

Animals and Politics

Instructor: Ross Mittiga

Office: TBD

Office Hours: TBD

email: rmittiga@virginia.edu

In this course, students will examine a host of theoretical and practical questions concerning animal politics and ethics. Should animals have political standing in human communities? Can animals be said to possess rights? What is the moral relevance of animal suffering and death? Are animals better understood as property or persons, or something else altogether? Is it acceptable to use animals for our research and food? What does it mean to do justice—or injustice—to animals? Our aim will not be to answer these questions once and for all, but to examine the political and ethical frameworks scholars have constructed for approaching them.

1. Course Materials

Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* [abbreviated as AL]

Tom L. Beauchamp and R.G. Frey (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Animal Ethics* [abbreviated as OH]

Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights* [abbreviated as ZP]

Robert Garner, *A Theory of Justice for Animals: Animal Rights in a Nonideal World* [abbreviated as TJA]

J.M. Coetzee et al., *The Lives of Animals*

All other materials, marked with an asterisk (*), will be made available online

2. Rules and Requirements

Attendance

Attendance at all classes and sections is a requirement of the course. Persistent unexplained absences constitute grounds for failing the class, regardless performance in other course requirements.

Participation

The more students actively participate in class discussion, the better. I encourage questions and discussion during all meetings. Participation will count in my assessment of your final grade.

Laptops and portable electronic devices

Texting, browsing, emailing, etc., during class are distracting to you and others, and so I respectfully ask that all laptops, phones, and other electronic devices be switched off and stowed away during

class. Students are likely to retain more of the information covered in class if they take handwritten notes, so I encourage bringing a notebook and pen.

Readings/Viewings

Students are expected to complete the reading and viewing assignments in accordance with the schedule. If you have trouble understanding what you have read or watched, don't be shy about visiting office hours for help. Learning to navigate through complex material is one of the most valuable skills a college degree can impart and I am happy to offer pointers on how best to develop that skill.

Academic Integrity

Students must comply with all provisions of the UVa Honor Code. Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are surprisingly easy to detect and very easy to avoid. Collaboration on tests and quizzes is strictly forbidden.

3. Grading Policies

Grade breakdown

- Participation = 10%
- Quizzes = 25%
- Segment Tests = 50% (12.5% each)
- Final Paper on Part 6 = 15%

Late work

Requests for extensions must be received in writing, by email, at least one week prior to the deadline. No extensions will be granted after that date. To request an extension, please send an email to me. Outside of approved extensions, late work will be penalized at a rate of a third of a grade per 24-hour period. These penalties may be waived in cases of documented emergency. NB: Loss of data (e.g., due to computer problems) will *not* count as an emergency. It is your responsibility to ensure that your work is backed up.

Grading procedures

Every effort will be made to return graded assignments within one week of submission. Students who wish to query their grades can submit a written grade appeal beginning five days after the assignment is returned. Students should understand, however, that grades may be adjusted up or down upon review.

Grade explanation

Here is a rough guide to interpreting the grades assigned to work in the class:

- A grade of A, in any flavor, signifies (varying degrees of) excellence: to earn a grade in this region, students must show genuine insight into (as opposed to a basic grasp of) the material, and successfully develop cogent, convincing and original responses to it.

- A grade of B+ signifies superior command of the course material: to earn it, students must show a good understanding of the leading arguments covered in the course, and demonstrate the ability to assess them critically on their own terms without necessarily achieving responses to them that are fully cogent or convincing.
- A grade of B signifies good performance: students receiving this grade will have shown a firm understanding of the course material and made plausible, if not fully developed, critical responses to it.
- A grade of B- indicates solid performance: B- work shows a decent basic understanding of the leading ideas covered in the course nonetheless marred by (e.g.) unclear or vague writing, omissions of relevant ideas, ambiguous formulations, conceptual muddle, or unsophisticated argumentation.
- C grades indicate performance of mixed quality: in work receiving C grades competence, understanding and insight will sit alongside error, misunderstanding, cliché, simplification and confusion.
- A grade of D, in any flavor, indicates work that is in some respect (and in varying degrees) radically inadequate: such grades are symptoms of (e.g.) unfamiliarity with, failure to understand, or half-hearted engagement with, the course materials.

4. Schedule

Part 1: Speciesism and the Political Standing of Nonhuman Animals

Tim Flannery, “The Amazing Inner Lives of Animals” in *The New York Review of Books*
 Singer, Chapter 1, 5, and 6 in AL

*Bernard Williams, “The Human Prejudice”

David Copp, “Animals, Fundamental Moral Standing, and Speciesism” in OH

David Schmidtz, “Are All Species Equal?” in OH

Part 2: Animal Suffering and Death

*Peter Singer, “What’s Wrong With Killing?” in *Practical Ethics*

*Cora Diamond, “Eating Animals, Eating People”

*Robert Nozick, “Animals and Constraints” in *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*

Elizabeth Harman, “The Moral Significance of Animal Pain and Animal Death” in OH

Part 3: Animal Rights

*Alasdair Cochrane, *Animal Rights Without Liberation: Applied Ethics and Human Obligations* (selections)
 Donaldson and Kymlicka, Chapters 2 (“Universal Basic Rights for Animals”) and 3 (“Extending Animal Rights via Citizenship Theory”) in ZP

Tom Beauchamp, “Rights Theory and Animal Rights” in OH

Martha Nussbaum, “The Capabilities Approach and Animal Entitlements” in OH

Will Kymlicka, “Animal Rights, Multiculturalism, and The Left” (lecture version available at

<https://youtu.be/GsIf6xJ0Vuw>

Part 4: Justice for Animals

Robert Garner, Chapters 2 (“Contractarianism, Animals and Justice”), 3 (“Why Animals Need Justice”), and 6 (“Animal Rights and Justice”) in TJA

*Donald VanDeVeer, “Of Beasts, Persons, and The Original Position”

*Christine Korsgaard, “Facing the Animal You See in the Mirror”

Part 5: Slavery, Atrocity, and Animals

J.M. Coetzee et al., *The Lives of Animals* [selections, TBD]

Marjorie Spiegel, *The Dreaded Comparison* [selections, TBD]

*Charles Patterson, “The Industrialization of Slaughter” from *Eternal Treblinka*

Part 6: Practical Politics and the Animal Question

Persons, Property, or Something Else?

Sarah Chan and John Harris, “Human Animals and Nonhuman Persons” in OH

Michael Tooley, “Are Nonhuman Animals Persons?” in OH

*Kimberly K. Smith, “Property” in *Governing Animals: Animal Welfare and the Liberal State*

Donaldson and Kymlicka, Chapters 5 (“Domesticated Animal Citizens”) in ZP

Agriculture, Factory Farming, and Animals

*Singer, “Open the Cages!” in *The New York Review of Books*

Singer, Chapter 3 of AL

*Steven Davis, “The Least Harm Principle”

Robert Streiffer and John Basl, “Ethical Issues in the Application of Biotechnology to Animals in Agriculture” in OH

Cowspiracy [documentary]

Food, Inc. [documentary]

Experimenting on Animals

*Carl Cohen, “The Case for the Use of Animals in Biomedical Research”

Hugh LaFollette, “Animal Experimentation in Biomedical Research” in OH

Julian Savulescu, “Genetically Modified Animals: Should There Be Limits to Engineering the Animal Kingdom?” in OH

Jeffrey Kahn, “What’s Ethics Got to Do with it?: The Roles of Government Regulation in Research-Animal Protection” in OH

Keeping and Caging Animals

Hilary Bok, “Keeping Pets” in OH

Donaldson and Kymlicka, Chapter 4 (“Domesticated Animals within Animal Rights Theory”) in ZP

*Dale Jamieson, “Against Zoos”

David DeGrazia, “The Ethics of Confining Animals” in OH

Blackfish [documentary]

5. Assignments

Tests

- Conducted at the end of Parts 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5
- 5 questions long (responses should not exceed 350 words each)
- Only top 4 (out of 5) count

Quizzes

- Conducted at random, but at least once a week
- 2-3 questions long (responses should be approximately 3-5 sentences each)
- Graded on a scale of 1-10
- Only the top 10 (out of 15) count

Part 6 Paper

- Select one of the modules to focus on (e.g., “*Persons, Property, or Something Else?*” or “*Experimenting on Animals?*”)
- Write a paper 2,500 to 3,000 words in length, structured as follows:
 - Introduce a claim relevant to that module that you propose to defend (e.g., “It is right/wrong to experiment on animals under ‘x’ conditions”)
 - Three to four paragraphs outlining some of the strongest reasons to reject the view you intend to defend pulling on the literature covered in that module
 - Three to four paragraphs attempting to rebut those objections pulling on the literature covered in that module
 - Conclude the paper by explaining whether or not you still accept the view you have defended. If so, explain why; if not, why not.
- A strong paper will engage deeply with the relevant literature, and offer sophisticated and thoughtful argumentation.