDF on OAKS: not required, but skim it

W 9/13: Hinduism and Animals Waldau and Patton: Lance Nelson “Cows, Elephants, Dogs, and Other Lesser Embodiments...” (reading questions and journal prompts will be provided)

F 9/15: Buddhism and Animals no reading; lecture on key concepts in Buddhism

M 9/18: Buddhism and Animals Waldau and Patton: Ian Harris “A Vast Unsupervised Recycling Plant” (reading questions and journal prompts will be provided)

*web-link: Jataka tales (skim a few selections to get a flavor)

W 9/20: Christianity and Animals Waldau and Patton: Jay McDaniel “Practicing the Presence of God: A Christian Approach to Animals” (reading questions and journal prompts will be provided)

F 9/22: Christianity and Animals OAKS: Cal Dewitt, “Behemoth and Batrachian in the Eye of God”

*****Summary #2 due*****

M 9/25: Christianity and Animals OAKS: chapters 2 and 3 from *Vegangelical* (reading questions and journal prompts will be provided)

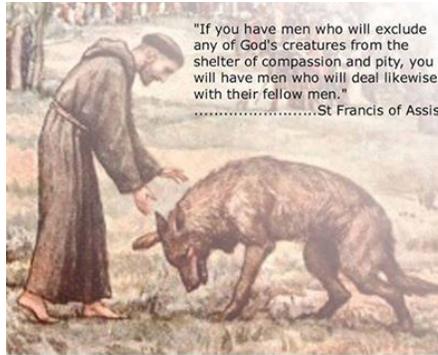
W 9/27: Indigenous Relations Waldau and Patton: John Grim, “Knowing and Being Known by Animals: Indigenous Perspectives on Personhood” (reading questions and journal prompts will be provided)

F 9/29: **Mid-term given**

M 10/2: **Mid-term due**, printed out, at the beginning of class—no late mid-terms will be accepted

W 10/4: Guest lecture or movie

F 10/6: Animal Ethics see OAKS document for journal prompts and reading questions
Sat 10/7---STORM MAKE-UP DAY IF NEEDED (CofC Policy)



M 10/9: Environmental Ethics OAKS: selections from *A Sand County Almanac* by Aldo Leopold **Summary #3**

W 10/11: Ethology Waldau and Patton, Marc Bekoff, “Wild Justice, Social Cognition, Fairness, and Morality” (reading questions and journal prompts will be provided) **Paper rubric will be discussed in class**

F 10/13 (watch out for black cats!): Animal Rights Waldau and Patton, Carol Adams “A very rare and difficult thing’: Ecofeminism, Attention to Animal Suffering, and the Disappearance of the Subject” **Summary #4**

M 10/16: **FALL BREAK: get in touch with your animal body and animal self**

W 10/18: Discourses on Animals Stibbe, Introduction and Chapter 1 **Summary #5**

F 10/20: Stibbe, chapter 2 (reading questions and journal prompts will be provided)

M 10/23: Stibbe, chapter 4 (reading questions and journal prompts will be provided)

W 10/25: Stibbe, chapter 8 and Conclusion (reading questions and journal prompts will be provided)

F 10/27: no reading; visit library

M 10/30: Diet OAKS: David Nibert, “New Welfarism, Veganism, and Capitalism;’ chapter from *Cowspiracy* book

Summary #6 on both readings

W 11/1: no reading

F 11/3: Sustainability (and Animals) OAKS: TBA

M 11/6: Sustainability (and Animals) OAKS: TBA

W 11/8: no reading

F 11/10: no reading; **RESEARCH PAPER #2 Due**

M 11/13: Domination OAKS: “The Animal Question” by Jim Mason; “Biocentric Religion” by Paul Watson

Summary #7 on both readings

W 11/15: no reading

F 11/17: no reading

M 11/20: **complete on-line UN Sustainability test**

THANKSGIVING BREAK—EAT TOFURKY!!



M 11/27: Who Are We? Who Are Animals? OAKS: web link to “Are We in Anthrodenial?” by Frans De Waal; web link to “Six Uniquely Human Traits Now Found in Animals” by Kate Douglas (reading questions and journal prompts will be provided)

W 11/29: share Haiku and pictures

F 12/1: share Haiku and pictures

M 12/4: Conclusion OAKS: “Introduction” by David Abram; “Reciprocity” by David Abram (reading questions and journal prompts will be provided)

receive FINAL EXAM; turn in self-evaluation of journal

FINAL EXAM due uploaded to OAKS by 8pm on 12/12; We will meet for a pot-luck at 9am on 12/13—attendance is mandatory

“The Laughing Oath”

I do solemnly swear from this day forward
To grease my giggling gears each day
And to wear a grin on my face for no reason at all
I promise to tap my funny bone often,
With children, family, friends, colleagues and clients,
And to laugh at least fifteen times per day.
I believe that frequent belly laughter
Cures terminal tightness, cerebral stuffiness,
And hardening of the attitudes,
And that HA HA often leads to AHA! Therefore, I vow, from this day forth,
To brighten the day of everyone I meet,
And to laugh long and prosper.

