

Academic Year/course: 2023/24

31974 - Critical Animal and Media Studies

Teaching Guide Information

Academic Course: 2023/24

Academic Center: 801 - Masters Centre of the Department of Communication

Study: 1011 - Master in International Studies on Media, Power and Difference

Subject: 31974 - Critical Animal and Media Studies

Credits: 7.5

Course: 1

Teaching languages:

Theory: Group 1: English

Teachers: Nuria Almiron Roig

Teaching Period: Second Quarter

Presentation

This subject aims to identify the key ethical issues involved in media reporting, advocacy, advertising and public relations, or any other form of communication regarding human exploitation of other animals and animals in nature. The course also emphasises the intersections between oppressed non-human 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 course will focus on the many important contributions already made by the recent convergence of the fields of critical animal studies and critical media and communication studies (critical animal and media studies or CAMS). Critical Animal Studies (CAS) refers to interdisciplinary scholarship that is grounded in an 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 the abolition of systems of domination.

This subject offers a critical examination of how and why media and communication strategies assign different roles and values to non-human species in contemporary Western society, and 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.

It aims to identify key ethical issues in media and communication practices relating to human exploitation of other animals and animals in nature, as well as examples of effective practice, with a view to deriving transferable academic and professional lessons.

Associated skills

CB6 - To possess and understand knowledge that provides a base or opportunity to be original in the development and/or application of ideas, often in a research context.

CB7 - To apply acquired knowledge and problem-solving abilities in new or little-known environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their area of study.

CB8 - To be able to integrate knowledge and cope with the complexity of making judgments based on information that, being incomplete or limited, includes reflections on the social and ethical responsibilities linked to the application of knowledge and judgments.

CB9 - To communicate conclusions - and the underlying knowledge and reasons - to specialized and non-specialized audiences in a clear and unambiguous way.

CG1 - To devise, document, draft, and publish original and quality academic texts.

CG2 - To be able to properly handle relevant academic documents and databases that allow access to such documents, for the drafting of academic works.

Learning outcomes

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

General:

- Critically evaluate and contribute to the most relevant current debates on media production, representation, cultural consumption and diversity.
- Evaluate the keys to interpreting global inequalities in the distribution of power.
- Define, evaluate and critique the different conceptual frameworks for diversity and communication policies and the media practices that result from them.
- Identify the ways in which difference and diversity are experienced and projected in socio-political and cultural contexts.
- Conceive and produce flexible and fluid texts about difference and diversity from an ethical perspective.
- Critically analyse communication phenomena related to difference and diversity.
- Incorporate inclusive communication techniques into their daily production routines.
- Use inclusive communication techniques to develop proposals for action based on respect for difference and diversity.
- Identify and critically evaluate the clues for interpreting communication phenomena related to the issue of difference and diversity.

Specific:

- Consider the changing roles and positions of animals in contemporary Western society and the ethical, cultural and social consequences of this.
- Explain key theoretical perspectives and concepts in the field of critical animal studies.
- Explain the importance of including a critical animal studies perspective in analyses of contemporary social issues.
- Analyse and critically review the norms and structures that organise human-animal relations in contemporary Western society, including media and communication routines and structures.
- Analyse the boundaries drawn between humans and non-humans and critically examine the consequences of these boundaries.
- Analyse the boundaries drawn between humans and non-humans, and critically examine the role of media and communication in doing so.

- Critically evaluate the ethical, cultural and social consequences of human-animal relations and their intersections with other forms of devaluation (sexism, racism, classism, etc.).
- Formulate research questions orally and in writing and identify the need for further development of knowledge in the field of critical animal studies.

Contents

I. BASICS:

- Why do nonhuman animals matter? And why do they matter for communication studies?
- Animal ethics, interspecies ethics, non-speciesist ethics, critical animal studies
- Animal Sentience & cognition, Intersectionalities, language
- The political economy of animal exploitation

II. MEDIATION:

- Mediating in cultural practices: animals exploited for food, experimentation, entertainment, labour, animals in nature, companion animals
- Intersectionality: speciesism and sexism, racism and classism
- The ethics of nonhuman animals in journalism, advertising, public relations, films, documentaries, and creative content

III. ADVOCACY:

- Nonhuman animals' agency
- Advocacy, Activism & lobbying

Sustainable Development Goals

12. Responsible consumption and production#14. Life below water#15. Life on land

Evaluation and grading system

The course relies on the active, committed participation of all students and we expect everyone to attend all sessions. However, if this is not possible, please remember that it is compulsory to attend 80% of the sessions. This means that you can miss up to two sessions without having to give a reason, although the teacher will appreciate if you inform her in advance (preferably by email) of your absence.

This course has two main types of tasks:

- **Course paper (70%)**
- **Other activities (30%):** this includes...
 - (a) a short oral presentation in class and
 - (b) the delivery of a short text

The rest of activities suggested are eligible.