

FW 2023-24

AP/EN 4005 3.0A (F)	<i>Literature and Animals</i>
Course Director:	Name: Monica Sousa Office: TBA e-mail: msousata@yorku.ca
Time:	Mondays, 11:30 am to 2:30 pm Class location: In person, room TBA
Delivery Format:	SEMINAR
Description:	<p>While there are many works of literature that are concerned with exploring the human condition, what shapes our ability to define what it is to be human largely depends on how we have understood, and continue to understand, the relationship between humans, animals, and animality. The question of what it means to be human is a valid and important one; so is the question of what it means to be an animal. Humans are indeed animals themselves, but how are they different from nonhuman animals? What are some key similarities? Why do these differences and similarities matter?</p> <p>Historically, literary treatments of animals have represented and treated them as “scarcely animals at all, but schematic elements in an aesthetic or psychological design” (Scholtmejer 259). In other words, too often animals in literature are seen less as beings with identities and more so as symbols/metaphors or aesthetic tools. While this history of how animals have been treated in literature is important (and will be discussed in this course), what is arguably more important is finding literature that strives to see animals as animals. Josephine Donovan, in <i>The Aesthetics of Care: On the Literary Treatment of Animals</i>, argues that we must find literature that challenges this; she states that literary critics have begun “questioning the ubiquitous aesthetic exploitation of animal pain and suffering, and seeking alternative forms of representation either in existing but neglected texts or by calling for new modes that do not, as Philip Armstrong puts it, ‘reduce the animal to a blank screen for the projection of human meaning’” (2016, 95).</p> <p>This course will explore 20th to 21st-century literary engagements with the question of the animal as framed by the field of animal studies/human-animal studies. The primary literary works that will be explored in this course include mostly novels, but also a few short stories, poems, a graphic novel, and a film. The literary works will be accompanied by scholarly, theoretical texts. While the texts in this course deal extensively with ethical, philosophical, and scientific debates and discussions about animals in other fields and in our own culture, the focus of this course is to see how those debates influence literary texts. How are animals represented and treated in the literary imagination? What can literary texts suggest about the role humans may play in their relations with animals?</p>

Category:	A
Historical Requirement:	N/A
Requirements:	<p>Course requirements & grade breakdown. Explanations will appear on eClass and the syllabus.</p> <p>Seminar Presentation: 20% Short reflections (3): 15% (at 5% each) First Literary Analysis Essay: 20% Final Essay Proposal: 5% Final Literary Analysis Research Essay: 30% Seminar Participation: 10%</p>
Reading List:	<p>*Note: the primary readings listed here are <u>tentative</u>. The final list will be confirmed on the updated syllabus during the first class*</p> <p>Books: J.M Coetzee, <i>The Lives of Animals</i> (1999) Yann Martel, <i>Life of Pi</i> (2001) Grant Morrison and Frank Quietly, <i>We3</i> (2005) Karen Joy Fowler, <i>We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves</i> (2013) Andre Alexis, <i>Fifteen Dogs</i> (2015) Genki Kawamura, <i>If Cats Disappeared from the World</i> (2019) Charlotte McConaghy, <i>Once There Were Wolves</i> (2021) Silvia Moreno Garcia, <i>The Daughter of Daughter Moreau</i> (2023)</p> <p>Film: Bong Joon-ho, <i>Okja</i> (2017)</p> <p>Short stories: Edgar Allan Poe, "The Black Cat" (1843) Franz Kafka, "A Report for an Academy" (1917) Alice Walker, "Am I Blue?" (1986)</p> <p>Poems: Ted Hughes, "Jaguar" (1957) Mary Oliver, "The Swan" (2010) Camille T. Dungy, "Trophic Cascade" (2017)</p>
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