

Animals and the Moral Landscape

PLDV 210g Fall 1995

VKC 100

Tuesday/Thursday, 9:30-11:00 p.m.

David C. Sloane, Instructor
Tina West, Teaching Assistant

Description

Animals play an integral part in our everyday lives. We kill and eat animals; we wear their skins; we hurt and kill them to learn about dangers to our health; we cherish them as pets; we cage them for our education; and we race them for sport. In each activity, humans make certain assumptions about animals and their place in the moral landscape. Each activity is at center an ethical decision, even if it is made implicitly. Our goal in this class is to unmask and confront the ethical issues surrounding humans relations with other animals.

The course will center on five ethical dilemmas: 1). The use of animals for food and clothing; 2). the use of animals as pets; 3) the use of animals in medical research; 4) the balance between human expansion and animal rights to independent living spaces; 5). the rights or obligations humans have in their political actions in defense of animals.

Human attitudes toward other animals have changed dramatically over the last two hundred years. We shall begin by exploring the manner of that change and the philosophical and cultural bases for it. We will use a series of short philosophical, political, social, and personal writings, along with the "bible" of the animal rights movement, Peter Singer's Animal Liberation.

Readings

Readings will be assigned in as readable chunks as possible since I need you to be able to discuss the assigned material for the day it is assigned.

Texts

Regan, Tom., and Singer, Peter. (R/S) Animal Rights and Human Obligations (1989)

Thomas, Elizabeth Marshall. (EMT) The Hidden Life of Dogs (1993)

Singer, P. (PS) Animal Liberation: A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals (1990).

Reader:

Serpell, James. In the Company of Animals (1986)

Olson, Steve. Shaping the Future: Biology and Human Values (1989)

Leopold, Aldo. A Sand County Almanac (1949)

Assorted articles on gnatcatcher controversy.

Suggested Readings

Adams, Carol J. Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory (1990)

Griffin, Donald R. Animal Minds (1992)

Hargrove, Eugene C. "Animal Welfare Ethics 'versus' Environmental Ethics: The Problem of Sentient Life," in Hargroves, ed., The Animal Rights/Environmental Ethics Debate: The Environmental Perspective (1992)

Nash, Roderick. The Rights of Nature: A History of Environmental Ethics (1989)

Taylor, Bob. Our Limits Transgressed: Environmental Political Thought (1992)

Movies

Planet of the Apes

Unnecessary Fuss (PETA Video)

Koko, The Talking Gorilla

101 Dalmations

Breaking Barriers (PETA Video)

Hope and A Question of Safety

Expectations

Appropriate Language is essential in writing and participation.

Your writing will be evaluated on the basis of content and style, as expected in a General Education class. Proper spelling, grammar, and style are important. Your argument will always be more persuasive if it is elegantly and effectively presented.

Please ensure that your work is free of gender bias. Avoid "mankind," "Man," and "man-made," when discussing all of humanity. Many authors freely use "man" to signify the entire human race. I believe such a characterization is outdated and unnecessary; human is a perfectly acceptable word which encompasses both genders. Other gender bias is as simple to correct: Instead of "If an experimenter uses an animal, he will help humanity", write, "If experimenters use animals, they will help humanity."

Class Attendance and Participation is mandatory.

Class participation is not decided by the quantity of remarks, but by demonstrating an interest in the course material, and by helping other students better understand it.

Debates: Every class member will be assigned to a debate team. Each of the four debates will have two groups presenting as persuasive as possible a moral argument for their position. I encourage imaginative presentation of the material in an innovative and accessible manner.

Debaters are expected

- a. to research their side of the moral issue
- b. to present their moral argument in an innovative and imaginative manner
- c. to work with the teaching assistant to ensure that the group has done adequate research and has made appropriate plans to engage the class in the issue
- d. to engage other class members in the moral argument.

Other members of the class are expected

- a. to attend each debate
- b. to ask questions of the debaters
- c. to complete a special assignment related to the debate topic.

Debate participants do not have to complete the assignment for their debate.

Grades:

Debate/Short Assignments/Participation, 30%; First paper 10%; Second paper 20%; Third paper 20%; Final 20%. The debate grade will be heavily influence by the teaching assistant's perception of each student's work not only during the debate but also during the planning and research phase prior to the debate.

Each student will purchase a three-ring binder (at 1 inch) to store their completed work. Each new submission will be placed into the binder and handed-in. In this way, we will be able to keep track of chronic writing, organizing and thematic problems for each student. Work will be accepted ONLY if it is in the binder.

Office Hours: Tuesday, 1-3 or by appointment.

My office is in 106 University Gardens, which is located across Figueroa in a courtyard behind the Sizzler and accessible through a door approximately eight feet to the right of the entrance to the Sizzler Restaurant. I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible.

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SCHEDULE OF CLASSES, ASSIGNMENTS, AND READINGS

Historical, Cultural, Scientific, and Philosophical Considerations

Changing Concepts of "Man's" Ethical Relationship to Nature

- August 31 Introduction: Singer's Dilemma
- Sept. 5 Ethics Reader: Olson
- Sept. 7 Pigs, Gnatcatchers, and Dogs: Humans and Animals Reader: Serpell
- Sept. 12 "Man" and "Nature": Ancient to Modern Distinctions R/S: Bible, Aristotle, Descartes, Bentham; PS: 185-212
- Sept. 14 Rights of Nature: Darwin and Ecology R/S: Darwin, Rollin, Rachels PS: 185-212
- Sept. 19 Two Traditions: Humane/Environmental R/S: Schweitzer, Regan PS: 1-23
- Sept. 21 Koko the Talking Gorilla: Language and Rationality R/S: Frey (both)
- Sept. 26 Defining Human, Defining Animal: Planet of the Apes
- Sept. 26 **PAPER ONE DUE**

Animal Experimentation

Animals and Medical Research

- Sept. 28 Animal Testing for Products/Medicine R/S: Gendin, Gallistal, Midgley; PS: 25-94
- Oct. 3 **Debate #1:** Two groups appear before the planning board (i.e., the class) of the city of Palo Alto. One argues that the new animal research facility is a necessary step forward in science; the other that the new building is a death chamber for animals, and science is misleading Americans into supporting their worthless research. R/S: Frey, Linzey
- Class Assignment:** Write a letter to your favorite personal health company
- Oct. 5 New, Alternative Tests, Methods; Making Animals Safer R/S: Frey and Paton
- Oct. 10 Ethical Balance Inside the Lab R/S: Cigman, Regan; PS: 25-94

People and Their Pets

Animals as Companion Animals and Pets

- Oct. 12 Companion Animals or Pets: Does it Matter? "101 Dalmations" (Disney 1961)
- Oct. 17 **Debate #2:** A new development that prohibits pets is set to open. Some local citizens want to move in, but first they must convince the planning board (i.e., the class) that it is ethical to own pets, so they will force the owners to allow pets. They are opposed by those that argue that animals deserve to be free from human ownership.
- Class Assignment:** Visit a pet store, are they ethical? (1-2 pages)
- Oct. 19 Humans and Pets, Historical Relationships EMT: vii-90
- Oct. 24 Thompson's Pets EMT: 91-146
- Oct. 24 **PAPER TWO DUE**
- Oct. 26 Case for and against Pets EMT 91-146

Food and Furs

Animals used as Food, Clothing

Oct. 31 Animal Economy R/S: Curtis, Narveson; PS: 95-158

Nov. 2 Sexual Politics of Meat

Nov. 7 **Debate #3:** A group of friends decides to move into together at school. Some of them ask that the household be vegetarian since it is the only ethical way to live. Other members wonders why eating meat is so bad, arguing that vegetarianism is against nature. Worried they will lose their friendship over this issue, they turn to you (i.e., the class) to judge the ethical merits of their argument.

Class Assignment: Eat as a vegetarian for a day, how did it feel? (1-2 pages)

Nov. 9 Vegetarianism PS: 159-184

Disrupting Development or Endangering Species

Natural Rights, Deep Ecology, and the Future

Nov. 14 Endangered Species Act, 1973 R/S: Ehrlich, Rolston, Kheel, Russow

Nov. 16 **Debate #4:** A party is going strong, when suddenly two groups animatedly start arguing about hunting. One groups suggests that hunting is perfectly natural; the other that humans are exploiting animals immorally. They asked you (i.e., the class) to judge the ethical merits of their arguments.

Class Assignment: Visit a zoo (L.A., San Diego, etc.). Are they ethical? (1-2 pages)

Nov. 21 Do Trees Have Rights? Reader: Leopold

Nov. 23 THANKSGIVING

Nov. 28 Does the Planet Have Ethical Standing?

Nov. 30 **Debate #5:** Your friend's parents have purchased a new home in Moreno Valley. The parents want to add on to the house for their growing family, and have been told that further development is prohibited because of the endangered kanagaroo rat. Your friend, tired of sharing a room with his sibling, complains bitterly that his parents should be free to do what they want with their property. A discussion ensues.

Class Assignment: Visit a restricted or preserved natural habitat. Bring a pamphlet or other material describing the habitat and write one page on your experience? Particularly consider who owned the land prior to its restriction or preservation.

Dec. 5 Gnatcatcher: Victim or Victimizer? Reader: Gnatcatcher

Dec. 7 Liberation Politics: ALF: Who's right? PS: 213-250

Dec. 7 **PAPER THREE DUE**

ALF, Regan, Niemi/Dodds

FINAL: December 14, 11:00-1:00