HUM 4: Animals and Human Culture – Humans and other nonhumans
Summer Session, UC Davis
Instructor: Ted Geier

Animals, particularly at an excellent veterinary and animal science studies campus like UC Davis, are often studied in biology, medicine, economics, agriculture, and other discrete modes with specialized languages all their own. This course aims to account for early articulations of such animal studies from various periods by Aristotle, Linnaeus, and others, and to dispel any myths about scientific divisions being merely a contemporary practical advent. This may not be news to all students, however, and so the course’s abiding focus will be on broadly interdisciplinary humanistic inquiry into not only the place of animals in human culture, but also the essential role played by the relationships between humans and nonhumans in the fundamental concepts and expressions of human (or any other) culture.

To do this, the course will start with what we know of the earliest integration of animals and human society and with the earliest graphic depictions by human beings, which were often of animals on cave walls or early characters written on animal parts like tortoise shells and animal skins. This will establish the foundational relationships between animals and human cultural expression and leads naturally to the study of religious representations and uses of animals, philosophical and literary meditations on human and animal qualities in diverse works from Aesop’s fables to Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, and ultimately even to recent fascinations with a variety of other nonhumans including fungi, aliens, and “posthuman” life forms that stretch the bounds of the human and the animal while also invoking the lengthy cultural history of human-animal relationships.

The course prepares students to consider some of the ways that the articulations of human and nonhuman life forms inflect thinking about humans and animals, together or separately. This will also include some consideration of perspectives on animals in human cultural use, including as pets, as food, as subjects of law, as property, as test subjects, and as patients. Students can expect to gain experience in diverse fields of study including literature, art, philosophy, film, and cultural studies, as well as in select historical and religious studies frames. Occasional secondary readings from recent academic critical studies.

Assignments
1. Weekly short writing assignments (200-300 words) to be posted on our class website and commented on by other students. Further details will be distributed in class.
2. Each student will comment on at least two other posts per week.
3. Two 500+ word critical responses. Students may choose which work they will respond to and the week they will submit these responses, and comparative studies of more than one work are welcomed, but each student must engage at least two different media forms during the term (i.e., one on film, the other on art, etc.). Further details to be available in course resources on the website.
4. Several small in-class collaborative projects throughout the term will help students develop their abilities discussing and writing about Environmental Humanities topics,
communicating to a diverse audience, and working in realistic social and professional settings, producing a set of general skills and aptitudes students can use in future work in any major discipline or future professional role. These will be part of class attendance and participation expectations.

5. Final Exam (includes 500 word written component). Examination will be built in collaboration between instructor and students during the quarter, drawing from important works and concepts at three levels of analysis: 1. form/technique, 2. narrative/theory; 3. theme/value. More information as class progresses.

**Grading Breakdown**
1. Attendance & Participation (20%)
2. Weekly writing/comments (20%)
3. Critical Responses (30%)
4. Final Exam (30%)

**Required Materials**
The majority of works under consideration in the class (art, literature, classical texts) will be available via course SmartSite, under Resources, or online in some other form. Films will be made available for viewing via library reserves, but all are available online through various methods if you have, for example, a Netflix account or Hulu+.

Students will be required to purchase one book: 

**Week 1:** **Humans and other animals, Day One.**
- “The Hall of Bulls,” prehistoric cave art and animals
- Jainism and early Greek philosophies on the animal
- Aristotle, excerpts from “The History of Animals”

**Week 2:** **“Animals are good for thinking with.”**
- Aesop’s animals and the representation of human virtue and social critique
- Tricksters, shamans, and other powerful animals in human culture

**Week 3:** **Return to class. Taxonomy, biological categories, and the trouble with Darwin.**
- Linnaeus, from *Systema Natura* on taxonomy and biological classification
- Darwin, excerpts from *On the Origin of Species*
- Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*

**Week 4:** **Fungi?! Fungi.**
The inscrutable mobility and insidiousness of fungi, closely related to another ancient cultural trope, the viral, challenges taxonomic divisions in ways animals alone may not. Focusing on anthropology and literary studies, this segment considers the mushroom as a critical apparatus of classification and permeation.
- Keats, “Endymion” (selections)
- H.G. Wells, “The Purple Pileus”
- Italo Calvino, “Mushrooms in the City”
- Anna Tsing, “Unruly Edges, Mushrooms as Companion Species”

**Week 5:** Animal rights and animal wrongs: recent expressions of humanimalia.
- Singer, “All Animals are Equal”
- Orwell, *Animal Farm*
- Film: Werner Herzog’s *Grizzly Man*

**Week 6:** After the animal and the posthuman.
- Robot animals, genetic mutations, and building the perfect meat
- How to make your human: microbes and the nonhuman quantity
- Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto”
- Film: *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1978)