

Animal Ethics Today

PHIL S417 / EP&E S417

*Syllabus subject to revision.



INSTRUCTOR: Jennifer Daigle

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TERM: Summer Session A

MEETING TIME: TTR 1-4:15pm

LOCATION: TBD

OFFICE HOURS: By appointment (see Policy Guide below)

ABOUT ME: Hi! My name's Jennifer, and you can call me that (including addressing me as such in emails – no need to be formal). I'm a PhD Candidate at Yale, specializing in ethics, including animal ethics. Other interests are hiking, tennis, and – unsurprisingly! – many of the other animals, including my four doggo companions.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to introduce students to central questions, themes, and approaches in today's animal ethics literature. Included among these are questions about moral status and about the relative moral status of humans and non-human animals, as well as questions about the role considerations of happiness, virtue, and inter-species relationships might play in our ethical theorizing. We begin by looking at seminal readings in the history of the animal rights movement, before turning to critical lines of response that have become important in shaping a new wave of literature and approaches, including from virtue ethicists, feminist philosophers, and philosophers of disability and race.

In addition to seminar meetings and readings, students' learning will be supplemented by watching two documentaries, as well as weekly participation in the seminar's discussion group and the writing of three philosophy papers.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Learning objectives for the course can be split between more content-oriented objectives, on the one hand, and more skills-oriented objectives, on the other. As to the **content-related objectives**, it is expected that students will be able to understand, or better understand

1. The similarities and differences across different ethical frameworks;
2. The concept of moral status and different proposals for what possessing it would require, as well as the debate over whether the concept should have any place at all in our ethical theorizing;

3. The concept of speciesism, and the debate over whether it's morally problematic, and relatedly what the claim to equal moral status between humans and non-humans might involve, and how it's been supported; and
4. The concept of the human-animal divide, and how some theorists have sought to use this as a way of arguing for the interconnectedness of various social justice movements.

As to the **skill-oriented objectives**, it is expected that students will improve at being able to

1. Read philosophical texts, identifying and reconstructing authors' main theses and the arguments in service of those theses;
2. Identify the various strengths, weaknesses, and assumptions of candidate answers to target questions (or of the arguments in support of those answers);
3. Construct and clarify for a reader/interlocutor their own philosophical arguments in support of their views;
4. Develop and respond to compelling objections to their views and arguments; and
5. Write philosophy papers, featuring a thesis statement and supporting argument, as well as objections and replies to that argument, all of which are presented in clear, focused prose, backed by examples and the minimal use of technical terminology and block quotations.

CLASS FORMAT

Students will be encouraged to not only gain familiarity with the views and arguments of the authors we will be reading, but to engage and evaluate those views and arguments, developing and sharing their own views and arguments, and understanding and engaging with those of their peers. So, whereas for each class students will have something new to read, during each meeting we will spend time discussing amongst ourselves the views, arguments, and questions at issue. The success of class meetings, therefore, will depend heavily both on students' preparation and participation (for details on preparation and participation, see the Policy Guide below).

REQUIRED MATERIAL AND RESOURCES

- **Readings.** Most readings will be available on the Canvas page for this course, under "Files". The only reading of which students will need to secure their own copy is J.M. Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals* (Princeton, 2016), with introduction by Amy Gutmann. This work is available in good used condition on several online platforms.
- **Films.** We will be watching the following two documentaries: (1) *Unlocking the Cage* (available on Apple TV) and (2) *Eating Animals* (available on [YouTube](#)). These are to be viewed before the class in which they are discussed. If you are experiencing difficulty in accessing this content, please let me know. I am sure there's an easy work-around, and would also be happy to set up a class viewing!
- **Online Discussion Forum.** In this class, we will be using the discussion board feature on Canvas. Students will be expected to participate in this way at least twice a week, either by posting or responding to a peer's post or comment. (See Assessment below.)

ASSESSMENT

Students' final grade will be based on their performance on three papers (5-6 pages each), as well as their preparation and participation, using the following distribution:

Best Paper 50% | 2nd Best Paper 30% | 3rd Best Paper 10% | Preparation & Participation 10%

Papers. For each paper, students will be given a choice of prompts from which they are expected to choose one. Each prompt will require that they not only describe some author's view or argument, but also evaluate it, saying whether they think the view or argument should be accepted or rejected and why. They will then be expected to develop, and respond to, at least one objection to their evaluation. In all, each paper will have four key components: (1) a thesis, (2) a descriptive section (in which they lay out some author's view or argument), (3) an evaluative section (in which they give their argument for their thesis, either supporting or rejecting the respective view or argument), and (4) an objections and replies section.

Preparation. Reading assignments are due on the day they are discussed in class. In addition to reading the text until the last page, you should look up unfamiliar words; circle parts of the text about which you have questions; and re-read parts of the text you do not understand. Always bring a hard copy of the required readings with you to class.

Participation includes participation (a) in classroom discussion and (b) on the Canvas forum.

(a) There's no single right way to participate in classroom discussion. In addition to taking notes and listening (both to me and to your classmates), you might join in (among other things):

Requesting clarification: "Jennifer claimed p. I don't know what p means. Would someone help clarify?"

Requesting argument: "Jennifer claimed p. Can anyone think of a good argument for p?"

Offering assistance: "Jennifer claimed p. I think p's plausible for the following reason..."

Offering an objection: Jennifer claimed p. I think p should be rejected for the following reason..."

Offering an interpretation: "Jennifer claimed p. I think there's an ambiguity, and that p could mean x or y."

(b) Students will be expected to do a total of two main posts. Each post should be approximately 200 words (range 150-250 words). In terms of content, posts are focused reflections on a single point, argument, or question raised in the reading assigned for that class day. In their posts, students might consider starting with a summary of the point of interest (e.g., Author X says that P...), before proceeding to reflect on that point, where this might include (but wouldn't be limited to) one of the following: maybe the student is puzzled about the point, and wants to raise a question; maybe they agree with the point, and want to offer a supporting argument; maybe they disagree with the point, and want to offer an objection; maybe they think the point has an important implication, and they want to explain what that implication is; maybe they're not 100% sure what some point/passage means, and they want to offer a possible interpretation; maybe they see a connection between that point and something else they've encountered, and they want to explain what that connection is, etc.

Students who aren't assigned to do a post for a given day are expected to respond to a post written for that day. They might consider (but are by no means limited to): asking for clarification, if something in the original post is unclear to them; offering a supporting consideration, if they agreed with one of the points made; offering an objection for the post's author to consider, if they thought there was a critique that the author should consider; making a connection between one of the claims or observations the author makes, and some other claim of interest; and asking a question about a possible implication, etc.

POLICY GUIDE

Academic honesty. By handing in the first written work assigned in this course, you are signifying that you have read, understood, and will fulfill the expectations and requirements outlined in [Yale's statement on academic honesty](#). If you have any questions at all about these expectations and the use of sources in your work, it's always better to ask me beforehand. Note that the [Writing Center](#), too, can also provide help on using sources.

Attendance is mandatory, including on all holidays.

Communication. Email's the best way to get in touch with me outside of class. I'll reply within one business day, unless it's complicated. If it's complicated, expect some delay – and possibly a treatise. Regardless, should you not receive a timely response, please resend. Email is also how I get in touch with you outside of class, so check your email regularly (e.g. once a day).

Electronics. No laptops, cellphones, e-readers, or electronic devices of any kind may be used during class. Students are expected to come to class with hard copies of any assigned readings.

Extensions & late submissions. You are always allowed to ask for an extension on a paper (note, though, that there are no extensions on posts or responses in the Online Discussion Forum). Here are the rules:

Rule 1: If you ask 24 hours in advance of the deadline, you don't need any reason to ask for an extension. Just email me with your plan (see Rule 4).

Rule 2: If you ask fewer than 24 hours in advance, please let me know the reason you need the extension. You don't have to go into detail if it's personal, but do fill me to the extent you can. If you're not sure if your reason is a good one, try me! It definitely won't hurt you.

Rule 3: Unexcused late work will receive a late penalty; your grade will be reduced by one notch for each day the assignment is late – e.g. A reduces to A-, B+ reduces to B, etc.). (Note that this rule doesn't apply if you have an extension – see Rules 1 and 2.)

Rule 4: Have a plan. Let me know when you will get the work turned in. Sometimes things happen such that you don't know when you'll plausibly be able to turn in an assignment. That's ok – just be as specific as you can be. If it turns out you need another extension, you can ask again. All rules apply to your new self-imposed deadline.

Office hours are your time to come chat with me about anything. These will primarily be conducted over Zoom. Because I find it very depressing to sit alone in a room with Zoom staring silently at me in the background, this semester my office hours are by appointment. Sign up for office hours by emailing me (jennifer.daigle@yale.edu). And please remember: it's part of my job (and all your instructors' jobs) to reserve *at least* one hour a week for conversations outside of class with you.

Special accommodations. The central importance of meeting the academic needs of every student cannot be overstated. If you have a disability that requires special accommodations, please let me know and contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS), located at 35 Broadway. SAS is reachable by phone (203-432-2324) and email (sas@yale.edu).

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

0 An Opening Question

Tuesday, May 27

Introduction to the Course

Syllabus

Shelly Kagan, *How to Count Animals, More or Less*, Introduction, pp. 1-5

Mary Midgley, "Persons and Non-Persons"

Onora O'Neill, "Kant on Duties to Non-Rational Nature"

1 Equality Views

Thursday, May 29

Utilitarianism & Equality of Interests

Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation*, Ch. 1, "All Animals Are Equal"

R.G. Frey, "Moral Standing, the Value of Lives, and Speciesism"

Tatjana Visak, "Do Utilitarians Need to Accept the Replaceability Argument?"

Tuesday, June 3

Equal Intrinsic Value & Deontic Approaches

Tom Regan, "The Case for Animal Rights"

Tom Regan, *The Case*, selections

Tom Regan and Peter Singer, "The Dog in the Lifeboat: An Exchange"

Gary Francione, "Comparable Harm and Equal Inherent Value: The Problem of Dog in the Lifeboat"

2 Protests

Thursday, June 5

"Humanity"

Bernard Williams, "On the Human Prejudice"

Cora Diamond, "Eating Meat and Eating People"

Tuesday, June 10

On the "Margins"

Eva Feder Kittay, "The Moral Significance of Being Human"

Alice Cary, "The Horrific History of Comparisons between Cognitive Disability and Animality (and How to Move Past it)"

Thursday, June 12

Humanizing the Non-Human

Martha Nussbaum, "The Capabilities Approach: Working with and for Animals"

Maneesha Deckha, "Humanizing the Nonhuman: A Legitimate Way for Animals to Escape Juridical Property Status?"

Aph and Syl Ko, *Aphro-ism*, Ch. 4, "By 'Human,' Everybody Just Means 'White'"

Aph and Syl Ko, *Aphro-ism*, Ch. 7, "Emphasizing Similarities Does Nothing for the Oppressed"

Unlocking the Cage (available on Apple TV)

3 A New Wave

Tuesday, June 17

Incomparability & Korsgaard's Neo-Kantian Approach

Christine Korsgaard, *Fellow Creatures*, Ch. 1, "Are People More Important than the Other Animals?"

Christine Korsgaard, *Fellow Creatures*, Ch. 2, "Animal Selves and the Good"

Christine Korsgaard, *Fellow Creatures*, Ch. 4, "The Case against Human Superiority"

Christine Korsgaard, *Fellow Creatures*, Ch. 8, "A Kantian Case for Our Obligations to the Other Animals"

Thursday June 19

Eudaimonist Virtue Ethics

Rosalind Hursthouse, "Applying Virtue Ethics to Our Treatment of the Other Animals"

Rebecca Walker, "The Good Life for Non-Human Animals: What Virtue Requires of Humans"

Eating Animals (available on [YouTube](#))

Tuesday, June 24

Empathy & Interspecies Relationships

Lori Gruen, *Entangled Empathy*, Ch. 2, "What Is Empathy?"

Lori Gruen, *Entangled Empathy*, Ch. 3, "Entanglements"

Hannah Monroe, "Ableism, Speciesism, Animals, and Autism: The Devaluation of Interspecies Friendships"

Thursday, June 26

Woundedness and The Limits of Philosophy

J.M. Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals*, pp. 15-69

Cora Diamond, "The Difficulty of Reality and the Difficulty of Philosophy"