

Syllabus (Course description)

Course title: Humans and Animals				
Course instructor(s), contact details: Eszter Szép, PhD eszterszep@gmail.com				
Code:	Curriculum (program/level):	Recommended semester:	Credit:	Number of class hours: Student task hours:
Related codes:	Type: (seminar/lecture/, consultation, etc.)	Can it be an elective course?	In case of an elective course what are the specific prerequisites:	
Course connections (prerequisites, parallels):				
Aim and principles of the course: The course looks at the development of the relationship between humans and nature, humans and animals. First we focus on a few chapters from the history of European culture, as these define both our problems and our desperate attempts to solve them. The larger part of the course deals with contemporary questions stemming from the realization that humans have irrevocably changed nature, and need to develop new kinds of relationships to it (see the weekly breakdown). We read theoretical texts and comics, we look for examples of art and talk a lot. The goals of the course include that the participants look for connections between our theoretical readings and works of art and design. Another goal is to enrich the concepts that are widely used today (e.g. Anthropocene, decolonialism, Capitalocene, ecocriticism, posthumanism, multispecies justice) with clearer and more critical interpretations. During the course, we look for practical applications of theoretical readings, as the stages of this process, the students will first give a small lecture and then write a short essay. At the end of the course, everyone digs into a given topic, which they creatively process as a zine or comic using the tools of images and texts. Our goal is to publish the students' end-of-course works (zine, comic book) in print or online. The additional goal of the course, in addition to expanding knowledge, is that the questions raised provide inspiration for the students' projects related to (and independent of) their majors. Each class focuses on a different problem, and class discussions, class creative tasks, and homework are connected to them. I count on your active participation in the discussions, your critical comments, and your creativity in the classes. AI and CHATGPT policy. Students can of course consult AI engines and they can use these generated answers as points of departures or prompts for further (re)search. However, AI-generated answers are not to be used, quoted, referred to in students' weekly responses or in their papers. Papers and answers with AI-generated bits (not to mention wholly AI-generated papers and answers) are rejected and the student will not get a chance to rewrite/edit/resubmit.				

Plagiarism policy. Plagiarism means copying someone else's sentences without indicating the source. Don't do it. Papers with plagiarism will be rejected.

The aim of the course is for the students to get to know the characteristic directions, concepts and research methods of art and design theory and the frontier areas of social sciences (sociology, psychology, anthropology), and to be able to apply them in their own field of expertise.

Learning outcomes (professional and general competences to be developed):

Knowledge: The student understands the theories of design culture in detail, including theories about the relationship between humans and animals, their terminology, their specific characteristics, their connection to and divergence from related fields, and is able to formulate and analyze comprehensive, special relationships based on these.

Ability: The student is able to creatively integrate the connections revealed by the course into their own design work.

Attitude: Openness to a theoretical approach to design and art, independent critical thinking.

Autonomy and responsibility: The student participates independently in current research projects, in the planning and implementation of related research.

Topics and themes to be covered in the course:

Mapping the border between man and animal in European cultural history. Anthropocene philosophies. Rethinking the relationship between humans and animals, humans and nature. Animal studies. Decoloniality and animal studies. Feminist ecocriticism and art. Extinction and art. Posthumanism.

Specificities of process organisation / organisation of learning:

1. 20 Feb

Introduction: Goals, Expectations, What we Already Know

Register at our Discord server before the first class and download our readings from wetransfer.

2. 27 Feb

Ordering Humans and Animals in European Cultural History

How did Europeans think about humans and their place in the natural world from the Renaissance to the birth of modern biology? How do these beliefs influence human–animal relationships in the current patriarchal capitalist systems and our dreams of different human–animal relationships in alternative, non-patriarchal non-capitalist systems (which we will read about in this class)?

Required videos for the second session (each of them is short):

- "What is the Great Chain of Being?" *Drybones*,
https://youtu.be/DllyGiwbVLA?si=O2-9KY_6nTv8NJ3- (8 mins)
- "Great Chain of Being." *New World Encyclopaedia*,
https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Great_Chain_of_Being
- "Museum History: The Curiosity Cabinet," *christeah*
<https://youtu.be/y8z9Exkmi10?si=oTvlzVhO9a-Jlp1t> (10 mins)

- “Cabinet of Curiosities Identity and Power,” *Giovanni Aloj*,
<https://youtu.be/3MQybTsRBO8?si=con0ZGEsHOYsWpeE> (10 mins)
- “Biology Before Darwin: Crash Course History of Science #19,” *Crash Course: History of Science*,
https://youtu.be/K4CKmYSMT_0?si=9I52VrCuQlj-WWNM (13 mins)
- Nee, Sean. “The Great Chain of Being.” *Nature*, 435, 429 (2005).
<https://www.nature.com/articles/435429a>

Recommended Reading:

- Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things*. XX
- [Literature] Le Guin, Ursula K. *The Left Hand of Darkness*.
- “Carl Linnaeus: The Father of Taxonomy” *Biographics* (22 mins)
<https://youtu.be/RcA7wuOkBvc?si=uxlo22BDIkwpTi2S>
- Public and Private Life of Animals (1877)
<https://publicdomainreview.org/collection/public-and-private-life-of-animals-1877/>
-

3. 6 March

Why Look at Animals?

We read John Berger’s canonical classic text and think about all the big questions regarding animals one can ask, including our relationships to pets, the establishment of zoos, eating meat vs not eating meat.

Required reading for the third session:

- John Berger: *Why Look at Animals?* p. 1-26

Recommended Reading:

- Yuval Hoah Harari: *Sapiens* – any chapters or any youtube interviews/talks.
- The comics adaptation of *Sapiens*

4. 13 March

The Anthropocene: Introduction

Humans have interfered with and have changed the earth: this is the era of the anthropocene (anthropos = human; cene=era), when natural sciences meet the arts and our daily concerns. Today we discuss how to readjust our philosophies (or at least one possible direction).

Required reading for session four:

- Latour, Bruno. “Agency in the Time of the Anthropocene.” *New Literary History, New Literary History* Vol. 45, 2014, pp. 1-18.
<http://www.bruno-latour.fr/sites/default/files/128-FELSKI-HOLBERG-NLH-FINAL.pdf>
- Welcome to the Anthropocene <https://www.anthropocene.info/>

- Steffen, Will. "The Great Acceleration."
<https://feralatlascupdigital.org/index?text=steffen-acceleration&ttype=essay&cd=true>

Recommended Reading:

- "About the Earth as a System: Background Information." *My NASA Data*,
<https://mynasadata.larc.nasa.gov/basic-page/about-earth-system-background-information>
- "Earth System Data Explorer." *My NASA Data*,
<https://larc-mynasadata-2df7cce0.projects.earthengine.app/view/earth-system-data-explorer>

5. 20 March

Dead and Alive: Taxidermy in the Anthropocene

We let our imaginations run wild on taxidermy horses: the weird art of preserving the corpses of animals has been with us for centuries and is being reinterpreted in the Anthropocene. We immerse ourselves into old and new meanings, balancing between disgust and fascination.

Required reading and video for session five:

- "Speculative Taxidermy: Indexicality, Vulnerability, and Representation" Giovanni Aloi,
https://youtu.be/TmQPBlvw9X0?si=Gysbs4RksOF_TqQ (70 mins)
- Aloi, Giovanni. "This is not a Horse: Biopower and Animal Skin in the Anthropocene." *Speculative Taxidermy: Natural History, Animal Surfaces, and Art in the Anthropocene*, Columbia University Press, 2018, pp. 221-243.

Recommended Reading:

- [Literature] Vandermeer, Jeff. *Hummingbird Salamander*, Harper Collins, 2021.
- Aloi, Giovanni. *Speculative Taxidermy: Natural History, Animal Surfaces, and Art in the Anthropocene*. Columbia University Press, 2018.

6. 27 March

New Friendships in the Anthropocene

Finally a less disgusting topic: dogs! Donna Haraway is a key figure of rethinking human–animal relationships in the 21st century by getting rid of the usual hierarchies and provocatively reassigning value to areas that have been despised. We discuss her ways of escaping the baggage we inherited and discussed in class 2.

Required reading for session six:

- Donna Haraway: "When Species Meet: Introductions." *When Species Meet*, University of Minnesota Press, 2008. p. 3-27.

Recommended video:

- Donna Haraway: "From Cyborgs to Companion Species" (youtube előadás, 75 perc)
<https://youtu.be/Q9gis7-Jads?si=u1tSeCBw34uY4nDA>

7. 3 April

Multispecies Justice in *Princess Mononoke*

Short essays are due today.

Last week Donna Haraway introduced ideas of multispecies justice and multispecies co-habitation, even co-creation. This week everyone watches *Princess Mononoke* before the session, and we discuss the consequences of both Haraway's and Miyazaki's visions.

Required film for session seven:

- Miyazaki Hayao (dir.): *Princess Mononoke* (1997).

8. 10 April

Imagining Extinction

The image of the starving polar bear floating on a block of ice has become an icon of the sixth mass extinction which is currently devastating our 4.54 billion year-old-planet. We read about anxieties around the end of nature and we start reading Joe Sacco's drawn reportage on how Canadian first nations navigate the 21st century, how their lives and societies have changed.

Required readings for session eight:

- Heise, Ursula. K. "Introduction: From the End of Nature to the Beginning of the Anthropocene." *Imagining Extinction*, University of Chicago Press, 2016. 1-18.
- Sacco, Joe: *Paying the Land*, Jonathan Cape, 2020. pp. 1-46. [graphic novel]

Recommended reading:

- "Anthropocene: Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet with Keynote speech by Ursula K. Le Guin," *UC Santa Cruz Arts, Lectures, and Entertainment*, <https://youtu.be/6BW8YmRAoW4?si=HCsFwc5o5HUnO4Hx>

9. 17 April

Colonialism + Zine checkpoint

We continue reading Joe Sacco's graphic novel and we discuss how colonialism, which has been a returning topic in most of our readings, is problematized by anthropocene philosophies and by the lives of Canadian first nation people. Students present their zine ideas.

Required reading for session nine:

- Sacco, Joe: *Paying the Land*, Jonathan Cape, 2020. pp. 47-160. [graphic novel]

Recommended reading:

- Billy-Ray Belcourt: "Animal Bodies, Colonial Subjects: (Re)Locating Animality in Decolonial Thought," *Societies* 2015, 5(1), 1-11. <https://www.mdpi.com/2075-4698/5/1/1>

10. 24 April

Capitalocene

We finish reading Joe Sacco's graphic novel and connect it to the age of capitalism.

Required reading for session ten:

- Sacco, Joe: *Paying the Land*, Jonathan Cape, 2020. pp. 160-260. [graphic novel]
- Le Guin, Ursula, [Acceptance speech of the National Book Award, no title.] *National Book Award*, 2014, https://youtu.be/Et9Nf-rsALK?si=cJtWrdd1N_8gzZS1 (6 mins)
- "Capitalocene." Definition, from *Slow Life. Radical Practices of the Everyday*.
https://slowlife.ludwigmuseum.hu/en/slow_tudastar/kapitalocen/

Recommended reading:

- Dominic Davies: "Graphic Capitaloscenes: Drawing Infrastructure as Historical Form" *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, 2023. pp. 1-16.
<https://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/30875/8/Graphic%20Capitaloscenes%20Drawing%20Infrastructure%20as%20Historical%20Form.pdf>

11. 8 May

Advanced zine checkpoint. Students present their zines which are in a very advanced stage by now.

No required reading.

Students' tasks and responsibilities:

1. Read/watch the given reading/video **before** each lesson.
2. **Post** to **Discord** before each class answering the **weekly** question. The deadline is very important for this task, because the weekly presenters build on these posts.
3. **Short presentation, in pairs:** (1) Summarize the most divisive or thought-provoking questions of our weekly reading, summarize or quote the questions and opinions raised in the forum posts related to the course. **DO NOT SUMMARIZE THE WHOLE ARTICLE. FOCUS ON 5 KEY IDEAS FROM THE READING.** (2) Formulate at least four questions to start the discussion in the group. The questions can be aimed at clarifying or further thinking about concepts and opinions. (3) Bring at least two works of art or design items that can be connected to your topic (can be more). Speakers can enrich their presentation with any new perspective, theory, or artwork.
4. Write a **short essay**, deadline is April 3. The topics are based on our readings and discussions. Details and requirements during the semester.
5. **Visual-text argumentation (zine, comic):** choose a problem or question that interests you based on the discussions and readings of the semester. Find out how this question appears in contemporary thought and art. Formulate a position on the researched question, present your position and argue for it with the help of pictures and text, first in a small presentation and then in a zine. We are discussing the format requirements of zines together and are preparing to publish all completed visual-text-comic-zine essays in a book or online.

Learning environment:

classroom

Assessment:**Requirements to be met:****Method of assessment:**

Weekly posts and in-class participation – 25%

Presentation – 20%

Short Essay – 25%

Visual-textual argumentation (zine, comics, whatever) – 30%

Assessment criteria:

Weekly posts and in-class participation - meeting the deadline, the richness of ideas in the posts, the quality of the posts

Presentation - did presenters keep the summary brief, did they respond to Discord post, did they bring work of art/design to their presentations, did they prepare with four questions, did they moderate the discussion, did they cooperate in preparing for and during the presentation

Short essay - how deeply and in detail you discuss the topic, the structure of the submission, keeping the focus of the essay, the language of the submission, use of references, bibliography

End of semester textual-visual argument (zine, comic book, whatever) - how deeply and in detail you discuss the topic, use of images in the argument, use of text in the argument, structure of the submission, language of the submission, use of references

How is the mark calculated:

Weekly posts and in-class participation – 25%

Presentation – 20%

Short Essay – 25%

Visual-textual argumentation (zine, comics, whatever) – 30%

Required Literature:

see the weekly schedule

Recommended Literature:

see the weekly schedule

Other informations:**Recognition of knowledge acquired elsewhere/previously/validation principle:**

- No exemption from attending and completing the course.
- Exemptions from the acquisition of certain competences and the completion of certain tasks may be granted.
- Some tasks may be replaced by other activities.
- Full exemption may be granted.

Out-of-class consultation times and location:

appointments to be negotiated in email

