

ANIMALS, CULTURE, AND RELIGION  
A PRACTICUM SYLLABUS

A Project

Presented to the faculty of the Department of Humanities and Religious Studies  
California State University, Sacramento

Submitted in partial satisfaction of  
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

Humanities

by

Jordan Nicole Beardsley

FALL  
2017

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Approved by:

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Dr. Joël Dubois

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Date

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I certify that this student has met the requirements for format contained in the University form manual, and that this project is suitable for shelving in the Library and credit is to be awarded for the Project.

\_\_\_\_\_, Department Chair \_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Bradley Nystrom Date

Department of Humanities and Religious Studies

Abstract

of

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*Statement of Problem*

The study of human-animal relationships deserves unique and targeted consideration within the study of Humanities. This project seeks to examine the place of animals in culture by rethinking current and historical approaches to human-animal relationships.

*Sources of Data*

The works of Kimberley Patton, Paul Waldau, Thomas Berry, Richard W. Bulliet, and Lisa Kemmerer were paramount to creating the foundation of this research.

*Conclusions Reached*

Humanities can and should be used to explore human-animal relationships, particularly through the lens of culture, religion, and philosophy. These insights create understanding of humans and animals both as individuals and as cohabitants of given cultures.

\_\_\_\_\_, Committee Chair  
Dr. Joël Dubois

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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## Syllabus

### **Course Description and Goals:**

This course is designed to allow students to explore the relationship between humans and animals in the context of a variety of cultures with an emphasis on spirituality, mythology, and religious tradition. Students in this course are encouraged to explore their own cultural beliefs and examine them against the varying traditions studied throughout the course. Critical thinking and active participation are crucial to success in this course.

### **Requirements and Grading:**

This course is based on a 100 point scale, each assignment is weighted with a specific point value and allows the student some flexibility in which assignments they choose to complete.

**\*\*All required assignments will be noted by the instructor.**

**A:** 90-100 points

**B:** 80-89 points

**C:** 70-79 points

**D/F:** 0-69 - points

**Please note that all requirements must be met in a timely, accurate, and meaningful way in order to count for full credit.**

### **Reading Responses: 5 Points Each**

Reading responses are due by Sunday at 11:59PM and should be a 1-2 page (approx. 500 words) double spaced analysis of the weekly material and/or readings. Prompts will be provided by the instructor. These responses are semi-formal but should still reflect academic writing, correct grammar, and punctuation. Six (6) responses are required for full credit, you may complete more if you choose-your highest six grades will count towards your final score. \*\*Please note that no make-up reading responses will be accepted after the week has closed.

### **Context Quizzes: 5 Points Each**

There will be 2 short answer quizzes throughout the semester. These quizzes are designed to check in with the student's knowledge on the overall concepts being discussed in the course and will focus on comprehensive questions about the assigned reading. The quizzes are formatted similarly to the midterm and final exams. \*\*Quizzes are required.

### **Midterm Essay: 20 Points**

A 3-5 pg essay response to the midterm project. These papers must reflect the student's knowledge on the overall cultural concepts of the course as well as an understanding of the assigned reading. These papers are formal and should reflect strong academic writing, correct grammar, and punctuation, they should also include proper and consistent quotation and citation format. \*\*This assignment is required.



**Midterm: 20 Points**

The midterm examination will be a combination exam including a fill in the blank/short answer section as well as short essay questions that will reflect all material in the first half of the course. You will need a Green or Blue Book for this exam. \*\*This assignment is required.

**Final: 20 Points**

The final is a cumulative exam covering the readings and basic concepts of the course. It will be in the same format as the midterm. You will need a Green or Blue Book for this exam.\*\*Required for students not completing a final project.

**Final Project: 30 Points**

The final project is an opportunity for students with an interest in expanding their knowledge in the course to research any subject of particular interest to them within the scope of the course. This project will vary based on the individual but should include a 8-10 pg research based essay as well as a short presentation of their findings. Please note that this project allows for creative expression on the part of the student but must be discussed with the professor no later than the midterm exam. \*\*Students who complete the Final Project are not required to take the Final Exam.

\*\*Please note, only one final, either the exam or the project, will count for your final grade.

**Required Reading:**

Paul Waldau and Kimberly Patton, *A Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science and Ethics*

Lisa Kemmerer, *Animals and World Religions*

Hal Herzog, *Some We Love, Some We Hate, Some We Eat: Why It's So Hard to Think Straight About Animals*

## Schedule

### **Week 1: Course Housekeeping**

Topic: Introduction of Subject

### **Week 2**

Topic: Speciesism

Film: Speciesism, directed by Mark Devries

Required Reading: Animals and World Religions (AWR), Introduction 3-18, Some We Love, Some We Hate, Some We Eat (LHE) Introduction 1-13 and Chapter 1 (15-35)

### **Week 3**

Topic: Animals and Religion in Context

Required Reading: A Communion of Subjects (COS) Heritage of the Volume 1-3, Prologue 5-10, Introduction 11-23, and “Caught within Ourselves in the Net of Life and Time” 27-39.

### **Week 4**

Topic: Greco-Roman

Required Reading: Online Reading(OR), Marie-Claire Bealieu, “The Dolphin in Classical Mythology and Religion”, Tiphaine Moreau, “The Horse, the Theology of Victory, and the Roman Emperors of the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE”, Juliet Clutton-Brock, “Aristotle, the Scale of Nature, and Modern Attitudes towards Animals”

### **Week 5: Quiz #1**

Topic: Greco-Roman

Required Reading: (OR) Daniele F. Maras, “*Numero avium regnum trahebant*: Birds, Divination, and Power amongst Romans and Etruscans”, Diana Guarisco, “Acting the She-Bear: Animal Symbolism and Ritual in Ancient Athens”

### **Week 6**

Topic: Animal Sacrifice

Required Reading: (OR) Dimitrios Mantzilas, “Sacrificial Animals in Roman Religion: Rules and Exceptions” Thomas Galoppin, “How to Understand the Voices of Animals”

**Week 7**

Topic: Animals as the Divine

Required Reading: (OR) Germond, excerpts from, *An Egyptian Bestiary: Animals in Life and Religion in the Land of the Pharaohs*, “Introduction” and “The Sacred World”, Houlihan, excerpts from, *The Animal World of the Pharaohs*, “The Divine Bestiary”

**Week 8**

Topic: Christianity and Animals - Medieval and Modern

Required Reading: (AWR) *Christian Traditions*, 205-276. (COS) “The Bestiary of Heretics: Imaging Medieval Christian Heresy with Insects and Animals” 103-116, (OL) Andrew Linzey, “The Place of Animals in Creation: A Christian View”

**Week 9**

Topic: Midterm Exam

**Week 10**

Topic: Sacred and Profane Hunting

Required Reading:(OR) Excerpts from, *The Animals Came Dancing: Native American Sacred Ecology and Animal Kinship*, “The Gift of Animals” and “Animal Rituals”

**Week 11**

Topic: Sacred and Profane Hunting Cont.

Required Reading: (OR) Renteria-Valencia, “Ethics, Hunting Tales, and the Multispecies Debate: The Entextualization of Nonhuman Narratives” Reo and Wryte, “Hunting and Morality as Elements of Traditional Ecological Knowledge”

**Week 12: Quiz 2**

Topic: Reincarnation and Animals

Required Reading: (AWR) *Hinduism* 56-90, (COS) “A vast unsupervised recycling plant: Animals and the Buddhist Cosmos” 207-217

**Week 13**

Topic: Animal Agriculture

Film: Okja, directed by Bong Joob-ho

Required Reading: (COS) “Agribusiness: Farming Without Culture” (568-582)

**Week 14**

Topic: Anthrozoology – Human Animal Relationships in Context

Required Reading: (LHE) Chapter 2 (37-66), Chapter 6 (149-175), Chapter 7 (175-204)

**Week 15**

Topic: How Does This Apply to Me?

Required Reading: (COS) The Dance of Awe, Interview with Jane Goodall (651-656),  
(LHE) Chapter 10 (263-279)

**Week 16- Final Exam, Final Project Presentations**

## Reading Responses

### Week 1: Introduction Getting to Know You

Name \_\_\_\_\_ you'd prefer to be called \_\_\_\_\_

Major \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for taking this course?

\_\_\_\_\_

What is your favorite animal? \_\_\_\_\_

If you could be any animal (besides human 😊) which would you be?

\_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

### Week 2: Speciesism

After watching the film “Speciesism” directed by Mark Devries, give your definition and stance on speciesism, do you think that the film is convincing? Is the argument sound, do you agree or disagree with anything in particular? Overall, do you believe it is a well-done documentary? Please back up all opinions with examples from the film and elaborate. If you liked the film, say what you liked, and if you disliked the film, explain which parts you found problematic.

Secondly, address whether anything about this film was emotional, shocking, confusing, exciting, etc. And, in particular, consider the scene in which Mark Devries interviews the Rabi and creates an argument for comparison between the “Animal Holocaust” and the Holocaust of World War Two. Do you feel that the concepts of suffering are accurate in Devries opinion given the definition of speciesism? What is your opinion?

### Week 3: Animals and Religion in Context

The article “Caught With Ourselves” by Kimberly Patton examines the emotional relationships of humans and animals through a variety of historical and religious contexts, which of these examples is most striking to you? Explain why. Also, Patton references Claude Levi-Strauss' book *Totemism*, and introduces the idea that some animals are “good to think”. Explain what you think this means and describe which animals you would consider as “good to think”.

### **Week 5: Greco-Roman Myth**

Choose one of the stories we've discussed in class or that was assigned in the reading and elaborate on the symbolic purpose of that animal within Greco-Roman culture. (For example, you may choose to discuss the dolphin as symbolic of death and rebirth or as a savior figure.) Examine which attributes the animal possesses that you think qualify it for the symbolic role and elaborate on the function and type of myth in which it is found.

### **Week 6: Animal Sacrifices**

Compare your previous experience and understanding of animal sacrifice (whether from assumption, exposure from media etc) with what you have learned in class and from the reading. Is there any major component or idea that is new information to you? Do you feel given the specifics of intention and culture that animal sacrifices are a functional way to communicate with the divine?

### **Week 7: Animals as Divine**

What factors in a culture do you think primarily influence the existence of anthropomorphic deities. Choose a deity we have discussed in the reading or in class and explain why the features of that particular animal (within cultural context) make it suited for divinity. For example, consider what characteristics of an elephant are apparent in Ganesha, or why would Anubis have the head of a jackal? You may include modern cultural understanding of these animals in your explanation, but your primary focus should be on the specific culture and time period applicable to your deity of choice.

### **Week 8: Christianity and Animals**

Christianity has had a major hand in influencing the shaping of the culture western world. In what ways, if any, do you think that Christianity has influenced the relationship between humans and animals in modern American culture. Reflect on and compare the stories and medieval bestiary in your answer.

### **Week 9: Midterm Review**

Reflecting on the material we have covered so far, what major themes have you noticed in relationships between animals and the divine? What do you think can be said about the relationship with humans as they interact with nature and animals when animals perform divine functions or hold religious significance?

### **Week 11: Hunting**

Explain a few major differences and similarities between indigenous hunting and modern hunting. Emphasize the variety in purpose of modern hunting, for example, do we find trophy hunting in indigenous culture, does it function in the same way? How do the different tools, methods, and intentions influence the mood of the hunt. Does religion influence these aspects of hunting now, how?

### **Week 14: You are what you Eat**

Examine the quote, “If slaughterhouses had glass walls, everyone would be vegetarian.” What does this mean to you?

Many religious traditions have dietary laws that specifically deal with the use of animals for food, examine why you think this is the case. Consider the moral applications of processing animals for food and the variance between slaughter houses and hunting. Were moral dietary laws more important when animals were prepared for food more personally as apposed to behind the closed doors of a slaughter house? You may also choose to draw comparisons from the material we’ve reviewed about animal sacrifice and/or hunting to formulate your response.

### **Week 15: Modern Applications**

Reflecting upon the material of the course have any of your perspectives or ideas been challenged or changed? Has anything in your personal life changed, why or why not?

### **Midterm Essay Prompt**

The midterm essay requires all students to take a visit to the zoo, a farm sanctuary, animal shelter, in the wild or at a wildlife preserve (a list of be provided by the instructor) and choose one species, or one individual with which to interact. Explain your choice in location and which animal or animals you choose to observe. Invest in this experience, try to determine the instincts, thought process, emotions, etc of the animal/animals you've selected.

Nearly all animals are featured in a religious tradition, mythology, or fable, find a story about the animal you've selected (it may be useful to select a myth or story prior to your choice in animal), and compare what you've found in your personal observations to the characteristics in the story. What similarities or differences do you notice? If applicable, do you think that captivity has altered the animal you've chosen to observe in any way? What can you determine about the culture and the myth based on their interpretations of the animal you've chosen?

**Important\*\*\***

**Please save a ticket stub from the location you choose to visit and take a few photos of your experience to turn in with your essay.**



## Quiz One

### Short Answer- (½ point each)

1. Which three Greek Gods are associated with the dolphin in the myth of Arion?

Answer: Poseidon, Apollo, and Dionysus

2. True or False? Anger over the death of Cecil the Lion by individuals who eat meat could be considered a speciesist response.

Answer: True

3. In Roman religion, the practice of observing the flight of birds as divination was called \_\_\_\_\_ and the individuals who practiced this skill were called \_\_\_\_\_?

Answer: Auspicious, Augures

4. True or False? The Conversion to Christianity by Constantine the Great changed the way in which the horse was viewed symbolically.

Answer: False

### Short Response- (3 points)

Choose **one** question and respond with a thoughtful and detailed paragraph.

1. Define "Speciesism".
2. Describe two possible interpretations of the paintings in Chauvet Cave.
3. Briefly describe the significance of Athenian girls "acting the she-bear" before marriage.

## Quiz Two

### Short Answer- (½ point each)

1. According to the Roman religious rules, what color and sex of animal would be most appropriate to sacrifice to Apollo?

Answer: White, Male.

2. Which particular animal is most closely associated with the ability to understand the language of all animals according to the Greek tradition?

Answer: Snake

3. Which two therianthrohic deities are connected to the afterlife in Egyptian mythology.

Answer: Anubis and Horus

4. Which saint was upset by the offer to “level the mountains to create rich meadows on [his] behalf”?

Answer: St. Kevin

### Short Response- (3 points)

Choose **one** question and respond with a thoughtful and detailed paragraph.

1. How did the influence of Greek culture change the way in which Roman gods received sacrifices from their devotees?
2. Describe one of the stories we've reviewed of an animal associated with a vice in medieval Christian thought. Does this interpretation reflect modern American symbolic thought of that animal?
3. Name and briefly describe the one of the four types of divine food giving traditions held by many Northern plains groups.

## Midterm Exam

### Fill in the Blank- (1 point each)

1. According to Greek poets, what civilized pleasure were dolphins said to enjoy?

Answer: Music

2. According to Thomas Berry the world should be seen as a “communion of subjects” as opposed to a\_\_\_\_\_.

Answer: Collection of objects

3. True or False: Testing pharmaceutical drugs on lab rats or cosmetics on rabbits to avoid testing them on people is a speciesist practice.

Answer: True

4. Which animals make up the underworld goddess Ahemait?

Answer: Lion, crocodile, hippopotamus

5. Haruspices practiced divination by \_\_\_\_\_ and were unique among the priestly because\_\_\_\_\_.

Answer: Reading the entrails of animals. They had to be of Etruscan origin.

6. The theory of animistic *numina* originates from a quotation by\_\_\_\_\_.

Answer: Augustine of Hippo

7. Northern Plains peoples practiced rituals to affect the outcome of a specific hunt, but more importantly these rituals were about\_\_\_\_\_.

Answer: Ensuring a continuing food supply or renewing the animals or world renewal.

8. Helinand of Froidmont compared the Virgin Mary to a(n) \_\_\_\_\_ to represent her \_\_\_\_\_.

Answer: Elephant, Chastity **or** Ox, Diligence

9. According to Greco-Roman tradition, what primary concept did horses represent?

Answer: Victory

10. True or False: Ancient Egyptians distinctly categorized sacred animals and animal deities as separate and different from each other.

Answer: False

Essay Questions- (5 points each)

Choose **two** questions and write a short essay on each. Answers should be thorough and thoughtful.

1. Describe the importance of, and explain the difference between, therianthrohic and theriomorphic deities in Egyptian culture.
2. Analyze and reflect on the idea from Herzog that human interactions with animals offer a unique look at human nature. Choose at least two examples from the reading to support your answers.
3. Explain the relevance of understanding animal language being connected with divination.

## Final Exam

### Fill in the Blank (1 point each)

1. Why did young Athenian girls, “act the she bear” specifically as a rite of passage before marriage?

Answer: To remove their wildness **or** to tame them.

2. True or False?: According to Reo and Whyte, the use of non-traditional hunting tools and practices undermines traditional moral codes.

Answer: False

3. According to Jay Daniels, which is the one religion that is incapable of bringing good news to the earth because it is “inherently un-ecological”?

Answer: Consumerism

4. What is the most important influence on whether we find a food delicious or disgusting?

Answer: Culture

5. Which Greek philosopher might be credited with starting the debate of “what comes first, the chicken or the egg? Which did he argue came first?

Answer: Aristotle, the Chicken

6. What basic flaw in animal agriculture was discovered during the farm crisis of 1998?

Answer: Agribusinesses make money when they sell confinement systems and the factory farm method, but it does not relate to the prices of livestock and is dependent on exports to succeed.

7. In Herzog's Love/Hate/Eat, which animal was credited as being more logical than human's in choosing their homes?

Answer: Ants

8. Who is more likely to be a vegetarian, a Buddhist or a Hindu? Which ethical principle influences this?

Answer: A Hindu, ahimsa.

9. What is the standard Mahayana Buddhist expression that echoes Thomas Berry's notion of a “communion of subjects, not a collection of objects”?

Answer: “It is not easy to find a being who has not formerly been your mother, or your father, or your brother, your sister or your son or daughter” or “All beings can be considered as our father or mother”.

10. During the late Dynastic period, what unique phenomenon was practiced to create a new form of intermediary agent between humankind and gods?

Answer: The process of killing and carefully mummifying a young animal and creating a votive offering.

Essay Questions (5 points each)

Choose **two** questions and write a paragraph on each. Answers should be thorough and thoughtful.

1. Compare and/or contrast the terms “anymal” and “non-human animal”. In your opinion, which is a more appropriate term for the scope of this course. Cite specific examples from class discussion and readings in your answer.
2. Define and describe what Thomas Berry has called a “communion of subjects”, elaborate and expand using other material we've reviewed in the course.
3. Consider the film *Okja*, directed by Bong Joob-ho. Using the film and other materials we've reviewed in class argue and support what you find to be the main purpose and/or message of this film.

## Lecture Notes

### Introduction of Subject

**Objective:** Describe the atmosphere of the class, including general expectations and style. Introduce the students to the professor as well as the reading material and the structure of the assignments. Explain the grading system and the nature of the assignments, emphasizing which are optional and which are not.

**In Class Video:** Non-Human Animals: Crash Course Philosophy # 42 (9:46)

([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y3-BX-jN\\_Ac](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y3-BX-jN_Ac))

**LS** 'Does anyone have any questions or immediate reactions to the video that they'd like to share? What do you think about speciesism? Have you heard this term before? Do you think that you are a speciesist? If so, do you care, does this seem right or natural to you?'

**Key Points:** (Lecture Script (LS)) 'In this course, we are going to be looking at several different cultures and time periods, including our own, to analyze the relationship between animals and people, religion, and culture in general. We'll talk about animals in mythology, their significance to rites, cultures, or locations. Also, anthropomorphic animals as they appear in pantheon's such as ancient Egypt and Eastern Culture, or as being associated with the divine, such as the lamb of Christ, or the companion animals of Greek and Roman gods. We'll also discuss hunting and the rituals, or lack thereof, surrounding hunting animal agriculture, factory farming, animal testing, and speciesism. And, in doing so we're going to analyze the moral and philosophical problems that are associated with these subjects.'

**Review of Syllabus and Grading Process: (LS)** I understand that the grading system may be a little confusing on first glance, so I'd like to quickly go over it and address any questions that you may have. The purpose of the course is for you to be able to engage at a level and in such a way in which you feel comfortable. You'll notice that the total amount of points for the course is greater than 100, which is of course a perfect score. There are a few reasons for this, but please note that you cannot score higher than 100% in this class. This should allow you some flexibility in the assignments that you choose to complete.

- The first category is Participation, this class works best with participation from all students so that we can explore different ideas collaboratively. As long as you attend classes and regularly contribute to conversation, and do not accumulate unexcused absences, you should not have to worry about these points.
- The second are the Reading Responses, these are worth five points each and ten will be offered total though you'll only need to complete six for full credit so you have a choice of which assignments you'd like to complete. The prompt will open on Monday and will be due by 11:59pm the following Sunday. Once that week closes you won't be able to go back and answer that question so please keep that in mind.
- There will be two Quizzes in class, these are worth 5 points each and these are required. They are meant to be practice for the format and style of the midterm and final.



- The midterm and final will be straight forward short answer and short essay questions. However, you can opt out of taking the final and instead do the final project. The final project is designed to be intentionally flexible, but should be the equivalent amount of work to a 6-8 page research paper on any approved course related topic of the student's choice. Students must have their project topics approved by the professor before the midterm.'

**Disclaimer: (LS)**'Please understand that we are going to talk about subjects in this course that you may find sensitive, unsettling, offensive, or frustrating. I understand that this is a touchy subject in many ways. What I ask is that we remember that we are here in an academic setting, and that we are all adults, considering that I request that we conduct ourselves with respect, curiosity, and compassion. I know that there are going to be emotional responses to some of this material, and I want us to be able to talk about and explore those emotions in a constructive and useful way. I may show videos or photos that you find uncomfortable would ask that you use this discomfort as a catalyst for critical thinking and self-reflection. I hope there will be debates and constructive arguments between varying opinions, but fighting or personal attacks will not be tolerated. To remain constructive this class room must remain a safe space for everyone to talk and express their opinions, thoughts, and insights. Any student being disrespectful of this safe space will be asked to leave the class for that day. In short, be kind and respectful to one another, and remember that to be open to new ideas, especially ones that are not your own, is a sign of intelligence and good character.'

## Speciesism

**Objective:** To explore speciesism as a philosophy, but also as a practical thought process of modern society; and in doing so understand and evaluate the role of speciesism with a particular emphasis on the contradictions and flawed logic that underline the topic. Also to examine the flexibility of speciesism, and how it is dependent on not only culture but also the individual.

**In Class Video:** NA – Film to be viewed before class.

**Key Points:** Speciesism is not a logical concept, it is not true always, everywhere, and for everyone. We are all speciesist in one way or another. Personal note/example:

(LS)'Even as a vegan, I am still speciesist. There is no one, except perhaps an extremely devoted Jainist, who is not at least slightly speciesist. I would do everything I could to prevent harming an animal, but I do kill spiders in my house when I am too scared to take them outside. And though I avoid it on principle, I do not associate the same guilt over consuming honey that I do with consuming cow's milk. Both are technically the secretion of an animal, but I *feel* very differently about them. That, in essence, is speciesism.'

**Assigned Reading:** (LS)'One of the main reason's I've introduced Herzog's book to this class is because of his emphasis on the “gray area”, because most of us currently operate in this zone whether we are aware of it or not. We've all been introduced to the concept of speciesism now and we can begin to think through the process in a similar way as Herzog. Does anyone recall the particular example that he sites as starting his though process? (Answer: Being falsely accused of feeding kittens to snakes.) This is an

interesting idea isn't it? It undoubtedly makes us uncomfortable to think about as whether we prefer them as pets or not, we have agreed as a culture that cats are companion animals. So the idea of using cats as feed for another animal is a little unsettling. How does his comparison to the use of mice work in this equation? Or his consideration of euthanized cats from “shelters” as feed for pet snakes. Does this remind you of the Crash Course video, where they introduce the idea that once your pet cat has passed away that you eat her rather than bury her?'

**Relevant Quotes/Excerpts:**

**(LS)** I'd like to open today with a quote from a man named William Ralph Inge. He was an Englishman, born in 1860, a Christian priest as well as being a religious professor at Cambridge. He was nominated for a Nobel Prize in Literature and was a clergyman in the Church of England. He has a handful of quotes regarding animals and religion but the quote of his I'd like us to consider is this one:

“We have enslaved the rest of the animal creation, and have treated our distant cousins in fur and feathers so badly that beyond doubt, if they were able to formulate a religion, they would depict the Devil in human form.”- William Ralph Inge

I would consider this one of the uncomfortable topics that we will discuss in the class, I think it's very easy to shrug this off or not look to deeply at it, but I am curious as to your initial reaction to reading or hearing something like this. How does a person come to a conclusion like this? What thought process was required by Inge to reach this

conclusion? Do you find this statement to be challenging or controversial, or do you think that this is an easy fact? Does the fact that Inge is a member of the clergy surprise you or does it make sense?

Animals and World Religions: Introduction - Does anyone have an opinion or any thoughts on this phrasing of “non-human animals”? Do you find it to be activist/hippie speak or do you feel it's scientifically accurate, or something in between? Do you think it's useful in this context of animals and religion?

Speciesism the Film – Do you feel you have a concrete understanding of the term? Has the film surprised or interested you in any particular way? (Set up for discussion board question)'

### **Animals and Religion in Context**

**Objective:** Examine the basics of relationships between humans and animals in the context of religion and culture.

**In Class Video:** Disney Classics Sing-a-long: Pocahontas, Colors of the Wind (3:34)

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O9MvdMqKvpU>)

**(LS)** 'Any ideas on why I showed you this? Other than to make you nostalgic for your childhoods? (Pause for suggestions) The reason I played this clip, and in particular one that allowed you to read the lyrics while it played is that despite some faults with this film, the overall message is quite powerful, particularly this song. Other than being funny and entertaining, the lyrics are very connected to the message of Thomas Berry in the introduction. The lyrics I want to draw the most attention to are :“You think the only people who are people, are the people who look and think like you. But if you walk the footsteps of a stranger, you'll learn things you never knew you never knew.” First we get the play on words that the definition of “people” as only relating to humans is inaccurate. We also have assumption that the bear is automatically an enemy or pest. And second, the suggestion of multiple intelligences, and the idea that the animals have something important that we could learn something from if only we paid attention to them. What do you think about the message of this film, or the lyrics in particular being presented in movie whose intended audience is children? Can you think of films that have relayed this message to adults? There is also an important dual purpose to the song, not only is Pocahontas defending the animals, but primarily she is defending nature which is a much

more common theme, particularly when we have concerns such as climate change. So there are several films I can think of that defend human damage or misuse of nature, (James Cameron's *Avatar* for example) but are there any that deal specifically with animals? Are more directed towards children than adults? Why would that be?

Examples:

Children: Babe, Free Willy, Lassie, Black Beauty, Air Bud, Andre, 101 Dalmatians, Brother Bear

Adult: King Kong, War Horse, Mighty Joe Black, White Fang, Planet of the Apes, Jaws, Jurassic Park, Turner and Hooch, Life of Pi

Either: Secondhand Lions, Two Brothers, Dr. Doolittle, Max'

**Key Points:** Animals have consistently occupied a space in religious and cultural traditions. Humans and “non-human animals” are co-inhabitant's of the planet, a shift in culture has emphasized the superiority of humans over non-human's and has reflected in cultural traditions. The nature of the human-animal relationship has become centered on the idea of use or value rather than cohabitation.

**Relevant Quotes/Excerpts:**

Communion of Subjects, Heritage of the Volume pg. 2-“The implications of this massive loss of biodiversity are only beginning to be understood, at the same time as we are appreciating anew the unique kinds of intelligence that distinguish the more-than-human

world. It is the subtle interactions of these intelligences that constitute what Thomas Berry has called “a communion of subjects”...The multiple intelligences and rich emotional life of each species contributes to the larger whole and creates the grounds for communion, resonance, and relationships.”

COS, Prologue pg. 8 - “The difficulty in our relation with the animals comes from the sense of *use* as our primary relationship with the world about us. Hardly any other attitude betrays ourselves and the entire universe in which we live.

**LS** 'Based on what you have read so far, do you believe that there is a significant difference in the relationships with humans and animals between the east and west? Consider both modern and historical applications. Is there a difference in the way animals are treated, or are animals simply ranked differently? (Introduce the question) : Is there a difference between *use* and *abuse*?'

### **Greco-Roman: Symbolic Animals**

**Objective:** Review the function of speciesism in the ancient and classical world and examine animals as symbolic or representative figures.

**In Class Video:** NA

**Alternative Visuals:** Show photos of animals, ask students to offer first impressions on what they think that animal symbolizes. Animals to include: Bear, Lion, Wolf, Owl, Monkey, Spider, Horse, Elephant, Shark, Snake, Butterfly, House Cat, Dog, Fox, Dove, Bull, Eagle, Tiger, Sloth

**Key Points:** Animals have value (or not) to a culture often based on what that animal represents to them. Representations and symbolic associations are often connected with the personality, physical appearance, and proximity of that given animal. The influence and effect of Aristotle's way of thinking on the modern world. Introduction of the concept of animals and the natural world as being designed for the use of people. Expand on *use* vs *abuse*. Does this work in a modern society plagued with climate crisis?

**Relevant Quotes/Excerpts:**

Beaulieu-“No sea creature was more prominent than the dolphin in Greek literature, folklore, and mythology. Despite its feral nature, poets insisted that the dolphin enjoyed the very civilized pleasure of music. The dolphin's gentle behavior and intelligence made it a welcome sight to sailors, who believed that dolphins brought good luck and guided ships to safe harbour. When sailors were unlucky and suffered shipwreck, it was thought



that dolphins rescued the living and brought the dead to shore for burial, showing a concern for human funerary rights that was unique in the animal world. In fact, dolphins were considered sacred and could not be hunted or eaten.”

**LS** 'How does the relationship between the ancient Greek's and dolphins develop? In examining the modern western understanding of dolphin behavior and nature, does their relationship make sense? The dolphin functions as a psychopomp, but also as a sign of good luck – consider the role of Psychopomp to the ancient Greeks, Hermes and Charon are both other examples, is there a contradiction to the dolphin standing for good luck and as a intermediary between life and death? Is there a modern understanding of the dolphin in the same way? Does the fact that the Greeks were sea faring people influence this association?'

Clutton-Brock - “ He [Aristotle] believed that everything in Nature had a purpose, and this purpose was for the benefit of Mankind. He wrote, “plants are evidently for the sake of animals, and animals for the sake of Man; thus Nature, which does nothing in vain, has made all things for the sake of Man.” And please note that whenever I say Man, I mean men and not women...the great importance of Aristotle's zoological works...is that they were the first attempt in Europe to observe and describe individual living animals in a scientific way.”

### **Animals as a Medium to the Divine**

**Objective:** Examine human-animal relationships as a means to communicate with divine forces. With particular emphasis on animals as the representatives of gods/goddesses and as animals as heralds of the desires/will of the gods/goddesses.

**In Class Video:** Rome, “Good Signs” clip (0:51)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6VfRhysVfAY>

**LS** 'Based on the reading we've done so far do you think this scene is exaggerated? Is modern cynicism at play in this scene, or is it accurate to the time? Accurate or not, what does it say about the divinity of the animals perceived by the modern people creating this media?'

**Key Points:** How does reading animal signs, both of living animals and through the process of divination of animal entrails etc give the individual insight into the divine. Does the nature of the animals as they are associated to their particular deities influence the way in which the signs are interpreted. What is the significance and/or difference of birds as apposed to other animals?

**Relevant Quotes/Excerpts:**

Maras - “As a matter of fact, the core of the augural science was in the rituals or *auspicium*, performed in a specific form and according to exact rules.” “As may be discovered from the literary sources, in an Etrusco-Roman context, a further important

instance of divination through the observation of birds deserves additional attention. The reference is to the mythical controversy between Romulus and Remus which determined who was to be the founder of Rome, and concluded eventually with the death of the latter. The story of how Romulus-the allegedly saintly founder of Rome, deceived his brother Remus like a common swindler, is one that has provoked unease among the annalists recording it. It raises the important question of whether the ritual challenge between the twins should be considered *auspicium* or as an *augurium*.”

What is the difference? Auspicium is receiving omens of good or bad fortune based on the flight and behavior of birds. Augurium is the interpretation of the will of the gods based on the flight and behavior of birds.

Guarisco - “It is thus possible to assert that the she-bear and the young girl share a partly wild nature. As the Brauronian myth shows [a young girl killed when mistreating a bear considered tame, causing the bear to be killed in turn by her brothers, resulting in famine for the village] such a nature could be very dangerous for the community. Acting the she-bear was probably a ritual way of erasing the ambivalence between wildness and tameness typical of maidens by assuming temporarily the identity which best symbolized it: the identity of the she-bear which became used to eating together with humans but retained the capacity to injure or kill one of them.’

## **Animal Sacrifice**

**Objective:** Continue to discuss the use of animal relationships as a way to communicate with the divine, however with an emphasis on the function, purpose, and process of animal sacrifice.

**In Class Video:** Rome, “Bloodbath” (1:05)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yUdxy836WY4>

**Key Points:** Explore the purpose and function of animal sacrifice as a medium of communication, supplication, and appeasement. Analyze what animal sacrifice tell us about the value placed on an animal to be sacrificed. Does the sacrifice increase or decrease that animal's value to that society? Why sacrifice animals at all? Explore the differences in deities that prefer bloodless sacrifice such as wine, fruit, bread etc.

**LS** What makes an animal sacrifice a good ritual act to please a deity. Why do they want them? What thought process would a person have had participating in the sacrificial act?

Consider one of the stories of Prometheus? It is acknowledged that the gods need the sacrifice there is something in the essence of the dead animal that either gets their attention or supplies them with spiritual nutrients of some kind. There are also stories of great hero's who have traveled to the underworld and visit the dead. The dead are unable to communicate with the living until they have drank animal blood. is there a consolation between these two stories? Is it the essence of Life that is important in these cases?

Consider the story of Iphigenia, she was sacrificed to the goddess Artemis to allow the

Greeks to sail to Troy. Some accounts tell that the goddess swept her out of the way at the last moment and replaces her with a white ewe. Does this version of the myth see the ewe of high or low value as a replacement?'

**Relevant Quotes/Excerpts:**

“The theory of animistic *numina* (called “numinism”) originates mainly from a quotation by Augustine of Hippo citing information derived from Varro, that the Romans had worshiped their gods without images for one hundred and seventy years, from 753 BCE to about 580 BCE. In truth, there are even more ancient images of the old gods, in wood or stone, with their symbols and attribute, their artistry being cruder. Initially having an abstract form, deities gradually acquired a more concrete one. We would like to propose a theory related back to Arnobius and the theory of numinsim: in early times, there were no particular representations or depictions of deities, and images of *numina* existed only in an abstract form in the mind and imaginations of their devotees. They had neither age, nor face, nor characteristic attributes. Later, through assimilation with the Greek gods, writers and artists began to give divinities one or more imagines, features, looks and expressions, attributes, sacred animals and attendants.”

**LS** 'As characteristics emerge, animals and symbols assigned, sacrificial rules developed.

### **Animals as the Divine**

**Objective:** Review cultures to whom animals are divine, or the divine is represented as an animal. Examine in which ways, if any, these cultures differ from cultures with more anthropomorphic deities. Focus on therianthrohic deities of Ancient Egypt and Hinduism.

**In Class Video:** Army of Anubis (0:55)

([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X\\_H8GVFQv9s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X_H8GVFQv9s)) (LS) 'Tell me what's wrong with this clip. Is it accurate in any way? What does it say about the modern interpretation of Egyptian religion in regards to the depiction of Anubis?'

The Sacred Animals of the Pharaohs (0:00-7:32)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XpfcvklmuoA>

**Key Points:** Examination of essential cultural motifs that are different in Egypt as opposed to Greece which alters the way in which they perceive animals. Explanation of why the Egyptian deities start out as fully animal in depiction and gradually evolve to the therianthrohic deities. This might suggest what specifically about Egyptians? Analyze the reverence and equality in the way these gods are depicted. Also of important note is that it is not simply one deity that is therianthrohic, but nearly all of them. Explore which geographic features and weather patterns about Egypt that may have influenced this perception of animals.

**Relevant Quotes/Excerpts:**

Houlihan - "There remains today a widely held misconception that the pharaonic Egyptians practiced zoolatry, the worship of animals. This was certainly not the case. Animals linked with Egyptian deities received adoration because it was believed that a particular species, or a number of individuals of the species, were uniquely beloved by a particular god, and thus served as the god's symbol and earthly manifestation."

"Originally a deity was thought to manifest itself in a single, specially selected representative of a given species. This chosen revered creature lived a pampered life, housed in a temple precinct until its natural death."

"The ancient Egyptians general attitude towards the animal world was always a very positive indeed. The excesses of the Late Dynastic Period and beyond may perhaps be viewed as proper intentions gone sadly awry. The multitude of charmingly expressed and sympathetic renditions of animals found decorating the walls of temples and tomb-chapels over many centuries clearly reflect a caring and respectful relationship with them. Here, animals are frequently portrayed in a loving fashion at the side of people, both at home and on the farm."

## **Christianity and Animals**

**Objective:** A review of Christianity as it views animals both scriptural, within religious stories, and practically. Create a conversation of analysis over the inconsistencies and contradictions that occur. Also, review the personalities associated with certain animals in the view of the church and what these animals represent.

**In Class Video:** YaleBritishArt: Art in Context: Elisabeth Fairman on "Helmingham Herbal and Bestiary" (3:20)

Suggested Video: SOAS University of London : Andrew Linzey: Can Christianity become good news for animals?

**Key Points:** Compare the understanding of animals as being for use as a gift from god, or as creatures without a rational soul, mind, or reason. Animals presented as for the service and use of man vs man as stewards and caretakers of the earth. Also, examine animals which represent vice and virtue and why.

**LS** 'What does it say about medieval view of animals that vice was more often associated with them than virtue. But at the same time, both Mary and Jesus were associated with animals? Usually domestic animals. Does this contradiction within Christian tradition have some influence over the current cultural conflicts in the US particularly? With many American's practicing Christianity, the argument of animals and nature as "for us" have caused problems in solving issues such a climate change and are used to justify meat eating and factory farming.'



### **Relevant Quotes/Excerpts:**

Kemmerer-

“Many saints viewed dwelling close to nature as dwelling close to God, and chose a life in which they shared time and space with animals. For example, St. Kevin of Ireland preferred to dwell where “the wild things of the mountains and the woods came and kept him company, and would drink water, like domestic creatures, from his hands”. He did not consume these fellow creatures, or their body fluids and eggs, but only “nuts of the forest” and “herbs of the earth””

“Emphasizing the spiritual importance of animals, the Catholic Christian tradition holds patron saints for a handful of animals, particularly domestic animals likely to need protection from exploitative humans”

“Jesus, the Christian moral exemplar, was most often associated not with powerful carnivores, but with “lambs, donkeys, and doves, animals that are gentle and easily abused”

Kienzle - “From the wily fox to the lowly moth, animals and their behavior came to symbolize dissident Christians and their conduct.”

“Many medieval characterizations of animals are negative, with animals often representing vices or evil in some form. The Second Letter of Peter may have provided

Christian exegetes the connection between heresy and animals in its comparison of false teachers and prophets to animals, destined to be caught and killed.”

“Helinand of Froidmont, for example, unflinchingly compared the Virgin Mary to an elephant in one sermon and to an ox in another when he sought to praise the chastity represented by the pachyderm and the diligence embodied in the ox.”

### **Sacred and Profane Hunting**

**Objective:** Analyze, in the most constructive way possible, the relationship between hunting, culture, and religion. Review the major differences between aboriginal and “native” hunting and modern hunting, with particular emphasis on the relationship between the hunter and their prey.

**In Class Video:** The Great Dance – A Hunter's Story (0:00-8:08)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UisnHp0Oqc4>

Deer Hunting with Glock 20! Opening Day Hunt (3:00-10:24)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mz3s4Nvxi-8&t=4s>

**(LS)** 'What if anything is the difference between these clips? Is there a difference?

Examine the thought process the tools and the motivation of the individuals involved.

Story telling as a process of the hunt

**Key Points:** How does religion influence hunting? Animals in both context are seen as being presented for the use and consumption of people by the divine. Explore the idea of animals as a gift, not as an individual. How does the thought process of animals as created for human use ethically influence hunting?

**Relevant Quotes/Excerpts:**

Reo/Wryte - “Consistent with our dynamic conception of traditions, incorporation of a single or set of non-traditional practices, we argue, does not render the entire subsistence system non- traditional. That is to say, non-traditional tools and practices by themselves do not necessarily or consequentially deter- mine the moral code of those who adopt

them. Adoption and long-term integration of non-traditional tools and practices into subsistence systems may in fact be guided by a community's traditional moral code.”

Valencia - “Assuming nonhumans as authoring subjects in their own right, Van Dooren and Rose advance the notion of storied-places, a concept centered on the capacity of animals to create via their (recorded) actions meaningful time-binding sequences in relation to their own experience of place. To illustrate this type of story-making, they refer to Shepard’s work (1996:16 cited in van Dooren and Rose 2012:4–5) who describes how an animal weaves sounds, smells, or other experiences into a meaningful sequence so as to, for example, determine whether a predator is drawing nearer or farther away, and on this basis make life-or-death decisions about what to do. “What interests us,” writes Van Dooren, “is the fact that the experiences of many nonhuman animals are rendered meaningful by them in a way that might be recognized and thought about through the familiar lens of ‘narrative’” (van Dooren and Rose 2012:4).”

Harrod- “The traditions dealt with in this chapter provided symbolic layers that enabled Northern Plains peoples to imagine how, at some time in their past, they received the gift of animals. Animals were assigned status in social reality that provided support for the necessary hunting and killing of them that occurred in these societies. Clearly these traditions were products of the religious imagination, as were the creation accounts, and they were very richly imagined. They provided a complex context for understanding human-animal relationships and some of these traditions informed the ritual practices that surrounded hunting.”

## Farming Without Culture

**Objective:** Expose students to the details of the practice of factory farming, create a dialogue about the lack of culture and compassion in modern farming.

**In Class Video:** watch1000eyes.com

(LS) ' I know that this video is extremely painful and uncomfortable to watch. This is a moment where I will stand on the activist soap box in some regards, but this is something we need to be aware of in our society. I wish that I could tell you that the footage is the exception but it simply isn't. This is the standard of factoring farming and industrial slaughterhouses. And I believe, as do many others, that we have to look, we have to know what this practice looks like. Gary Yourofsky, a sometimes controversial vegan activist said it best. "If it's not good enough for your eyes, why is it good enough for your stomach."

This particular video was filmed in Australia, but reflects the same industrial farming practices as in the US. In the United States it is illegal to film inside slaughterhouses, and activists who are caught doing so can be tried as terrorists which makes filming in the US difficult and dangerous, though people still do it.

<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/109/s3880/text>

**In Class Assignment:** Divide students into groups of approximately 4 (depending on class size) and ask them to come up with an example of what an ideal animal agriculture industry would look like. Describe in as much detail as possible conditions in which the

animals will be raised, how they will be treated while alive and while they are killed, how they should be killed and then processed for food.

**Key Points:** The removal of culture and personal interaction with the process of food creation, both animal foods and otherwise, distances individuals from an intimate understanding of where their food comes from and obscures what the true cost in time, labor, and suffering on the part of factory farmed animals.

**Relevant Quotes/Excerpts:**

“We know, at least, that this decision (ending factory farming) will help prevent deforestation, curb global warming, reduce pollution, save oil reserves, lessen the burden on rural America, decrease human rights abuses, improve public health, and help eliminate the most systematic animal abuse in history.”

“The factory farm has succeeded by divorcing people from their food, eliminating farmers, and ruling agriculture by corporate fiat.”

—Jonathan Safran Foer, *Eating Animals*

“If slaughterhouses had glass walls, everyone would be vegetarian. Animals raised on modern factory farms and killed in slaughterhouses endure almost unimaginable suffering. I hope that once you see the routine cruelty involved in raising, transporting, and killing animals for food, you’ll join the millions of people who have decided to leave meat off their plates—for good.” ~ Paul McCartney

### **Modern Applications/ How Does this Apply to Me?**

**Objective:** Broadly analyze and review the major points of the semester and compare student's thoughts and feelings from the beginning of the course to the end. See if any changes in attitude have arisen and if so why/what was the information that caused the change in thought.

**In Class Video:** Meat-Eaters Visit Farmed Animals for the First Time, PETA (4:51)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=966cgOSBGXc>

LC 'Even though PETA can be considered extreme or problematic, I think this video is sweet and even though it can read a little like propaganda it showcases The Gentle Barn and I think it functions well to make a point.'

Seeker, Why We Love Dogs More Than Humans (3:59)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RKKXQP6vehM>

LC 'Herzog's thesis seems to be, we are all hypocrites and the nature of human-animal relationships is more complicated than we thought it would be. Given the nature of his book, is this argument/thesis sufficient? The volume is dripping with stories of realizing the nature, beauty, and intelligence of animals, wild and domestic. Anecdotes on acting with compassion first and tales of activists changing their whole lives to help animals. Is it anticlimactic then to say, it's complicated? Or is it accurate?'

**Relevant Quotes/Excerpts:**

Herzog - “The philosopher Immanuel Kant argued that humans should not mistreat animals, but only because he felt that animals cruelty makes people more violent towards other people. The vision of the founders of Best Friends was the converse of Kant's dictum; they were convinced that being nice to animals makes us kinder to other humans”



### **Significance and Objectives**

The overall scope of this practicum syllabus is designed to function as an all inclusive course guide on the subject of human-animal relationships in the context of a variety of subjects and cultures. The primary objective of this project was to create a functioning course outline that could be easily used by any professor. The subjects addressed in the course range in scope from ancient Greco-Roman religion and mythology to modern factory farming practices and much more. The project includes a completed syllabus including reading assignments, a schedule, and a grading scale, as well as quizzes, exams, essay prompts, and weekly reading responses. In addition to these assignments there are also basic framework of lecture notes for each subject addressed within the course. The class is titled *Animals, Culture, and Religion*, and it is designed as a Humanities course with an emphasis on critical thinking, religious practice, and ethics with emphasis on creating many opportunities for student self-reflection and personal connection to course material.

The main focus of this study is the belief that human-animal relationships deserve unique and targeted consideration within the study of Humanities. The way in which animals are considered, classified, and treated by any given culture is a direct reflection on many cultural values. This project seeks to examine the place of animals in culture by rethinking current and historical approaches to human-animal relationships. Humanities can and should be used to explore human-animal relationships, particularly through the lens of ethics, religion, and philosophy. These issues allow for productive debate and

critical thinking insights which create understanding of humans and animals both as individuals and as cohabitants of given cultures.

By not only allowing, but encouraging students to engage personally in course material they are able to practice the fundamentals of Humanities on their own lives and beliefs. This introspection fosters creativity and the ability to personally connect with course material that may not always feel accessible to students. For example, students are invited to explore the purpose and moral implications of animal sacrifice in ancient Greece and compare that process to animal testing in the modern West. Both are ethical issues in their own way, but animal testing tends to illicit more emotional and personal response as it is more immediately relevant to students, this creates an emotional bridge to complex subjects and ideally allows students to open up into subjects in which they may not have previously engaged themselves. The recent coining and exploration of 'speciesism', the suggestion that individuals value species differently based on their culture and personal experiences, has created the opportunity for deeper understanding within the current as well as historical cultural context. This term gives a basic template with which to discuss and compare a variety of cultures, behaviors, and cases.

In creating the scope of this course and sourcing materials the primary goal was always to appeal to students of all backgrounds and to present materials in as unbiased a way as possible. Each source presented in class or in a reading assignment was selected with care to both challenge and inform students without proselytizing ideals. Sources that present themselves with bias were carefully labeled and identified, creating room for students to

learn to identify and interpret biased information and in doing do actively analyze sources. The course is also designed to illicit personal reactions, opinions, and thoughts from students and most of the reading response questions are intentionally framed in this way. The purpose is to cause students to personally engage in the material by asking them to form an opinion about the subject, rather than to only ask them to analyze or memorize. The quizzes and exams are formulated to bring up the other end academically and are focused on reading comprehension and analytical questions. This two part approach of personal engagement and comprehensive analysis is in an effort to fully immerse students in the liberal arts approach to learning. This format is also reflected in the formatting of the lecture notes which are meant to give a feel to what the class room environment might entail. Most classes are meant to be opened with a short video clip or other media, designed to engage auditory and visual learners. In most cases these videos are provocative, emotional, funny, or insightful and encourage students to express their opinions as a way of opening up the subject. Following these warm up videos, the assigned reading is discussed to add further dimension and present the facts of a given subject. The lecture notes also suggest small in-class group projects, in which students are given a question to solve as a group encouraging compromise, communication, and problem solving. Though the subject matter of this particular course covers a large breadth of material, students are encouraged to further explore the details of particular subjects that interest to them in the option of a final project, which can be completed in the place of the standard final exam.

The fundamental purpose underlying the study of Humanities should be to better understand ourselves and the world we live in, and by doing so to find compassion for others by furthering our knowledge and finding common ground. In a climate where opposing opinions are often roadblocks to analysis and conversation, Humanities classes which cover sometimes controversial subjects and teach balance of opinion and facts are essential to liberal arts education. Students often enroll in courses to simply tick a box on graduation requirements, by encouraging active participation rather than passive learning students who may have otherwise not have engaged personally are encouraged to find a way to do so.

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