

**POLI 119A: Animals, nature, and justice  
(Special topics in political theory)**

**Summer Session I, 2018, UC San Diego  
Instructor: Ike Sharpless**

**Course meets:** Mondays and Wednesdays from 2:00 to 4:50 PM

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11 AM to noon, outside of the Loft (upstairs at the Price Center)

**Contact:** [isharple@ucsd.edu](mailto:isharple@ucsd.edu)

**Outline of course content:** This course looks to a variety of texts to make sense of the status of nonhuman animals, especially concerning the nature of justice if and as it relates to animals. Rather than opening with a debate over “animal rights” vs “animal welfare” starting from the work of Peter Singer and/or Tom Regan, it comes at these questions instead from one long interpretive bundle of threads in the tradition running from Aristotle down to the present, emphasizing the range of answers on offer, both in antiquity (Aristotelians, Stoics, cynics, and epicureans) and the present (deontology, utilitarianism, contractarianism, care ethics, and virtue ethics) rather than any one answer—though the phenomenology and history/philosophy of biology, science, and nature is foregrounded here.

**Required text:** Richard Sorabji, *Animal Minds and Human Morals: the Origins of the Western Debate*

**Course objectives:**

- Engaging in careful, critical, and sympathetic reading practices
- Preparing to discuss topics at once critically and with an open mind

**Course expectations:** You can expect the following from me. I will: treat you with respect; respond to queries as promptly as I can manage; come to class and scheduled meetings prepared to discuss the material and assignments; provide any knowledge and guidance I can during office hours and discussion; grade your work with clear and transparent criteria, and provide feedback on how you can improve your writing and/or thinking; and do my best to scaffold an atmosphere of learning and open inquiry. In response, I expect each of you to: treat each other with respect; read the syllabus; come to class having done the required reading and ready to participate; and commit to this spirit of inquiry.

**GRADING**

**Two papers** (one 4 full double-spaced pages and one 6)

First paper outline (5%)

First paper (20%)

Second paper outline (5%)

Second paper (25%)

**8 reading questions.** Due on both sides of a 3x5 card for all but the first of our 9 classes. Doubles as **attendance** as well (6% each, with 3 lowest dropped, for a total of 30%).

Attendance – 2% each

Questions arising from the texts – 4% each

**Participation** (5%)

**Quick flipped class exercises** (10%) [signup sheet to be distributed on first day of class]

## OUTLINE OF COURSE

**(1) Mon July 2** – Introductions, concepts, outline of class. Also two short texts, distributed in advance: Clare Palmer, “Between the species: what, if anything, do we owe wild animals?;” excerpts from John Berger, “Why Look at Animals?”

**(2) Mon July 9 – Animals and the Aristotelian Legacy** Richard Sorabji, *Animal Minds & Human Morals; the Origins of the Western Debate* (1993) [1<sup>st</sup> of 3 sessions, on sections 1-5, or pp. 1-65]

**(3) Wed July 11 – Nature and the Question of Normativity** Sorabji's *Animal Minds & Human Morals* [2<sup>nd</sup> session, sections 6-10, pp. 65-133]

First paper brainstorming exercise due

**(4) Mon July 16 – Rights of Contract Alone? Or...?** Sorabji's *Animal Minds & Human Morals* [3<sup>rd</sup> session, sections 11-15, pp. 122-219]

First paper outline due

**(5) Wed July 18 – Ways of Seeing Animals** [excerpts from] J.M. Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals* and Martha Nussbaum's *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership* (2006)

**(6) Mon July 23 – Life and the Nature of Evolution** [excerpts from:] Peter Godfrey-Smith, *Other Minds: The Octopus, the Sea, and the Evolution of Intelligent Life* (2016); Richard Prum, *The Evolution of Beauty: How Darwin's Forgotten theory of Mate Choice Shapes the Animal World – and Us* (2017)

First paper due

**(7) Wed July 25 – (Post?)modern and (post?)human** Mateusz Tokarski, “Dangerous animals and our search for meaningful relationships with nature in the Anthropocene,” Lynda Birke, “Who – or what – are the rats (and mice) in the laboratories?”

**(8) Mon July 30 – Exiled in the word? Phenomenology and the animal *umwelt*** [excerpts from:] David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*; Jakob von Uexkull, *A Stroll through the Worlds of Animals and Men*; Hans Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*

**(9) Wed August 1 – Race, Species, and the Logics and Levels of Exclusion** [excerpts from:] Claire Jean Kim, *Dangerous Crossings: Race, Species, and Nature in a Multicultural Age* (2015); and Ursula Heise, *Imagining Extinction*

Second paper outline due by the beginning of class

Second paper due by finals time