

ANIMAL HISTORIES

Fall 2017

History 4261-004
Wooten Hall 319
MWF 11:00-11:50 AM

Professor Michael Wise

Office: Wooten Hall 259
Hours: W 1:00-4:50 PM

E-mail: michael.wise@unt.edu



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

Course Description and Objectives:

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 three main questions: how have people understood the difference between human and "animal" over time? 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 write five short essays, one short research paper, and deliver one five-minute research presentation to the class.

Required Texts:

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

Noëlie 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 (2-3 pages):	5%
Critical Film Reviews (3-5 pages), 2 @15% each	30%
Pet-keeping Historical Essay	15%
Meat Historical Essay	15%

Subtotal: 65%

Animal History Mini-Conference Research Project: 35%

Research Proposal:	5%
Conference Presentation:	10%
Research Paper (5-7 pages):	20%

100%

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 the first day, Monday, August 28th.

Essays (60%):

Each student will write four, 3-5-page, double-spaced essays. The first two essays will be critical film reviews that engage with course readings, discussions, and lectures.

The first of these will be a response to one episode of the British television show, *Black Mirror*, titled, "Fifteen Million Merits," which we will watch in class. Students will be expected to put this film into critical conversation with the intellectual positions on the histories and futures of animal-human relationships that we will have studied in class to that point, including those of Giorgio Agamben, Aristotle, Michel Foucault, and Karl Marx. It will be due in class on Monday, September 18th.

The second critical review will consider the Werner Herzog film, *Grizzly Man*. Students will be expected to consider this film in light of their early reading of Gregg Mitman's book, *Reel Nature: America's Romance with Wildlife on Film*, as well as our course's contemporaneous unit on "predation and conservation." This essay will be due in class on Monday, October 9th.

The third essay will focus on the history of pet-keeping in America. It will ask students to answer the following questions: Why do Americans "love pets?" What does it mean to "love pets?" How have the stakes and practices of American pet-keeping changed over the last two centuries? The deadline for this essay is Friday, October 20th.

The fourth essay assignment asks students to consider the relationship between animal history and present-day American food cultures. What can the historical study of animal-human relationships contribute to our popular conversations about Americans' food habits and food choices today? This essay will be due on November 17th, the Friday before "Turkey Day."

Animal History Mini-Conference (35%):

One 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 5 to 7 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 primary and secondary sources and other fragments of historical evidence.

Presentations will take the format of five mini-conference panels during the last two weeks of class. 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 during two workshops. The first workshop is scheduled for October 13th, and the second for November 17th. Final papers will be due, by email, at the end of our scheduled final exam window: 12:30 pm on Monday, December 11th.

Accessibility:

This course is committed to accessibility. If you need certain accommodations, please notify me (Michael Wise) in person as soon as possible. If it is not possible to discuss accommodations in person, for whatever reason, then please email me at michael.wise@unt.edu or call me at (940) 891-6774.

Blackboard Website:

Grades and digitized course materials, including all assigned readings, will be available on Blackboard. Please note, however, that this is not an online course, and that changes to the syllabus and other important information may not always be available on Blackboard.

Attendance and Late Work:

Attendance is mandatory. Students are expected to attend all class sessions. *More than three absences will result in an "F."* The only exceptions to this rule are if absences are arranged *in advance*, or if they conform to emergency situations documented in official University of North Texas policies.

Other than in exceptional cases meeting the parameters of university policy, late work will *not* be accepted unless *arranged in advance*.

PART ONE: CULTURE, POLITICS, AND THE HISTORY OF ANIMAL-HUMAN DIFFERENCE

WEEK ONE

Monday, August 28, 2017

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

Read: *no reading*

Wednesday, August 30, 2017

The Anthropological Machine

"Homo sapiens, then, is neither a clearly defined species nor a substance; it is, rather, a machine or device for producing the recognition of the human."

Read:

*Giorgio Agamben, "7. Taxonomies," and "16. Animalization," from *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. Kevin Attell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004): 23-27; 75-77.

Friday, September 1, 2017

The Political Animal

"That man is more of a political animal than bees or any other gregarious animals is evident. Nature, as we often say, makes nothing in vain, and man is the only animal whom she has endowed with the gift of speech. And whereas mere voice is but an indication of pleasure or pain, and is therefore found in other animals, the power of speech is intended to set forth the expedient and inexpedient, and therefore likewise the just and the unjust."

Read:

*Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 1, trans. Benjamin Jowett
(<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/politics.1.one.html>).

WEEK TWO

Monday, September 4, 2017
No Class (Labor Day)

Wednesday, September 6, 2017

The Biopolitical Animal

"If genocide is indeed the dream of modern powers, this is not because of a recent return of the ancient right to kill; it is because power is situated and exercised at the level of life, the species, the race, and the large-scale phenomena of population... One might say that the ancient right to take life or let live was replaced by a power to foster life or disallow it to the point of death."

Read:

* Michel Foucault, "The Right of Death and Power over Life," from *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1978): 133-145.

Friday, September 8, 2017

Tracking Animals

Read: *no reading*

Due: Animal Tracking Assignment (be prepared to share and discuss findings)

Extra Credit Opportunity:

Department of Biological Sciences Seminar Series, 3:00-4:00 PM: Michael D. Wise, "Beasts of Bounty: Wolf Eradication in Montana and the Uncertain Distinction between Predator and Producer," Location TBD.

WEEK THREE

Monday, September 11, 2017

The Political Economy of Animal-Human Difference

"Man no longer feels himself to be freely active in any but his animal functions—eating, drinking, procreating... what is animal becomes human and what is human becomes animal."

Read:

*Karl Marx, "What, then, constitutes the alienation of labor?" from *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, Second Edition, trans. and ed. Richard Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978), 74-81.

Film (in-class):

Charlie Brooker and Konnie Huq, "Fifteen Million Merits," an episode of *Black Mirror* (2011).

Wednesday, September 13, 2017

The Species-Being

Read: *no reading*

Film (in-class):

Finish and discuss "Fifteen Million Merits."

Friday, September 15, 2017

No Class (use time to work on critical review of "Fifteen Million Merits.")

**PART TWO:
PREDATION AND CONSERVATION**

WEEK FOUR

Monday, September 18, 2017

The Hunting Hypothesis

"Man is man, and not a chimpanzee, because for millions upon millions of years we killed for a living."

Read:

*Robert Ardrey, *The Hunting Hypothesis: A Personal Conclusion Regarding the Evolutionary Nature of Man* (New York: Atheneum, 1976), 7-15.

*C. Loring Brace, review of *The Hunting Hypothesis* by Robert Ardrey, *American Anthropologist* 80 (1978): 172-173.

Due:

Critical Review of "Fifteen Million Merits."

Wednesday, September 20, 2017

Man-Eaters

"Few of those who have experienced the crocodile's death roll have lived to describe it."

Read:

*Valerie Plumwood, "Surviving a Crocodile Attack," *Utne Reader*, July-August 2000.

Friday, September 22, 2017

Extermination

"In the new order, Hokkaido's wolves were to be sacrificed, their dead faces grimaced and their bodies strewn around poisoned horse carcasses."

Read:

*Brett L. Walker, "Meiji Modernization, Scientific Agriculture, and the Destruction of Japan's Hokkaido Wolf," *Environmental History* 9:2 (April 2004): 248-274.

WEEK FIVE

Monday, September 25, 2017

Class and Conservation

"My father did not believe it was right to catch fish for sport, but for food only. And the right method for fishing was with a net that would take only larger fish... A fish as well as a man has a sense of feeling and suffers after being hooked, and the longer this period of torture can be extended, the more fun the so-called "sportsman" can get out of it."

Read:

*Karl Jacoby, "Class and Environmental History: Lessons from 'The War in the Adirondacks,'" *Environmental History* 2:3 (July 1997): 324-342.

Wednesday, September 27, 2017

Racism and Conservation in the Progressive Era

"No white man calling himself a sportsman ever indulges in such low pastimes as the killing of such birds for food. That burden of disgrace rests upon the negroes and poor whites of the South."

Read:

*William T. Hornaday, "Destruction of Song Birds by Southern Negroes and Poor Whites," in *Our Vanishing Wildlife: Its Extermination and Preservation* (New York: Scribner's, 1913).

Friday, September 29, 2017

Misanthropies of Conservation in the Postwar Era

"Leopold attributed World War II and other human conflicts to overpopulation. He asserted that societies had developed ethics to overcome the 'laws of intrahuman predation' but that these ethical restraints broke down as populations surged... 'Are we like the lemming, the quail, or deer in our response to overpopulation?'"

Read:

*Miles A. Powell, "'Pestered with Inhabitants': Aldo Leopold, William Vogt, and More Trouble with Wilderness," *Pacific Historical Review* 84:2 (2015): 195-226.

WEEK SIX

Monday, October 2, 2017

"The World of the Bears"

Read: *no reading*

Due: Research Proposal

Film (in-class): Werner Herzog, *Grizzly Man* (2005).

Wednesday, October 4, 2017

Nature and Narcissism

"The popularity of animal behavior as a science in the postwar years was itself due in part to what nature film and television revealed about human behavior in a period when topics regarding marriage, home, and parenting were at the forefront of public interest."

Read:

Gregg Mitman, *Reel Nature: America's Romance with Wildlife on Film* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009 [1999]), 1-25.

Film (in-class): Continue *Grizzly Man*.

Friday, October 6, 2017

Red in Tooth and Claw

"It is not a very hard thing to go into the wilderness and kill an elephant... it is a very hard thing to go off and get photographs of them."

Read:

Mitman, *Reel Nature*, 26-84.

Film (in-class): Finish and discuss *Grizzly Man*.

**PART THREE:
DISPLAY AND COMPANIONSHIP**

WEEK SEVEN

Monday, October 9, 2017

Parks, Zoos, Menageries, Museums

"Should we not try to do the best we can to preserve what remains in a civilization that has let go all holds and has turned neurotic?"

Read:

Mitman, 85-131.

Due:

Critical Review of *Grizzly Man*.

Wednesday, October 11, 2017

The Television Animal

"The task of the photographer was 'to find each animal's eccentricity and to somehow exploit it and incorporate the individualism into the story.'"

Read:

Mitman, 132-208.

Film (in-class): Don Maier, *Wild Kingdom* (1963).

Friday, October 13, 2017

Research Workshop #1

Read: *no reading*

Due:

Research proposal

WEEK EIGHT

Monday, October 16, 2017

The Priceless Pet

"People owned dogs, they said, because dogs were faithful and people were not. As one theorist commented, 'this fidelity, so rare in any epoch, and still more so in our own,' was increasingly difficult to actualize in modern times. Dogs were appealing because 'one is delighted to meet in the beast that laudable conduct that is so rarely engendered within the human species itself.'"

Read:

*Kathleen Kete, "The Notion of Fidelity in a Bourgeois World," in *The Beast in the Boudoir: Petkeeping in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 22-38.

Wednesday, October 18, 2017

Becoming-With

"What happens when the undead but always generative commodity becomes the living, breathing, rights-endowed, doggish bit of property sleeping on my bed, or giving cheek swabs for your genome project, or getting a computer-readable ID chip injected under the neck skin before the local dog shelter lets my neighbor adopt her new family member?"

Read:

*Donna Haraway, "Value-Added Dogs and Lively Capital," in *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 45-67.

Friday, October 20, 2017

Dominance and Affection

"Pets exist for human pleasure and convenience. Fond as owners are of their animals, they do not hesitate to get rid of them when they prove inconvenient."

Read:

*Yi-Fu Tuan, "Animal Pets: Cruelty and Affection," in *Dominance and Affection: The Making of Pets* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

Due:

Historical essay (3-5 pages)

Why do Americans "love pets?" What does it mean to "love pets?" How have the stakes and practices of American pet-keeping changed over the last two centuries?

**PART FOUR:
SLAUGHTER AND PERSONHOOD**

WEEK NINE

Monday, October 23, 2017

Meat's Modern Histories

"Meat in America is supposed to be a faceless substance, a food lacking eyes to stare back at its swallower... But the personhood of animals has also long penetrated the core of America's pastoral mythologies, so a series of tensions about the morality of eating animals have persistently shaped American foodways from the colonial era to the present."

Read:

*Michael D. Wise, "Meat," in *The Routledge History of American Foodways*, eds. Michael D. Wise and Jennifer Jensen Wallach (New York: Routledge, 2016): 97-112.

Wednesday, October 25, 2017

The Craft of Disassembly

"The animal is vegetalized, as it were, the slaughterer becomes a woodcutter, and blood is almostedulcorated into sap."

Read:

Noelie Vialles, *Animal to Edible*, trans. J.A. Underwood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 3-32.

Friday, October 27, 2017

The Blood of the Beasts

"Je te frapperai sans colère / Et sans haine, comme un boucher"
"[I will strike you without anger / And without hate, like a butcher]"

Read:

Vialles, *Animal to Edible*, 33-134.

Film (in-class):

George Franju, *Les Sang des Bêtes* (1949).

WEEK TEN

Monday, October 30, 2017

Man's Dominion

"While the modern view of our place in the world differs enormously from all the earlier views we studied, in the practical matter of how we act toward other animals little has changed."

Read:

*Peter Singer, "Man's Dominion: A Short History of Speciesism," in *Animal Liberation* (New York: Harper Collins, 2002[1975]), 185-212.

Wednesday, November 1, 2017

The Sexual Politics of Meat

"If animals are the absent referent in the phrase 'the butchering of women,' women are the absent referent in the phrase 'the rape of animals.' Because the structure of overlapping absent referents is so deeply rooted in Western culture... we fail to see anything disturbing in the violence and domination that are an inextricable part of this structure."

Read:

*Carol J. Adams, "The Rape of Animals, the Butchering of Women," in *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*, 20th Anniversary Edition (New York: Bloomsbury, 2010), 64-91.

Friday, November 3, 2017

No Class (Professor Wise in San Diego for the Western Historical Association conference)

WEEK ELEVEN

Monday, November 6, 2017

Meat, Colonialism, and Indigenous Practices

"The new slaughterhouse and butcher shop instituted profound changes in how the Blackfeet acquired their subsistence. Trading work for prepared meat dissociated from its animal origin had reoriented the process of making meat from a collaborative project of hunting and butchering bison to an individuated procedure of exchanging labor for beef."

Read:

*Michael D. Wise, "Colonial Beef and the Blackfeet Reservation Slaughterhouse, 1879-1895," *Radical History Review* 110 (2011): 59-82.

Wednesday, November 8, 2017

Not Not an Elk

"The elk-hide coat worn with its hair outward, the headgear with its characteristic protruding ears, and the skis covered with an elk's smooth leg skins, so as to sound like an animal when moving in snow... It was not that Spiridon had stopped being human. Rather, he had a liminal quality... He was occupying a strange place in between human and nonhuman identities."

Read:

Rane Willerslev, *Soul Hunters: Hunting, Animism, and Personhood Among the Siberian Yukaghirs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 1-28.

Friday, November 10, 2017

No Class (Professor Wise in Dallas for the Southern Historical Association conference)

WEEK TWELVE

Monday, November 13, 2017

Mimesis and Alterity

"What defines power in the Yukaghir world is the ability not to confuse analogy with identity... the borderline where self and other are both identical and different, alike yet not the same."

Read:

Willerslev, *Soul Hunters*, 29-118.

Wednesday, November 15, 2017

Taking Animism Seriously

"We will no longer be able to hold that conceptions of animals, trees, and mountains are more real than those of spiritual beings."

Read:

Willerslev, 119-192.

Friday, November 17, 2017

Research Workshop #2

Read: *no reading*

Due:

Historical Essay (3-5 pages)

What can the historical study of animal-human relationships contribute to conversations about Americans' foods and food choices today?

WEEK THIRTEEN

Monday, November 20, 2017

No Class (work on research project)

Wednesday, November 22, 2017

No Class (work on research project)

Friday, November 24, 2017

No Class (Thanksgiving Break)

**PART FIVE:
ANIMAL HISTORIES MINI-CONFERENCE**

WEEK FOURTEEN

Monday, November 27, 2017

Panel One *TBD*

-
-
-
-
-

Wednesday, November 29, 2017

Panel Two *TBD*

-
-
-
-
-

Friday, December 1, 2017

Panel Three *TBD*

-
-
-
-
-

WEEK FIFTEEN

Monday, December 4, 2017

Panel Four *TBD*

-
-
-
-
-

Wednesday, December 6, 2017

Panel Five TBD

-
-
-
-
-

Friday, December 8, 2017

No Class (Reading Day)

FINALS WEEK

Monday, December 11, 2017

DUE: Research Papers, 12:30 PM (by email to michael.wise@unt.edu)