

Animal Intimacies

Professor Nadeen Kharputly (nkharputly@wlu.edu)

Office hours: Mondays 1:30-3:30 and Fridays 11:30-1:30 & by appt (schedule through Canvas)

Weekly class meeting: Wednesdays 2:30-3:35pm

Course description

Non-human animals occupy a central force in our lives. We love them, wear them, eat them, study them, experiment on them, honor them in our art, poetry, and film, and establish therapeutic relationships with them. Animals have long served as a reflection of our own (in)humanity, and this class will offer a close look at the human-animal bond through different genres of writing, including but not limited to poetry, personal essays, food writing, animal rights and environmental activist writing, and comics.

An important note

Our class reading list represents a wide range of experiences pertaining to race, gender, sexuality, ability, identity, and more. This list was intentionally curated; these differences in experiences matter. It is important for us to approach issues from a variety of perspectives and to challenge any one way of understanding and moving through the world. Reading these stories is only the first step towards becoming active, engaged, and empathetic citizens of the world. Our conversations will thus be grounded in critical analyses of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, politics, and more. Many of us are not well versed in having such conversations, as these topics are often avoided for the sake of “politeness.” However, it is crucial that we all learn to become fluent in the practice of holding space for difficult conversations so that we are better equipped to address the injustices that persist in our societies.

Objectives and learning outcomes

- Write persuasive essays that contain a clear and debatable thesis, appropriately developed claims, and logical organization of argument.
- Analyze supporting evidence fully and convincingly, integrating the writer’s ideas with those from appropriate primary or secondary sources.
- Demonstrate knowledge of audience appropriate documentation conventions and mastery of sentence-level skills, including precision in grammar, mechanics, and style.
- Reflect on and apply the stages of the writing process including pre-writing, drafting, reviewing, conferencing, editing, and revising to develop polished final products.

Assignments

- 3 essays (with one draft each)
- 3 self-assessments
- 1 diagnostic writing exercise (due with first self-assessment)

Required texts

All texts are available through Canvas.

Grading policy

Rather than using a traditional grade breakdown (where each component of the class is worth a certain percentage of the overall grade), I’m relying on the following guidelines in order to provide more flexibility for you during these extraordinary circumstances.

An A will be given to students who demonstrate the following:

- Meet the requirements for all assignments in this class. Basically, show me that you have a) understood the purpose of the assignments (this includes the essays, Canvas posts and/or

exercises, self-assessments, and so on), b) completed them in a timely manner, in good faith, and with your best efforts, c) with careful attention to the particular requirements of each assignment and to the key concepts and specific examples we cover in class.

- Demonstrate a significant improvement in your progress over time with the end result of producing high quality analysis, writing, and engagement & participation.
- Demonstrate regular, thoughtful engagement with the material and with our class community - this means contributing meaningfully to our conversations and community on Zoom and Canvas, making specific and knowledgeable references to our class material in your writing and discussion, acknowledging and working with feedback you receive on your assignments (i.e., are you revising your writing and analysis specifically with the feedback in mind; if not, do you articulate a good reason for not doing so?). If struggling to participate in class, communicate with me early and regularly in order to draw up and commit to a plan for improvement.
- Treat our class space with seriousness and respect by demonstrating a conscientious and appreciative approach towards our subject matter, our materials (including assignments), and most importantly, your classmates and professor.

Meet most of these requirements and you'll get a B, do the bare minimum and you'll get a C, and so on. Serious breaches of trust and community will result in a failing grade.

Letter grades will be provided only for a) your essays b) midterm grade (if you are eligible as a first year student and/or are on probation) and c) final class grade. I will provide qualitative feedback on your midsemester self-assessment, which will give you the opportunity to evaluate your progress, articulate your standing in the class to me, and make any necessary changes for improvement moving forward. I will also provide regular feedback on your Canvas posts.

Class policies

While this syllabus lays out everything you need to know for this class, please understand that our present circumstances demand a certain level of flexibility. If any changes to the class arise, I will let know you ASAP. This policy applies to you as well: there are certain expectations that you need to meet for this class, but your situation may require flexibility from me. Therefore please maintain communication with me should any changes or emergencies arise in your situation and we can work together to address them. Please check your W&L e-mail at least once a day to keep up to date with any possible changes to our schedule. Expect responses to your e-mails within 24 hours during the week and 48 hours over the weekend.

Zoom policy

Please develop a setup that works best for you for our meetings: you can use virtual backgrounds or turn off your camera if a genuine need arises. Whether your camera is on or off, I expect you to stay engaged and be ready to respond to any question I pose to the class. Do stay on mute until it is your turn to speak in order to minimize background noise. Keep distractions (such as phones) out of sight in order to minimize distractions. Pet sightings are highly encouraged.

Accommodations

Students requesting accommodation will need to provide appropriate documentation of: (1) a disability, which is a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; and (2) a need for accommodation, by virtue of the specific functional limitations of the disability, to have equal access to educational opportunities. It is the responsibility of a student with a physical or mental disability who may require any type of accommodation to make the accommodation request in a timely manner. In order to ensure sufficient time for the eligibility and accommodation decision process and to make arrangements for appropriate

accommodations, a student should contact the Title IX Coordinator and Director of Disability Resources, Elrod Commons 212, Washington and Lee University, Lexington, Virginia 24450, (540) 458-4055 and submit the documents required for consideration of disability accommodations during the first month of the fall or winter academic terms. Requests submitted after the first month of either of those academic terms, or requests submitted with incomplete documentation (including insufficient testing data), could result in a delay of consideration and action on the request until the the following academic term. The student will need to complete a "Request for Accommodation of Disability" form, obtain a copy of the most recent medical or cognitive testing documentation, and schedule an interview with the designated administrator.

Honor system and plagiarism

Students will be held to the standards of the W&L Honor System. The inclusion of your name on all assignments indicates that you have understood and abided by the pledge, whether you write the pledge or not. Plagiarism is a serious offense. It is imperative that you review the university's statement on plagiarism before turning in any assignments: <https://libguides.wlu.edu/plagiarism> and <https://www.wlu.edu/writing-program/citation-documentation-and-plagiarism>

Plagiarism consists of but is not limited to the following: presenting another person's ideas or language as if they were your own, copying (words AND ideas) from the Internet, and failure to acknowledge and properly cite the sources of the language and/or ideas presented. Re-using language from a paper you have previously written for another class is unacceptable. If you are unsure about what constitutes plagiarism, please check in with me ahead of time. It is your responsibility to be aware. You may find this plagiarism test useful: <https://www.indiana.edu/~istd/test.html>. Another test you can take is to e-mail me a photograph of your pet(s) (or a random animal) so that I know you've read this syllabus carefully.

Writing resources

The Writing Center on campus is not a tool for remedial purposes, but a crucial resource for writers across every skill and background. Good writing relies on feedback from other perspectives; I encourage you to visit the Center frequently in order to solicit feedback and improve your writing. **The Writing Center will be operating entirely online due to the pandemic.** <https://www.wlu.edu/writing-program/writing-center>

The Writing Program website (<http://www.wlu.edu/writing-program>) offers a good list of resources for your essays. Use right hand side menu/tabs for:

Resources: <https://www.wlu.edu/writing-program/resources>

Specific Types of Writing: <https://www.wlu.edu/writing-program/specific-types-of-writing>

Writing in Different Disciplines: <https://www.wlu.edu/writing-program/writing-in-different-disciplines>

International Students: <https://www.wlu.edu/writing-program/international-students>

Schedule	Topic	Reading	Assignment
Week 1 Jan 20-22	Introduction	1. Mark Bekoff, "In These Horrific Times, Why Do You Work for Animals?" in <i>Psychology Today</i> 2. Craig Santos Perez, "We Aren't The Only Species" 3. Hal Herzog, "Introduction" from <i>Some We Love, Some We Hate, Some We Eat</i>	Flipgrid video response due Mon 25
Week 2 Jan 25-29	Diagnostic writing; A bird's eye view	Ted Chiang, "The Great Silence," in <i>Electric Literature</i>	Diagnostic writing assignment and self-assessment due Fri
Week 3 Feb 1-5	Close reading; What animals teach us about ourselves	Linda Hogan, "Ancient Root," in <i>Emergence Magazine</i>	Essay #1 draft due Fri
Week 4 Feb 8-12	Conferences for Essay #1	None	Read comments on essay prior to your conference
Week 5 Feb 15-19	Audience and ethics of eating	David Foster Wallace, "Consider the Lobster," in <i>Gourmet</i>	Revised essay #1 due Wed
Week 6 Feb 22-26	Anthropocentrism and the environment	1. CJ Hauser, "The Crane Wife," in <i>The Paris Review</i> 2. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson, "A love story for the coral reef crisis" <i>TED Talk</i>	Midterm self-assessment due Fri
Week 7 Mar 1-5	No class	No class	No class
Week 8 Mar 8-12	Compare/contrast; Dogs and racism	1. Joshunda Sanders, "Healing Fraught History of African Americans and Dogs," in <i>Bark</i> , 2. Ahmed Tharwat "The great Arab-Muslim- American dog story," in <i>Slate</i>	Essay #2 draft due Wed
Week 9 Mar 15-19	Veganism and race	1. Aph and Syl Ko, "We've Reclaimed Blackness Now It's Time to Reclaim the Animal" from <i>Aphro-ism</i>	Revised essay #2 due Fri
Week 10 Mar 22-26	Race, culture, and the animals we eat	1. Jenny G. Zhang, "Pinning Coronavirus on How Chinese People Eat Plays Into Racist Assumptions" in <i>Eater</i> , 2. Soleil Ho, "Do You Eat Dog?" in <i>Taste Magazine</i> , 3. Why These Animals?" <i>Gastropod</i> podcast episode	Search strategies exercise
Week 11 Mar 29-April 2	Animal liberation and capitalism	<i>Okja</i> (dir. Bong Joon-ho); stream on Netflix	Essay 3 proposal due

Week 12 April 5-9	Conclusion	None	Essay #3 draft due Fri. Revision due next week, along with final self-assessment
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