

American Literature and Animal Studies

ENGL 6339-001 Topics in American Literature

Spring 2017 Syllabus

Monday 6:00 – 8:50 p.m. Carlisle 212

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office hours: Tues.-Thurs. 3:30-5:00 p.m., and by appointment

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Course Description:

Animal studies has emerged in recent years as a rich, dynamic interdisciplinary field. This course will consider various animal studies problems and theories alongside American literary texts. Nonhuman animals have figured prominently in American literature from its origins, looming especially large in some well-known texts, but appearing in countless others—white whales and ravens are only the beginning. Animal studies provides a revealing vantage on these literary creatures. (The very word *creature*, with its root meaning of “something created,” may suggest a deep affinity between animals and imaginative or literary creation.) At the same time, literary texts offer a powerful medium for exploring central questions in animal studies. Animals bring to the surface anxieties, fantasies, and contradictions that are entrenched in American culture. Nonhuman animals embody an alterity that exceeds perceived human differences such as race or gender; the accusation of animality has often been employed to denigrate human others. Yet animals are also familiar, present and often taken for granted in many of our lives, most commonly as pets or as food. Animals are “good to think,” as the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss claimed: as ideas or symbols, they are potent meaning-makers, generating stories that help us to understand ourselves and our relation to the world around us. But they are more than just ideas: Donna Haraway contends that dogs “are not here just to think with. They are here to live with.” American literary texts engage with the ongoing, often everyday practices and experiences that bring humans and actual nonhuman animals together in material contact and interaction. Primary texts include various works of American literature and popular culture, such as London’s *The Call of the Wild* and Burroughs’s *Tarzan of the Apes*, as well as several films. We will also read critical, theoretical, and cultural studies writing that engages with a wide range of issues in animal studies.

Course Texts:

Edgar Rice Burroughs, *Tarzan of the Apes* (Penguin)

J.M. Coetzee, *The Lives of the Animals* (Princeton)

Jack London, *The Call of the Wild* (Broadview)

Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (Penguin or Oxford)

Additional readings will be available as e-texts. I will set up a UTA Box folder for the course, where you will be able to access and download them.

Films:

King Kong (dir. Cooper and Schoedsack, 1933)

Grizzly Man (dir. Herzog, 2005)

Rise of the Planet of the Apes (dir. Wyatt, 2011)

Course Requirements:

1. Eight response papers. Minimum two full pages double-spaced. Response papers should engage with the week's readings, especially emphasizing critical/theoretical readings as well as primary literary texts. You should address the arguments of the scholarly texts we read, but you can also use these papers to explore your own ideas about the readings (critical or literary). Topics for your seminar paper may emerge out of your response papers.

Note: Response papers should be submitted by email prior to the class meeting in which we will discuss the readings they address. These short papers will not be graded individually—I will give them an aggregate grade at the end of the course. However, I will let you know if your response papers are not at least B-level work.

2. Seminar paper. A substantial research paper (minimum 15 pages) drawing on readings and issues from the course. Students will give a presentation based on their papers at the end of the course. The final class meeting(s) will be set aside for this purpose.

3. Participation.

Note: All required work must be completed in order to pass the course.

Course Grade:

Eight response papers	25%
Participation and presentation	15%
Final paper	60%

Student Learning Outcomes:

Students will become familiar with literary works by the authors covered in the course, as well as with important critical issues, particularly related to the course thematic, that have shaped scholarship on these writers individually, and in relationship to each other. Students will become acquainted with a range of contexts relevant to considering these authors, including literary historical accounts of literature in the period, and theoretical and cultural studies work within the field of animal studies. Students will be able to produce original scholarship according to accepted academic standards, reflecting an awareness of existing scholarship on their topic.

Official UTA Policies & Course Policies

Attendance and Participation:

At The University of Texas at Arlington, taking attendance is not required. Rather, each faculty member is free to develop his or her own methods of evaluating students' academic performance, which includes establishing course-specific policies on attendance.

Because this is a graduate seminar that meets once a week, absences will only be excused in the case of truly unavoidable circumstances. Two or more absences will have an effect on your final grade. I expect you to come to class each week having carefully read the texts for that day's meeting, prepared with questions, comments, thoughts, enthusiasms, or objections. Participation for the course includes informal contributions to class discussion as well as presentations.

UTA Drop Policy:

Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance. Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. For more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (<http://web.uta.edu/aao/fao/>).

Academic Integrity:

Students enrolled in all UT Arlington courses are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code:

I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington's tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence.

I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.

UT Arlington faculty members may employ the Honor Code as they see fit in their courses, including (but not limited to) having students acknowledge the honor code as part of an examination or requiring students to incorporate the honor code into any work submitted. Per UT System *Regents' Rule* 50101, §2.2, suspected violations of university's standards for academic integrity (including the Honor Code) will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Violators will be disciplined in accordance with University policy, which may result in the student's suspension or expulsion from the University.

The policy for this course is that any assignment found to involve plagiarism or other significant academic dishonesty will receive a zero.

Americans with Disabilities Act:

UT Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including *The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*, *The Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA)*, and *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act*. All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of disability. Students are responsible for providing the instructor with official notification in the form of a letter certified by the **Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD)**. Students experiencing a range of conditions (Physical, Learning, Chronic Health, Mental Health, and Sensory) that may cause diminished academic performance or other barriers to learning may seek services and/or accommodations by contacting:

The Office for Students with Disabilities, (OSD) www.uta.edu/disability or calling 817-272-3364.

Counseling and Psychological Services, (CAPS) www.uta.edu/caps/ or calling 817-272-3671.

Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at www.uta.edu/disability or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

Let me know if you have a disability, and we can work together to ensure that you are able to participate fully in the course.

Title IX:

The University of Texas at Arlington does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, genetic information, and/or veteran status in its educational programs or activities it operates. For more information, visit uta.edu/eos. For information regarding Title IX, visit www.uta.edu/titleIX.

Student Feedback Survey:

At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as “lecture,” “seminar,” or “laboratory” shall be directed to complete an online Student Feedback Survey (SFS). Instructions on how to access the SFS for this course will be sent directly to each student through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. Each student’s feedback enters the SFS database anonymously and is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. UT Arlington’s effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law; students are strongly urged to participate. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/sfs>.

Final Review Week:

A period of five class days prior to the first day of final examinations in the long sessions shall be designated as Final Review Week. The purpose of this week is to allow students sufficient time to prepare for final examinations. (In this course, there is no final exam.) During this week, there shall be no scheduled activities such as required field trips or performances; and no instructor shall assign any themes, research problems or exercises of similar scope that have a completion date during or following this week *unless specified in the class syllabus*. During Final Review Week, an instructor shall not give any examinations constituting 10% or more of the final grade, except makeup tests and laboratory examinations. In addition, no instructor shall give any portion of the final examination during Final Review Week. During this week, classes are held as scheduled. In addition, instructors are not required to limit content to topics that have been previously covered; they may introduce new concepts as appropriate.

Emergency Exit Procedures:

Should we experience an emergency event that requires us to vacate the building, students should exit the room and move toward the nearest exit, which is located down the stairs across from the elevators on the second floor of Carlisle Hall. When exiting the building during an emergency, one should never take an elevator but should use the stairwells. Faculty members and instructional staff will assist students in selecting the safest route for evacuation and will make arrangements to assist individuals with disabilities.

Student Support Services Available:

UT Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. Resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals, students may visit the reception desk at University College (Ransom Hall), call the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107, send a message to resources@uta.edu, or view the information at <http://www.uta.edu/universitycollege/resources/index.php>

Electronic Communication Policy:

UT Arlington has adopted MavMail as its official means to communicate with students about important deadlines and events, as well as to transact university-related business regarding financial aid, tuition, grades, graduation, etc. All students are assigned a MavMail account and are responsible for checking the inbox regularly. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, which remains active even after graduation. Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/cs/email/mavmail.php>.

I will use your UTA email address for course announcements, as well as to contact you individually if necessary. Please be sure to check your MavMail account frequently.

Reading Schedule

Note: There may be minor changes, additions, or deletions in the course readings.

- 1/23 Introduction; J.M. Coetzee, "The Philosophers and the Animals," "The Poets and the Animals" from *The Lives of Animals*
- 1/30 "Reflections" by Peter Singer, Barbara Smuts, in *The Lives of Animals*
Cora Diamond, "The Difficulty of Reality and the Difficulty of Philosophy"
Cary Wolfe, "Human, All Too Human: Animal Studies and the Humanities"
Kafka, "A Report for an Academy"
- 2/6 Jacques Derrida, "The Animal that Therefore I Am"
Donna Haraway, "When Species Meet"
- 2/13 *The Call of the Wild*
Jennifer Mason, "Animal Politics, Affect, and American Studies"
Michael Lundblad, "Between Species: Queering the Wolf in Jack London"
- 2/20 Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, "Loveliness"
Stephen Crane, "A Dark Brown Dog"
Mark Twain, "A Dog's Tale," "Letters from One Dog to Another Dog Explaining and Accounting for Man," "Letter to the London Anti-Vivisection Society"
Donna Haraway, "Sharing Suffering"
James Serpell, "People in Disguise: Anthropomorphism and the Human-Pet Relationship"

- 2/27 Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle*
Nicole Shukin, "Automobility"
- 3/6 *The Jungle*
Critical reading TBA
- 3/13 **Spring Break!!**
- 3/20 Edgar Rice Burroughs, *Tarzan of the Apes*
Donna Haraway, "Teddy Bear Patriarchy"
- 3/27 *Tarzan of the Apes*
Michael Lundblad, "Black Savage, White Animal: Tarzan's American Jungle"
- 4/3 Colin Dayan, from *The Law is a White Dog*
Colleen Glenney Boggs, "American Bestiality: Sex, Animals, and the Construction of Subjectivity"
- 4/10 *King Kong* (1933)
John Berger, "Why Look at Animals?"
Nicole Shukin, "Telemobility"
- 4/17 *Grizzly Man*
Ryan Hediger, "Timothy Treadwell's Grizzly Love as Freakshow"
- 4/24 *Rise of the Planet of the Apes*
Critical reading TBA
- 5/1 Presentations
- 5/8 Presentations

Final paper due Monday, May 8 (submitted to Blackboard)