



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: Dr Núria Almiron

1. Overview

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' refers to interdisciplinary scholarship grounded in the ethical exploration of our treatment of other species and their rights and interests. 'Critical media studies' refers to media studies with a critical approach, such as cultural studies of media representations or the political economy of communication. Both fields 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, neuroscience, gender studies 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 producing media coverage, or any other form of communication, 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

By the end of the subject, students should be able to:

- 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.

3. Subject outline

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Why do other 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.

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, heteropatriarchalism, 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
Reading and journal entries	25%
Participation in discussions (and oral presentation)	25%
Final paper	50%
TOTAL	100%

Students have to complete three marked tasks:

1) Readings and journal entries (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 asked to write two types of entries: entries preparing for the sessions (commenting on what they find valuable, thought-provoking, puzzling, mistaken, etc., in the readings) and follow-up entries after the sessions (commenting on the lectures, screenings, guest speakers, presentations by research fellows or other selected activities). Students should write roughly two to three pages per week in their journals and bring the journals to class.

2) Participation in discussions (including one oral presentation on an assigned topic) (roughly 25% of the final mark)

The participation portion of the final mark encompasses productive engagement in class discussions and the preparation for class discussion of one oral presentation (to last approximately 15 minutes) on an assigned topic. The instructor will provide brief guidelines for this presentation.

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

Students will be asked to select a topic for their final paper. More specific guidance will be provided by the instructor, but the project will involve researching the topic from a theoretical point of view, presenting and comparing two examples from the media or the field of communication (news, ads, films, documentaries, public relations strategies, etc.) in which nonhuman animals are framed in different ways, and discussing the ethical issues involved in both types of representations.

Students must select their topic by Week 6, submit a paper proposal by Week 9, and turn in the final paper after the Easter holiday. The paper proposal must include a research question, a paragraph describing the rationale behind the research question, and an annotated bibliography with at least seven sources. The final paper (between 5,000 and 6,000 words) must reflect the feedback on the initial proposal, have at least ten academic sources and answer the research question.

5. Bibliography and teaching resources

5.1. Basic bibliography

Almiron, N.; Cole, M.; Freeman, C.P. (2015). *Critical Animal and Media Studies: Communication for Nonhuman Animal Advocacy*. New York: Routledge.

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

Freeman, C.P. (2014). *Framing Farming: Communication Strategies for Animal Rights*. New York: Rodopi.

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

5.2. Further reading

Adams, C.J. (2013). *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*. New York: Bloomsbury [1990].

Adams, C.J. & Gruen, L. (2014). *Ecofeminism: Feminist Intersections with Other Animals & the Earth*. New York: Bloomsbury.

Almiron, N. & Zoppeddu, M. (2014). 'Eating Meat and Climate Change: The Media Blind Spot – A Study of Spanish and Italian Press Coverage'. *Environmental Communication*.. Published online. DOI: 10.1080/17524032.2014.953968.

Bekoff, M. (2007). *The Emotional Lives of Animals*. Novato, CA: New World Library.

Bekoff, M. (2013). *Why Dogs Hump and Bees Get Depressed*. Novato, CA: New World Library.

Bekoff, M. & Pierce, J. (2009). *Wild Justice: The Moral Lives of Animals*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Berger, J. (1980). 'Why Look at Animals?' In J. Berger: *About Looking*. New York: Vintage Book.

Best, S. (2014). *The Politics of Total Liberation: Revolution for the 21st Century*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Cole, M. & Stewart, K. (2014). *Our Children and Other Animals: The Cultural Construction of Human-Animal Relations in Childhood*. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate.

Donaldson, S. & Kymlicka, W. (2013). *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dunayer, J. (2001). *Animal Equality: Language and Liberation*. Derwood, Maryland: Ryce Publishing.

Dunayer, J. (2004). *Speciesism*. Derwood, Maryland: Ryce Publishing.

Flynn, C. P. (2012). *Understanding Animal Abuse: A Sociological Analysis*. New York: Lantern Books.

Freeman, C.P. (2009). 'This Little Piggy Went to Press: The American News Media's Construction of Animals in Agriculture'. *The Communication Review*, 12: 78-103.



Freeman, C.P.; Bekoff, M.; Bexell, S.M. (2011). 'Giving Voice to the "Voiceless". Incorporating Nonhuman Animal Perspectives as Journalistic Sources'. *Journalism Studies*, 12(5): 590-607.

Gruen, L. (2011). *Ethics and Animals: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gruen, L. (2015). *Entangled Empathy: An Alternative Ethic for Our Relationships with Animals*. New York: Lantern Books.

Joy, M. (2008). *Strategic Action for Animals: A Handbook on Strategic Movement Building, Organizing, and Activism for Animal Liberation*. New York: Lantern Books.

Joy, M. (2010). *Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs, and Wear Cows: An Introduction to Carnism*. San Francisco, CA: Conari Press.

Kemmerer, L. (2015). *Eating Earth: Environmental Ethics and Dietary Choice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Khazaal, N. & Almiron, N. (2014): 'An Angry Cow Is Not a Good Eating Experience'. *Journalism Studies*. Published online. DOI: 10.1080/1461670X.2014.982966.

Malamud, R. (2012). *An Introduction to Animals and Visual Culture*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Mason, J. (2005). *An Unnatural Order. The Roots of Our Destruction of Nature*. New York: Lantern Books.

Masson, J.M. & McCarthy, S. (1995). *When Elephants Weep: The Emotional Lives of Animals*. New York: Delta Book.

Molloy, C. (2013). *Popular Media and Animals*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan

Nibert, D. (2002). *Animal Rights/Human Rights: Entanglements of Oppression and Liberation*. New York: Rowman/Littlefield Publishers.

Nibert, D. (2013). *Animal Oppression & Human Violence: Domesecration, Capitalism, and Global Conflict*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Patterson, C. (2002). *Eternal Treblinka: Our Treatment of Animals and the Holocaust*. New York: Lantern Books.

Phelps, N. (2007). *The Longest Struggle: Animal Advocacy from Pythagoras to PETA*. New York: Lantern Books.

Plec, E. (Ed.) (2013). *Perspectives on Human-Animal Communication: Internatural Communication*. New York: Routledge.

Regan, T. (2004). *Empty Cages: Facing the Challenge of Animal Rights*. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Regan, T. (2004). *The Case for Animal Rights*. Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.

Schweitzer, A. (2009). *Ethical Vision: A Source Book*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Singer, P. (2002). *Animal Liberation*. New York: Harpers Collins [1975].

Singer, P. (Ed.) (2006). *In Defense of Animals: The Second Wave*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Spiegel, M. (1997). *The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery*. New York: Mirror Books.

Taylor, N. & Twine, R. (Eds.) (2014). *The Rise of Critical Animal Studies: From the Margins to the Center*. New York: Routledge.

5.3. 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>

- *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/>
- *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

Students will be asked to write a short seminar paper for oral presentations that will then be discussed in class with their classmates.

All weekly readings must be completed before the start of each session.

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

Students will have to participate in at least one field trip to a venue (museum, zoo, wildlife sanctuary, animal shelter, national park, city park, animal rights organization, etc.).

7. Schedule of activities

WEEK 1	
<i>Class activities</i>	<i>Homework</i>
Presentation of the course, syllabus, course instructor and classmates. Seminar paper topics handed out Topic: Why do other animals matter?	Reading and journal entries
WEEK 2	
<i>Class activities</i>	<i>Homework</i>
Topic: Ethical foundations Seminar paper on Wednesday	Preparation of oral presentation (designated student) Reading and journal entries
WEEK 3	
<i>Class activities</i>	<i>Homework</i>
Topic: Critical animal theory and the political economy of framing animals (interest groups) Seminar paper on Wednesday	Preparation of oral presentation (designated student) Reading and journal entries
WEEK 4	
<i>Class activities</i>	<i>Homework</i>
Topic: Mediating in cultural practices (animals on display) Seminar paper on Wednesday	Preparation of oral presentation (designated student) Reading and journal entries <i>Optional field trip</i>
WEEK 5	
<i>Class activities</i>	<i>Homework</i>
Topic: Mediating in cultural practices (animals for food I) Seminar paper on Wednesday	Preparation of oral presentation (designated student) Reading and journal entries

WEEK 6	
<i>Class activities</i>	<i>Homework</i>
<p>Topic: Mediating in cultural practices (animals for food II) Seminar paper on Wednesday</p>	<p>Preparation of oral presentation (designated student) Reading and journal entries Choice of paper topic</p>
WEEK 7	
<i>Class activities</i>	<i>Homework</i>
<p>Topic: Mediating in cultural practices (animals for experimentation) Seminar paper on Wednesday</p>	<p>Preparation of oral presentation (designated student) Reading and journal entries Preparation of the paper proposal</p>
WEEK 8	
<i>Class activities</i>	<i>Homework</i>
<p>Topic: Mediating in cultural practices (other cases) Seminar paper on Wednesday</p>	<p>Preparation of oral presentation (designated student) Reading and journal entries Preparation of the paper proposal <i>Optional field trip</i></p>
WEEK 9	
<i>Class activities</i>	<i>Homework</i>
<p>Topic: Respectful media representation Seminar paper on Wednesday</p>	<p>Preparation of oral presentation (designated student) Reading and journal entries Paper proposal due</p>
WEEK 10	
<i>Class activities</i>	<i>Homework</i>
<p>Topic: Academic research for change Course summary</p>	<p>Writing of the paper Paper due after the Easter holiday</p>