

The Human Animal (Hum/En 25)
Winter quarter 2020 / 9 – 10:30 a.m.

Professor: Jocelyn Holland (jholland@caltech.edu)
Office: Dabney 301a / office hours: by appointment¹



Course description and objectives:

This course asks the question – What makes humans different from all (other) animals? – and considers a variety of answers offered by literary and philosophical texts. The readings are drawn from the fifteenth through the nineteenth-centuries, a time period when topics such as the animal soul, animal rationality, and animal rights were fiercely debated. In addition to attendance and participation, student activities will include short homework assignments (including at least one creative writing project) and two essays. We will also devote some class time to working on important elements of college writing: from taking notes and forming an outline, to creating an argument and developing an individual style.

Upon completion of this course, you should be able to:

- Discuss a few of the literary and philosophical contributions to the debates about animals from the time period we studied and be in a position to compare different approaches.
- Describe particular strategies writers used to narrate animal points of view.
- Explain how various literary genres (such as the bestiary, the fable, and the novel) were used to write about animals.
- Feel confident about your ability to write a successful college essay that is well-argued and reflects of your own unique perspective.

Course Readings

All readings, with one exception, will be posted on the moodle site before the Winter break for anyone who wants to get a head start. The exception: *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. Students should purchase a used or new copy (the Penguin edition is a good one). Be sure that the version you get is unabridged.

¹ I am on campus every day. The best times to reach me are M/W/F in the mornings, or pretty much any day between 1:30 and 4 in the afternoon. You are welcome to stop by my office or schedule an appointment.

Class schedule:

January 7	Introduction: the history of a relationship
January 9	The medieval bestiary
January 14	<i>Reynard the Fox</i> (Simpson translation)
January 16	<i>Reynard the Fox</i>
January 21	Montaigne, <i>Apology to Raymond Sebond</i> (excerpt)
January 23	Miguel de Cervantes, “Colloquy of the Dogs” (1613)
January 28	Cervantes, “Colloquy of the Dogs” (1613)
January 30	no class
February 4	Jean de la Fontaine, <i>Fables</i> (1668) (selection)
February 6	La Fontaine <i>Fables</i> and the “animal machine” debate
February 11	Jean-Jacques Rousseau, <i>Discourse on Inequality</i> (excerpt)
February 13	no class
February 18	Jonathan Swift, <i>Gulliver’s Travels</i> (Book 4)
February 20	Visit to the Huntington Library
February 25	Edgar Allen Poe, “The Murders of the Rue Morgue” (1841)
February 27	H. G. Wells, <i>The Island of Dr. Moreau</i> (1896)
March 3	<i>The Island of Dr. Moreau</i>
March 5	<i>The Island of Dr. Moreau</i>
March 10	Review + workshop for final papers

Friday, February 1:
Midterm essay due
through email. Prompts
will be posted on the
moodle site by Jan 14.

Final papers are due on Monday, March 17th. Prompts will be posted by March 1st.

The fine print:

Attendance and Late Work: Attendance in this course is required. Your success in this course depends upon timely attendance and active participation. Multiple unexcused absences, late arrivals, and the late submission of homework and essays will result in a reduced grade.

Formatting: Your papers should adhere to MLA formatting guidelines. I will help you with this in class and refer you to online sources that give you an easy overview.

Plagiarism: this includes both direct quotation and paraphrasing (summarizing) from internet or print sources without giving them credit. Because this class is to help you develop your own analytical and writing skills, I do not expect you to consult secondary literature. All plagiarism cases will be reported immediately to the university administration.

Course site and email: I realize that email is rapidly becoming old-fashioned, but please do check both our course website and your university email account regularly for important announcements. Be sure to use your caltech.edu address for all course communication so that your email does not accidentally land in my spam folder.

Electronic devices: Laptops are permitted for note-taking purposes or course readings **only**. Please turn off all social media platforms during class time. Cellphones should be silenced and stored away during class.

Grade breakdown:

short homework (full credit given for thoughtful, completed assignments): 20%

midterm paper (approximately 1500 words): 20%

final paper (approximately 2500 words): 40%

participation: 20%

Regarding gender & names: If you feel comfortable doing so in person or through an email, please let me know if your preferred name differs from what is printed on the roster, and which pronouns you would like for me to use.

A note on plagiarism: **all** cases will be referred to the Dean of Students. If you have any questions about what plagiarism is, visit: <http://www.hss.caltech.edu/academics/avoiding-plagiarism>