

ANTH 343
Anthropology and the Animal

Winter 2021
Tuesdays 2:35pm – 5:25pm

Non-human animals, more-than-humans, animal persons, biosociality, companion species, multispecies ethnography... all these concepts call into question a distinction that has nurtured anthropology for decades: nature versus culture. Animals force questions upon us that go to the heart of anthropology: How do we differ from animals? How does the ethnographic study of the interactions humans have with other living beings change our understanding of our own humanity? By examining works that range from ethnography to history and philosophy, we will consider how animals problematize our central assumptions about what it means to be human. Accordingly, this course explores a variety of ways in which human beings relate with animals and examines some conceptual tools that can help us make sense of the continuities between humans and other kinds of beings and the worlds we might inhabit with them.

Course Goals and Objectives

Through critical engagement with select readings, class discussions, and writing assignments, students will be introduced to some key anthropological debates regarding human-animal relationships. By the end of this course students should improve their analytical and expressive skills and they should also deepen their understanding of animals and other nonhuman beings within an anthropological framework.

General Information

Tuesdays 2:35pm – 5:25pm

Instructor: Daniel Ruiz-Serna

Contact: daniel.ruiz-serna@mail.mcgill.ca

Virtual Office Hours: Tuesdays 5:30pm-6:30pm via Zoom, or by appointment.

Email Policy: I will do my best to respond to your emails in a timely manner. To help me do this, I ask that you please include “ANTH343” in the subject lines of your emails. I will do my best to respond within a day or two to emails sent within working hours (8am-6pm) on weekdays. Emails sent over the weekend will not be seen until Monday afternoon, so I invite you to plan ahead when getting in touch.

Remote Delivery Course Format

This term is an unusual one as our course will be offered in a remote learning context in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic. This context presents new challenges for the students and the teaching team alike. However, we remain committed to creating a safe, healthy and engaging learning environment for you. We understand that some students may experience a range of difficulties as a result of these exceptional conditions and we will endeavor to provide a supportive learning environment for all.

We will meet every week via Zoom. Please note that while we are officially scheduled to begin our weekly meetings at 2:35pm, our actual meetings will start instead at **4:00pm** as a way to mitigate Zoom

fatigue. In order to create an engaging remote learning environment, the course will be organized through two kinds of lectures:

Live Lectures: We will have a set of different guest speakers throughout the term (see below). Each of these speakers will hold a live lecture (starting at 4pm), followed by a short Q&A session. Additionally, during the first and the last week, I (the instructor) will deliver live lectures.

These lectures will be recorded but students must be aware of their responsibility in ensuring that this video and associated material are not reproduced or placed in the public domain. This means that each of you can use it for your educational (and research) purposes, but you cannot allow others to use it, by posting it on the Internet or by giving it or selling it to others who may also copy it and make it available. Please refer to McGill's [Guidelines for Instructors and Students on Remote Teaching and Learning](#) for further information. Thank you very much for your help with this.

Please read the [Guidelines for the Remote Teaching Context](#) and the course outline for this course in myCourses. You will be notified through a 'pop-up' box in Zoom when the lecture or portion of a class is being recorded. By remaining in sessions that are recorded, you agree to the recording, and you understand that your image, voice, and name may be disclosed to classmates. You also understand that recordings will be made available in myCourses to students registered in the course.

Pre-recorded Lectures: A pre-recorded lecture (two- or multiple-part) will be recorded along with a PowerPoint slide show, delivered by me. The recording will be available on MyCourses at 8pm EST on Monday before class, unless otherwise noted. These lectures will be followed by a Zoom Q&A session (30-60 minutes) that will be held on Tuesdays starting at 4pm EST.

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For both kinds of lectures, students are expected to read the materials **before** watching the lecture and be prepared to discuss them during the weekly Q&A session.

Despite the new format, you will remain able to actively participate in your own learning. We also want you to be aware of these [resources](#) for students to help you manage this new remote learning environment.

Accommodations for Missed Assessments During the Term

It is strongly advised that students submit assignments at least an hour or two before the deadline in order to avoid late submissions due to unstable internet service or other technical difficulties. If such a situation does arise students should, when possible, contact the instructor to explain before the deadline is passed.

It is at the discretion of the instructor to arrange accommodation for students who have missed an assignment. In general, we will accept late papers up to five days late, with a 5% paper-grade reduction

per day late. Late weekly reading questions will not be accepted without an appropriate accommodation due to illness or exceptional circumstances. Complicated cases may be directed to the Student Affairs Office.

The [Policy for the Accommodation of Religious Holy Days](#) may apply to students seeking accommodation. “Students are not to be penalized if they cannot write examinations or be otherwise evaluated on their religious holy days where such activities conflict with their religious observances”. A student seeking accommodation must contact the instructor at least 14 days in advance so that arrangements can be made.

Evaluation

All assignments must be submitted electronically in a **pdf** file via MyCourses. **Late assignments** will be penalized by **removing 5%** of the grade for the assignment, per day.

Assignment	Due Date	% of Course Grade
Personal Statement	January 19, 2:35 pm EST	5%
Meme	April 13, 2:35 pm EST	10%
Weekly Reading Questions	Ongoing from weeks 3 through 12	20%
Essay (critical film review)	Angry Inuk: February 16, 7pm EST Grizzly Man: March 30, 7pm EST	30%
Final Essay	April 22, 7pm EST	35%

Personal Statement 5% of grade (January 19, 2:35 pm EST)

This assignment has two components: a personal statement and one animal joke.

To help our TA and I get to know you, we ask that you write 1 page (**500 words**) about yourself, telling us where you’re from, your current time zone, what you’re majoring in, why you’re taking this class, and some interests or hobbies that you have outside of school. More importantly, we’d like to know about any intimate experience or significant encounter that you’ve had with an animal in any given context. Any type of interaction may be discussed, from relations you have had with pets to survival stories in the wilderness. Tell us why this encounter or experience is meaningful. If you want, you can include a drawing.

The joke should be short and involve some kind of animal. Please be careful with the language you use. Racist or sexist jokes will not be accepted.

Internet Meme 10% of grade (April 13, 2:35 pm EST)

An internet meme is a photo with captioned text that contains meaningful and often funny information. A meme exemplifies what a shared sphere of cultural knowledge is, communicating

complex ideas or feelings with just a short phrase and image. Overall, a good meme is simple, funny, and appeals to a large audience. In a good meme, text and image combine to create a meaning that is different from either one alone.

For this assignment, your goal is to create a meme that encapsulates some of the original content of the course, fostering some kind of awareness about the conceptual, sensory or ethical issues discussed in class. While humor is important, it will not be the deciding factor of evaluation.

It is up to you to pick both the image and the text, but the meme as a whole has to say something meaningful about the course and the ideas you learned. A good meme, and this is important to your assignment, expresses shared emotions and thoughts very quickly and simply.

The rubric for grading this assignment is as follows:

The meme successfully makes cross-references between pop culture and course content Text is clear and expresses engaging ideas Image captures meaningful references Good interplay between text and visual	A range
The meme includes pop culture references and some content from the course Mundane text Image does not match with the captioned text Poor interplay between text and visual	B range
It includes outdated or irrelevant content	C range
Assignment was not submitted	F range

Weekly Reading Questions 20% of grade (Jan 26 to Apr 6)

Every Monday by **7:00 pm EST**, between weeks 3 (Jan 25) and 12 (Apr 6), students submit a weekly reading question via MyCourses. Please notice that you are supposed to submit these questions before the pre-recorded lectures associated with the readings are posted. This is why late submission **will not be accepted**.

The assignment is intended to encourage students to complete their readings in a timely way each week, to gauge comprehension of the course materials, and to make connections across the content. Questions should be genuine and thought-provoking and should include a statement of context. Genuine questions are those that you are sincerely curious or confused about. They are unlikely to have clear answers found on specific pages of our readings. Instead they might stem from how new concepts are used, the implications of an author’s argument, or how a reading connects to the rest of the course.

The brief context and question should be **max 150 words** long in total. Given that there are two readings for a given week, the question should reference both of them, but may focus on a particular one. Great questions may be incorporated into the final exam.

The rubric for grading this assignment is as follows (with 4 marks each for **5 randomly selected submissions** from across the term):

Clearly explained context for the question	Original, clear, engaging question	3.5-4.0
Good context	Original, clear, engaging question	3.0-3.5
Acceptable Context	Acceptable question	2.0-3.0
Minimal context	Mundane question	1.5-2.0
Lack of context	Absence of engaging question	0.0-1.5

Critical Film Review 30% of grade

You have to choose **one** of the two documentaries listed below and write a **1,500 word** review. Your critical film review should demonstrate a clear understanding of the concepts presented in the readings and lectures, as well as an ability to identify and synthesize key themes from the documentary. Your challenge is to show mastery of the material and expand on the presented ideas.

Your film review has to clearly address some of the key concepts or arguments of the readings included for each film (please refer to the syllabus). Essays should have a title, an introduction, a body, a clear conclusion, and a bibliography. You need to demonstrate an appropriate level of language and organization.

Choose **only one** of the following documentaries, read the articles associated with each one, and submit your review on the specified date. Please notice that besides these articles, you have to use at least **two other references** from the bibliography that will be discussed in class (see below).

Documentary #1: Angry Inuk. Directed by A. Arnaquq-Baril. Due on February 16

- M. Robinson (2014): “Animal personhood in Mi’kmaq perspective.” *Societies* 4: 672-688
- F.J. Taster (2010): “Mad dogs and (mostly) Englishmen: Colonial relations, commodities, and the fate of Inuit sled dogs”. *Études/Inuit/Studies* 34 (2): 129-147

Documentary #2: Grizzly Man. Directed by W. Herzog. Due on March 30

- V. Despret (2013): “Responding bodies and partial affinities in Human-Animal worlds”. *Theory, Culture and Society* 30 (7/8): 51-76
- J. Metcalf (2008): “Intimacy without Proximity: Encountering Grizzlies as a Companion Species.” *Environmental Philosophy* 5 (2): 99–128.

Details of the format will be discussed in due time.

Final Essay 35% of grade (April 22, 7pm EST)

This is a short essay (2,000 words) in which you should demonstrate a clear understanding of the concepts presented throughout the term. You will be given a set of questions and you will answer **only one**. This essay should reflect your understanding of the material discussed in class as well as your ability to make connections between the different authors' ideas.

Details of the format will be discussed in due time.

Course Schedule

The following is a general outline of the course. Some modifications may occur over the course of the semester

Jan 12	Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • J. Berger: "Why look at animals?" in <i>About Looking</i>, pp 1-28. New York: Pantheon • S. Hurn (2012): "Why look at human-animal interactions?" in <i>Humans and Other Animals. Cross-Cultural perspectives on Human-Animal Interactions</i>, pp 1-11. London: Pluto Press 	
Jan 19	Nature, culture, and naturecultures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P. Descola and G. Palsson (1996): Introduction in <i>Nature and Society. Anthropological Perspectives</i>, pp. 1-21. London and New York: Routledge. • T. Ingold (2000): "Hunting and gathering as ways of perceiving the environment" in <i>The Perception of the Environment. Essays on Environment, Dwelling and Skill</i>, pp: 40-60. London and New York: Routledge. 	Personal statement is due
Jan 26	Hunting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P. Nadasdy (2007): "The gift in the animal: The ontology of hunting and human-animal sociality." <i>American Ethnologist</i> 34 (1): 25-43 • C. Scott (2006): "Spirit and Practical Knowledge in the Person of the Bear among Wemindji Cree Hunters" <i>Ethnos</i> 71 (1): 51-66 	Guest Speaker: Colin Scott
Feb 2	Multispecies encounters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • D. Haraway (2008): "Introduction" in <i>When Species Meet</i>, pp. 1-42. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. • R-C. Collard (2012): "Cougar-human entanglements and the biopolitical un/making of safe space." <i>Environment and Planning D: Society and Space</i> 30: 23-42 	
Feb 9	Domestication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M.E. Lien, H.A. Swanson, and G. Ween (2018): "Naming the beast-Exploring the otherwise" in <i>Domestication Gone Wild. Politics and Practices of Multispecies Relations</i>, edited by H.A. Swanson, 	Guest Speaker: Sophie Chao

		M.E. Lien, and G. Ween, pp 1-30. Duke University Press: Durham and London <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S. Chao (2018): “The plastic cassowary: problematic pets in West Papua”. <i>Ethnos</i> 84 (5): 1-21 	
Feb 16	Perspectivism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E. Viveiros de Castro (1998): “Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism”. <i>Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute</i> 4: 469-488 • E. Kohn (2007): “How dogs dream: Amazonian natures and the politics of transspecies engagement”. <i>American Ethnologist</i> 34 (1): 3-24 	Guest Speaker: Eduardo Kohn Angry Inuk is due
Feb 23	Amazonia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • K. Arhem (1996): “The cosmic food web: Human-nature relatedness in Northwest Amazon” in Ph. Descola and G. Pálsson (eds), <i>Nature and Society. Anthropological Perspectives</i>. London and New York: Routledge. • D. Ruiz-Serna (2015): “Threads of life and death: A photo essay on hunting and fishing in Northwest Amazonia.” <i>Visual Anthropology Review</i> 31 (1): 73-86 	
March 9	Disposition of being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Descola (2006): “Beyond Nature and Culture. Radcliffe-Brown Lecture in Social Anthropology” in <i>Proceedings of the British Academy</i>, pp 137-155. Oxford: Oxford University Press. • E. Kohn (2009): “A conversation with Philippe Descola”. <i>Tipiti: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America</i> 7 (2): 135-150 	
March 16	Animal Agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • T. Mitchell (2002): “Can the mosquito speak?” in <i>Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity</i>, pp. 19-53. Berkeley: University of California Press. • J. Hribal (2010): <i>Fear of the Animal Planet. The Hidden History of Animal Resistance</i>, pp 1-30. Petrolia: Counter Punch 	Guest Speaker: Ivan Vargas
March 23	Animals and the end of the world	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bird Rose (2011): “Flying fox: kin, keystone, kontaminant.” <i>Australian Humanities Review</i> 50: 119-136. • G.S. Sodikoff (2017): “Multispecies epidemiology and the viral subject” in <i>The Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities</i>, edited by U. Heise, J. Christensen and Mé Nicemann, pp 112-119. London and New York: Routledge 	
March 30	Cryptozoology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P. Dendle (2006): “Cryptozoology in the Medieval and Modern Worlds”. <i>Folklore</i> 117 (2): 190-206 • D. Dixon (1981). Excerpts from <i>After Man. A Zoology of the Future</i>. London: Eddison Books 	Guest Speaker: André Costopoulos

			Grizzly Man is due
Apr 6	War	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • J. Kosek. 2010. "Ecologies of Empire: On the new uses of the honeybee". <i>Cultural Anthropology</i> 25 (4): 650-678 • R. Hediger (2013): "Dogs of war: the biopolitics of loving and leaving the U.S. Canine Forces in Vietnam". <i>Animal Studies Journal</i> 2 (1): 55-73 	Guest Speaker: Lina Pinto
Apr 13	Animalizing and Dehumanizing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E. Russell (2004): "Speaking of Annihilation: Mobilizing for war against human and insect enemies, 1941-1945" in <i>Natural Enemy, Natural Ally. Toward an Environmental History of War</i>, edited by R. Tucker and E. Russell, pp. 142-174. Corvallis: Oregon State University Press • I. Braverman. 2017. "Captive: Zoometric operations in Gaza." <i>Public Culture</i> 29 (1): 191-215. 	Meme is due

McGill Policy Statements

Academic Integrity

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information). (approved by Senate on 29 January 2003)

L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/).

Language of Submission

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded." (approved by Senate on 21 January 2009 - see also the section in this document on Assignments and evaluation.)

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l'un des objets est la maîtrise d'une langue).

Additional Statements

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

Land Acknowledgment

McGill University is located on unceded indigenous lands. The Kanien'kehá:ka Nation is recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters on which we gather. Tiohtiá:ke/Montreal is historically known as a gathering place for many First Nations. Today, it is home to a diverse population of Indigenous

and other peoples. We respect the continued connections with the past, present and future in our ongoing relationships with Indigenous and other peoples within the Montreal community. (This territorial acknowledgement was adapted from Concordia University's Indigenous Directions Leadership Group [2017]. To read the entire territorial acknowledgment and learn more about why it was written this way, please visit <https://www.concordia.ca/about/indigenous/territorial-acknowledgement.html>.)