



MA in International Studies on Media, Power and Difference

COURSE PLAN

Name of the subject: Critical Animal and Media Studies

Subject code: 31974

Term: Second

Type: Optional

Number of credits: 7.5 ECTS credits

Teaching language: English

Teaching staff: Núria Almiron

1. Overview

This subject aims to identify the main ethical issues involved in media coverage, advocacy, advertising and public relations, or any other form of communication, regarding human exploitation of other animals and nature. The course particularly stresses intersections amongst oppressed nonhuman animals, oppressed humans and the crisis of ecological systems.

Critical animal studies have emerged as a growing field of inquiry in the last decade. This subject will focus on the many important contributions that have already been made by the recent merging of the fields of critical animal studies and critical media studies (critical animal and media studies or CAMS). 'Critical animal studies' (CAS) refers to interdisciplinary scholarship grounded in the ethical exploration of our treatment of other species and their rights and interests. 'Critical media studies' (CMS) refers to media studies with a critical approach, such as cultural studies of media representations or the political economy of communication. Both fields, CAS and CMS, are deeply committed to abolishing systems of domination.

This subject offers a critical exploration of how and why the media and communication strategies assign various roles and values to non-human species in contemporary Western society, as well as of the consequences for the living conditions of animals and humans alike. It will look at innovative critical animal studies research primarily in the field of media and communication studies, as well as key research from disciplines such as sociology, philosophy, cultural studies, biology, ethology, neuroscience, gender studies, colonialism, and critical race studies, in order to provide students with an initial grounding in the field of CAMS.



The subject aims to identify the main ethical issues involved in media practices regarding human exploitation of other animals and nature, as well as examples of effective practice with a view to deriving transferable academic and professional lessons.

2. Learning outcomes

On completion of the course students shall be able to...

General:

- Critically assess and contribute to the most relevant current debates concerning media production, representation, cultural consumption and diversity.
- Assess the keys to interpreting globally unjust phenomena related to the distribution of power.
- Define, evaluate and critique the different conceptual frameworks for diversity and communication policy, as well as the resulting media practices.
- Identify the ways in which difference and diversity are experienced and projected in socio-political and cultural contexts.
- Conceive of and produce flexible and fluid texts on difference and diversity from an ethical perspective.
- Critically analyse the communication phenomena surrounding the issue of difference and diversity.
- Incorporate inclusive communication techniques into their daily production routines.
- Apply inclusive communication techniques to the design of action proposals based on respect for difference and diversity.
- Identify and critically evaluate the clues to interpreting communication phenomena related to the issue of difference and diversity.

Specific:

- Account for the shifting roles and positions of animals in contemporary Western society and the ethical, cultural and social consequences of these
- Account for key theoretical perspectives and concepts in the field of critical animal studies
- Account for the importance of including a critical animal studies perspective in analyses of current social issues

- Analyse and critically review norms and structures organising human-animal relations in contemporary Western society, including media and communication routines and structures
- Analyse the boundaries drawn between humans and nonhumans and critically review the consequences of these
- Analyse the boundaries drawn between humans and nonhumans and critically review the role of media and communication in it
- Critically assess the ethical, cultural and social consequences of human-animal relations and their intersections with other types of devaluation (sexism, racism, classism, etc.)
- Formulate research issues orally and in writing and identify the need of further knowledge development in the field of critical animal studies

3. Subject outline

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Why do nonhuman animals matter?

Overview of the merging of critical communication studies and critical animal studies. Why does studying our relationship with other animals matter? And why does it matter in the context of media and communication studies? The role of CAMS and the answers provided by neuroscience, ethology, biology, psychology, sociology, and environmental and climate science, amongst others.

2. Ethical foundations

The earliest ethical critiques of our treatment of other animals (Jainism, Buddhism, Hinduism, ancient Greece). Classical attempts to defend ethical humanism (Stoics, Aristotle, Aquinas, Kant, Descartes). Modern European attempts to challenge ethical humanism (Voltaire, Bentham, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Schweitzer, Derrida, Heidegger, Salt, Foucault, etc.). Contemporary North American challenges to ethical humanism (utilitarianism (Singer), animal rights (Regan), ethics of care (ecofeminism), others (Midgley, DeGrazia, Sapontzis, Wise, Kymlicka).

3. Critical animal theory

Critical animal studies as an intersectional social justice approach to confronting global oppression and violence. A brief overview of various ideological systems (speciesism, anthropocentrism, hetero-patriarchies, humanism, carnism), dualisms (human/nature, man/woman, civilized/savage, emotion/reason, mind/body) and intersections (capitalism, colonialism, racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, ableism, ecocide). The close link between human and animal liberation.

II. REPRESENTATION

4. The political economy behind the representation of other animals

The influence of capitalism and the animal industrial complex in the mediatization of other animals: manufacturing consent through the knowledge nexus and interest networks. Interest groups (lobbies and think tanks) and power relations behind mainstream discourses on our relationships with other animals.

5. Mediating in cultural practices

Language and discourse in journalism, persuasive communication, and films and documentaries. Media representations of key cultural practices involving the use and exploitation of other animals: animals for food (factory farming); animals for experimentation (animal testing); animals on display (zoos, aquariums, marine parks, etc.); animals for entertainment (circuses, horse/greyhound racing, bull/cock fighting, hunting, fishing, etc.); animals as workforce (advertising, films, pack animals, etc.). Language and discourse addressing ethical practices (vegetarianism and veganism, animal sanctuaries and shelters) and companion animals.

III. RESPONSIBILITY

6. Respectful media representation

Recommendations for communication and media practitioners: guidelines for journalism, advertising and public relations, audiovisual entertainment, film and documentaries, and the general public. Self-regulation and professional ethical codes. Best professional practices.

7. Academic research for change

Scientific research for an inclusive social justice: non-anthropocentric language and discourse; coverage and framing of non-speciesist advocacy; audiovisual activism (films and documentaries); the role of social networks; interest groups, knowledge networks and alternative discourses regarding our relationship with the planet and other species; research for inclusive media policies; a holistic understanding of the world.

4. Assessment

Assessment system	Weighting
Journal entries	25%
Readings & Participation in Discussions	25%
Final paper	50%
TOTAL	100%

Students have to complete three tasks:

1) Journal (roughly 25% of the final mark)

Students will be asked to keep a journal to record their thoughts and insights during the course. They will be encouraged to write follow-up entries after the sessions (commenting on the lectures, screenings, guest speakers, presentations by research fellows or other selected activities). This task won't be graded with a quantitative mark but students will receive a feedback at the end of the course (and in some cases also during the course).

2) Participation in discussions and other activities (roughly 25% of the final mark)

The participation portion of the final mark encompasses productive engagement in class discussions and the participation in suggested activities (like bringing media samples for discussion, writing practices, screenings, guest lectures, etc.). This task won't be graded with a quantitative grade but students will receive a feedback for it.

3) Final paper (roughly 50% of the final mark)

Students will be asked to select a topic for a final paper. Further details on this and the other tasks are provided every year in Moodle. This task will be graded from 0 to 10.

5. Bibliography and teaching resources

Basic bibliography

Almiron, Núria; Cole, Matthew; Freeman, Carrie P. (Eds.). 2016. *Critical Animal and Media Studies: Communication for Nonhuman Animal Advocacy*. New York: Routledge.

DeMello, Margo. 2012. *Animals and Society: An Introduction to Human-Animal Studies*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Nocella II, Anthony J.; Sorensen, John; Socha, Kim; Matsuoka, Atsuko (Eds.). 2014. *Defining Critical Animal Studies: An Intersectional Social Justice Approach for Liberation*. New York: Peter Lang.

A list of recommended readings are provided in Moodle.

Learning resources

Academic journals:

- *Antennae*
- *Anthrozoos*
- *Between the Species*
- *Environmental Communication*
- *Ethics and the Environment*
- *Green Theory and Praxis Journal*
- *Humanimalia*
- *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*
- *Journal of Animal Ethics*
- *Peace Studies Journal*
- *Society & Animals*

Useful links:

- *Animals and Media*: animalsandmedia.org.
- *Animals and Society Institute*: <http://www.animalsandsociety.org/has>
- *Animal Ethics*: <http://www.animal-ethics.org>
- *Centre for Human Animal Studies*: <http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/cfhas/>
- *Culture and Animals Foundation*:
<http://www.cultureandanimals.org/index.htm>



- *Institute for Critical Animal Studies*: <http://www.criticalanimalstudies.org/>
- *Minding Animals*: <http://mindinganimals.com//>
- *New Zealand Centre for Human-Animal Studies*:
<http://www.nzchas.canterbury.ac.nz/people/potts.shtml>
- *Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics*: <http://www.oxfordanimaethics.com/>
- *UPF-Centre for Animal Ethics*: <http://www.upf.edu/cae>
- *Voiceless, the Animal Protection Institute*: <https://www.voiceless.org.au/>

6. Methodology

The course will consist of a combination of:

- Practical and theoretical class presentations by the professor
- Seminars in which readings and case studies will be discussed
- Screenings and use of audiovisuals
- Personal enquiry, individual research and readings
- Personal tutoring
- Workshops

Students must attend at least 80% of the sessions. Attendance is always mandatory at sessions featuring guest speakers.