

THIS IS THE SPRING 2020 SYLLABUS: SPRING 2020 will be very similar!

ANTH510 ANIMALS, IDENTITY, AND CULTURE

Robin E. Sheriff/Dept. of Anthropology/UNH

Spring 2020 Mondays and Wednesdays 12:40-2:00 Horton 215

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“The Sorcerer” (Trois Frères ca. 14,000BC)

Our task must be to free ourselves... by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature and its beauty. -- Albert Einstein, 1950

RATIONALE

We are currently living in the Anthropocene—the age in which humans are having a profound and mostly deleterious impact on the biosphere and its diverse species. This impact has been fueled by the idea that *Homo sapiens* occupies a morally distinct category, set apart from all other animals. But do all societies believe this? Are there other ways of thinking about and relating to animals?

Human-animal studies is an exploding, interdisciplinary field. Our readings are drawn from anthropology, anthrozoology, the biological sciences, neuroscience, comparative psychology, sociology, history, and science journalism. The course is inspired, however, by a fundamental anthropological premise: that the ways humans occupy the planet and interact with its species are determined not just by the biology that we share with other vertebrates, but also by culture—and that culture varies across time and space, and can be changed.

We will investigate a range of culturally-mediated relationships, including those that figure animals as beings sharing in personhood; as prey; as food; as workers; as scientific models; and as companion species. In addition to learning about the diversity of ways that humans have interacted with other species, we will look at the many continuities among humans and other vertebrates and thereby question the notion of human exceptionalism. Cross-cultural, trans-

historical, and biological comparisons invite us to re-conceptualize how we relate to animals and provide us with a deeper sense of agency and urgency in how we reimagine our stewardship of our shared and imperiled planet.

CENTRAL OBJECTIVES

- We will use experiential methods, as well as study and discussion to develop critical thinking and communication skills.
- We will learn about and apply the concepts of culture and ontology and recognize the diversity of ways that humans have related to non-human animals.
- We will examine our own “ideologies of the animal,” ponder how these ideologies are tied to economic interests, and entertain alternative ways of reconfiguring the human-animal interface.

COURSE MATERIALS Readings, visual material, podcasts, and assorted links are posted on MyCourses, under Modules. Current news stories may be added. In addition, the following required book can be purchased at the Durham Book Exchange (and is widely available elsewhere as well):

Herzog, Hal 2010 *Some We Love, Some We Hate, Some We Eat: Why It's So Hard to Think Straight About Animals*. New York: HarperCollins.

REQUIREMENTS, COMMUNICATION, AND GRADING

All of the following components must be completed in order to pass the course. No exceptions will be made:

Three Essay Exercises: 15 points each= 45%

One Summing Up Exercise: 5%

One Book Review: 15%

Three Quizzes: 10 points each=30%

Participation (including book review presentation): 5%

Two Field Trips—discussed in assignments