

ANIMAL HISTORY

Spring 2015: History 4260-001
W 3:30-6:20
Wooten Hall 110
University of North Texas

Professor Michael Wise

Office: Wooten Hall 259

Hours: T 2-4

or by appt.

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"I'll Write When I Can." Peter Beard, 1965.

Course Description:

As a discipline, history is normally associated with human action and decision-making. This course takes a different approach by studying how nonhuman animals also create what we call history. The course asks two main questions: how do animals affect historical transformations? And how do animals shape what historians write about the past?

History, as we know it today, developed as a discipline during the late-nineteenth century. Professional historians adopted a rigorous methodology of analyzing and interpreting written records left by human voices as a means of peering into the structures and contingencies of past societies. In the last fifty years, historians have begun to discover the limitations of this archival method. Social historians have searched for supplemental modes in which to tell the stories of people who left no written records. Cultural historians, particularly specialists on topics like gender and sexuality, have had to pioneer new analytical frameworks for interpreting unrecorded acts and practices. Environmental historians have demonstrated the need to situate history within broader changes in the material worlds that people inhabit.

Animal history draws on insights from these (and other) subfields of history to suggest that humans are probably just one of many species of historical authors. By paying close attention to the changing relationships between humans and other animals, historians have developed innovative histories of colonization, capitalism, globalization, and other significant transformations of the modern world. They have also encouraged a more open-minded, interdisciplinary, and agile use of historical evidence, pushing for a critical reflection of history's disciplinary relationships with normative discourses of humanity and animality. What counts for a human or an animal has changed over time, and historians are themselves partly responsible for creating and concealing those changes.

This course has three main goals: for students to develop an understanding of the emerging field of animal history; to more firmly analyze how nonhuman actors have shaped historical transformations; and to more clearly interpret how ideas of animal-human difference have affected past, current, and potential changes in social, political, environmental, and cultural relationships. Students will learn about animal history by practicing it themselves throughout individual semester-long research projects. Because of its comparative approach, this course provides credit for history major groups A, B or C. History majors are encouraged—but not required—to select a research topic relevant to the group in which they are seeking credit.

Required Books:

Gregg Mitman, *Reel Nature: America's Romance with Wildlife on Film* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009 [1999]).

Noëllie Vialles, *Animal to Edible*, trans. J.A. Underwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

Rane Willerslev, *Soul Hunters: Hunting, Animism, and Personhood Among the Siberian Yukaghirs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

Grading Criteria:

Tracking Assignment:	5%
Exams (2):	30%
Participation:	15%
<u>Animal History Mini-Conference:</u>	<u>50%</u>
Research Proposal:	5%
Conference Presentation:	15%
Research Paper (8-12 pages):	30%

Blackboard:

Electronic course materials will be available as PDF files on the Blackboard website.

Assignments:Tracking Assignment (5%):

How can we write the history of an animal? What evidence do animals leave us as clues to their past movements, decisions, and effects on the world around us? This assignment asks you to make an initial foray into these large questions by finding an individual animal, observing it, and then considering how you might write its history given more time and resources. Detailed information will be distributed in class on January 21st.

Exams (30%):

There will be two in-class exams on 2/25 and 4/22. One week in advance, I will (likely) make study guides available in class.

Participation (15%):

Your “participation grade” is based on my vague, composite recollection of whether or not you came to class, did the readings, and sought to make honest and intelligent contributions to class discussions.

Research Project (50%):

A major mission of this course is for students to learn how to approach animal history (and history in general) not only as a body of knowledge, but also as a practice. In keeping with this goal, students will research and write their own animal histories based on primary and secondary sources. This project will have three components: a proposal, a mini-conference presentation, and a final paper (approximately 8 to 12 pages). We will work step-by-step in developing each of

these elements, and all students are encouraged to meet with me in advance to discuss their ideas and their progress.

The goal is to try your own hand as an animal historian in developing, writing, and presenting a short original research paper on a topic of your choice. You are expected to draw from our class discussions of what constitutes animal history and its methodologies in conceiving of your research study. You will be expected to ground your paper in the analysis of specific sources of historical evidence.

Presentations will take the format of six mini-conference panels. Each panel will be comprised of four to five students with similar research topics. During the research proposal process, students will be responsible for organizing themselves into these conference panels. I will distribute detailed information on the research project in class on February 4th. Proposals will be due on March 11th. We will spend one hour that day organizing conference panels.

Course Policies:

Attendance

Students are expected to attend all class sessions and to complete reading assignments before class.

Late Assignments

In order to be fair for all students, late assignments can only be accepted in the case of an emergency that conforms to official university policy.

University Policy Statements:

Disability Statement

Any student with special circumstances covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act should register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA), Suite 322, University Union Building (phone 940-565-4323). Students who have registered with ODA should also make an appointment to discuss disabilities accommodation requests with the instructor of this course during the first week of class. Reasonable adjustments will be made to accommodate the special needs of students with disabilities where such adjustments are necessary to provide equality of educational access.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is defined in the UNT Policy on Student Standards for Academic Integrity. Any suspected case of Academic dishonesty will be handled in accordance with the University Policy and procedures. Possible academic penalties range from a verbal or written admonition to a grade of "F" in the course. Further sanctions may apply to incidents involving major violations. The official policy and procedure are located online at: <http://vpaa.unt.edu/academic-integrity.htm>.

Course Schedule

Week 1

W: Jan 21

Course Introduction: What is Animal History? What is an Animal?

Week 2

W: Jan 28

The Politics of Tracking Animals

READ:

*Benson, *Wired Wilderness*, excerpts

*Linda Nash, "The Agency of Nature or the Nature of Agency?"

*Harriet Ritvo, "On the Animal Turn"

DUE:

Animal Tracking Assignment (be prepared to share findings)

Week 3

W: Feb 4

The Hunting Hypothesis

READ:

*Robert Ardrey, *The Hunting Hypothesis*, excerpts

*C. Loring Brace, review of Ardrey in *American Anthropologist*

*Matthew Cartmill, *A View to a Death in the Morning*, excerpts

Research Project discussion

Week 4

W: Feb. 11

Man-Eaters

READ:

*British Cyclopedia, "Crocodiles," ~1835

*Valerie Plumwood, "Being Prey"

*Graham and Beard, *Eyelids of Morning*, excerpts

*Quammen, *Monster of God*, excerpts

Film: Werner Herzog, *Grizzly Man* (2005)

Week 5

W: Feb. 18

Killing and Conservation

READ:

*Brett Walker, "Meiji Modernization, Scientific Agriculture, and the Destruction of Japan's Hokkaido Wolf"

*Hank Fischer, *Wolf Wars: The Remarkable Inside Story of the Restoration of Wolves to Yellowstone*, excerpts

*Wise, "Killing Montana's Wolves"

Week 6

W: Feb. 25

EXAM #1

Week 7

W: March 4

Zoos, Menageries, and Display

READ:

*Brechin, "Conserving the Race"

*Hornaday, *Our Vanishing Wildlife* (1913), excerpts

*Benson, "Paparazzi in the Woods," 2010.

Mitman, *Reel Nature*, 1-25.

Film: Don Maier, *Wild Kingdom* (1963)

Week 8

W: March 11

The Priceless Pet

READ:

Mitman, 85-131.

*Jones, *Valuing Animals*, 115-154.

*Kete, *The Beast in the Boudoir*, excerpts

*Cameron, "The Wolf in Montana," 1912.

*Tuan, *Dominance and Affection*, excerpts

SPRING BREAK

Week 9

W: March 25 **Meat's Modern Histories**

READ:

Vialles, *Animal to Edible*, 3-134

*William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, excerpts

Film: George Franju, *Les Sang des Bêtes* (1949)

Week 10

W: April 1

Postmodern Domestication

READ:

Mitman, 132-208.

*Michael Taussig, review of *Cane Toads*

Film: Mark Lewis, *Cane Toads: An Unnatural History* (1988)

April 2-4: "Moral Cultures of Food, Past and Present" Conference at UNT
extra credit available

Week 11

W: April 8

Taking Animism Seriously

READ:

Willerslev, *Soul Hunters*, ALL.

(Please note that this is a very difficult book. Do your best and don't get bogged down. I will clarify things in class!)

Week 12

W: April 15 **EXAM #2**

Week 13

M: April 15 *Conference Panels TBD*

Week 14

M: April 22 *Conference Panels TBD*

Week 15

M: April 29 *Conference Panels TBD*

Finals Week

DUE: Final Research Papers