Healing Animals
MHS 290
Spring 2015
M/W 2:35 – 3:50
Buttrick 306

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DESCRIPTION
Some animals are doctors’ best friends. Non-human animals are essential to modern medicine, and play an indispensable role in therapeutics and in research. Animals are also patients in their own right, and fuel veterinary/comparative medicine, as well as concerns about the health of animals as friends, food, entertainment, and vectors of disease. Despite the centrality of animals in medicine, the roles of some animals—and some activities—are often obscured or erased. Through classroom discussion and outside assignments, students will consider the legal, economic, social and emotional techniques people use to both celebrate and conceal the central place of animals in modern medicine.

COURSE MATERIALS
There will be approximately 50 pages of reading per meeting, which should take students roughly 2.5 hours to complete. There are no required books to purchase for the course. Reading and listening assignments will be available on OAK.

COURSE POLICIES
Students may use laptops in class with Professor Stark’s permission. Please email a request for permission and schedule a meeting to discuss the possibility.

Students may audio or video record lectures for personal use after receiving written permission from Professor Stark. Students who would like to record as part of a learning accommodation should apply through Vanderbilt’s Disability Services Program. Professor Stark is happy to help with the process: http://www.vanderbilt.edu/ead/ds_students.html

It is mandatory to attend and participate in all class meetings. Excused absences will be accepted with a message from a health clinic or from students’ class deans for illnesses, life events, and observed holidays: http://as.vanderbilt.edu/docs/Religious%20Calendar%202012-13.pdf

Late assignments are not accepted.

Assignments based on collaborative work are graded individually, and should reflect each student’s original work. The Vanderbilt University Honor Code is available online: http://www.vanderbilt.edu/student_handbook/the-honor-system#honorcode

GRADING
The course integrates grading with instruction. The aim of the grading process is to give students helpful feedback, evaluate students’ performance, and apply a fair standard of assessment across students and assignments.
Written assignments will be evaluated in four areas using the grading scale below. Paper markings will identify patterns of strengths and weaknesses, first through written comments, then through marks showing additional examples of the pattern that students will then be expected to recognize and address in future work. To get feedback on drafts of written assignments before submitting them, please visit Vanderbilt’s Writing Studio: http://www.vanderbilt.edu/writing/

Areas of assessment

- **Completeness:** Are all elements of the assignment fully addressed? Does the paper meet the goals of the assignment? Is the paper appropriately organized—with topic sentences (e.g., summaries, analytic statements, or arguments) followed by evidence (e.g., examples, refinements, or details)?
- **Analysis:** Does the paper synthesize detailed materials into broader points or arguments? Are broader points presented in students’ own words? Are strengths and weaknesses of evidence explored?
- **Evidence:** Is the choice of evidence appropriate? Is the evidence specific (e.g., cases, quotations, or sub-points)? Is the evidence accurate? Are sources of evidence cited?
- **Writing mechanics:** Are shortcomings of previous assignments correct or reduced? Is the paper free of typographical errors? Is the grammar correct?

Grading standard

A: excellent performance in all areas, and unexpectedly fine performance in some.
B: good performance in all or most areas.
C: adequate performance in many, but not all, areas.
D: inadequate performance in many areas.
F: incomplete performance in most areas.

Students may request a re-grade of any assignment by emailing a 500-word justification to Professor Stark within one week of receiving the original grade.

Final course grades are based on the Vanderbilt University Grading System: http://registrar.vanderbilt.edu/transcripts/transcript-key/grading-systems/

ASSIGNMENTS

**Reading responses (3 responses: each 5% of final grade)**

Three reading responses of 500-600 words each are required during the semester. The aims of the assignments are to allow students to explore new concepts and arguments, to document a thorough and thoughtful reading of the texts, and to put readings in dialogue with earlier course material, students’ lived experiences, and current events. At the first class meeting, students will sign up for the days on which they will write responses. The papers should cover all of the reading assignments for one class meeting, and be uploaded to OAK by 11:59PM on the evening before the set of readings will be discussed in class. For an overview of how to read effectively to write a response, please see the Guide to Reading Social Science appended to the syllabus.

Responses should accomplish four things:

- **Summarize** the main argument of the reading in one paragraph. What is the author’s main purpose in writing the piece, and what is his/her novel claim? If appropriate, discuss the
conventional wisdom, body of scholarship, or scientific evidence that the author is arguing against.

- **Identify** the type of evidence the author uses. Does the author base his or her claims on statistics, interviews, observations, historical documents, literature, or philosophical reflection, for example? What are the strengths and weaknesses of this evidence in light of the author’s argument.

- **Reflect** on ideas that the piece raises for you, in one of two ways. If there is a reading question (see schedule), attempt to answer it. Alternatively, describe an example or counter-example that relates to the theme of the readings. These may be based on current events, previous readings, or personal experience.

- **Ask** a critical or exploratory question for the author(s).

**In-class quizzes (3 quizzes: each 10% of final grade)**

Three short quizzes will allow students to demonstrate they have completed the readings, understood course materials, and engaged with class discussions. The quizzes are cumulative: they will cover all lecture and reading materials to date but emphasize material from the most recently completed section.

**Research exercises (3 assignments: each 5% of final grade)**

Three short research assignments will be due at the start of class as noted on the schedule. The aims of the assignments are to introduce students to resources for research on the social dimensions of animals in medicine; and to develop the critical skills needed to evaluate the quality of a variety of kinds of scholarly evidence. Detailed instructions will be given in class one week before assignments are due. Research assignments will culminate in the final analysis (see below).

**Final analysis (30% of final grade)**

The final analysis includes two parts. A summary of each chapter of a recent book on animals in medicine will be due in class on Monday, April 13, 2015. The summary is 10% of final course grade. A final review of a recent book on animals in medicine will be due on Wednesday, April 22, 2015. The review is 20% of final course grade. Instructions for the review will be available on OAK at mid-term. Students may choose to analyze one of the following two books, which are on reserve at Central Library:


**Participation (10% of final grade)**

Course participation accounts for students’ efforts to engage in class discussions; contributions to collaborative work; and attention to current events.
**SCHEDULE**

**January 5:** Welcome

**January 7:** Where are the animals?

*Required*

*Reading question:* Animals play many roles in medicine. What role(s) do they play in this article; and what additional roles can you think of? What social factors shape and pattern people’s health behavior in relation to animals?

*Further reading*

**I. MULTISPECIES MEDICINE**

*Making and unmaking binaries*

**January 12:** No class

*Required*

*Reading question:* Diagnosing companion animals with diabetes alongside people affects our understandings of diseases and of selfhood. In what ways are they affected?

**January 14:** Humans / animals

*Required*

*Reading question:* In the sciences, what creates the sense that there is a natural boundary or a natural connection between human and nonhuman animals? What political, economic or aesthetic factors might also be served in creating either similarity or difference serve?

*Further reading*

Wolf, Meike. “Is There Really Such a Thing as ‘One Health’? Thinking about a More than Human World from the Perspective of Cultural Anthropology.” Social Science & Medicine, 2014. doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2014.06.018.

January 19: MLK Day (no class)

Required

Reading question: How have scientific claims about animals embedded political assumptions? Do all scientific claims about animals embed political assumptions?

January 21: Nature/society
Class visit to Art History collection.

Required

Reading question: How do visual representations of human and non-human animals create the sense that species are connected or divided?

Further reading

Approaches

January 26: From subjectivity to inter-subjectivity
Research assignment 1 due at the start of class.

Required

Reading question: Let’s face it: leeches are gross. But they were (and are!) used as therapies. Often we think of therapeutic animals as warm and cuddly. Leeches challenge the intuition that pets are the most common or best therapeutic animals and vice versa. How did physicians teach patients to relate to leeches; and what contradictions did this create in their own conceptions of leeches?
Further reading


**January 28:** From individuals to interactions

*Required*

*Further reading*

**February 2:** From genetics to cybernetics

*Required*

*Reading question:* What is xenotransplananation, and why is it interesting to the author?

*Further reading*


**February 4:** Quiz 1

*Required*
Explore website Aesop’s Anthropology <aesopsanthropology.com>
II. ANIMAL EXCHANGES

Networks

February 9: Expert systems

Required

Reading question: Mitchell asks, Is there an overarching explanation of social changes that could otherwise be attributed to single factors, including epidemic, war, or famine? What kind of explanation can bring together these factors? How does Mitchell conceptualize the mosquitoes—in what ways are mosquitoes (biological systems) similar or different from the weapons or fertilizers (political and chemical systems) that Mitchell writes about? What is “agency”?

February 11: Actor-network theory

Required

Markets

February 16: Economies

Further reading


Models

February 18: Model organism

Required
Reading question: What are “model organisms” and how do they differ from other kinds of animals?

Further reading


February 23: Constituting communities

Required

Further reading


February 25: Quiz 2

Required
Explore website of the American Association of Veterinary Medicine. <https://www.avma.org/>

March 1-8: Spring break
III. RE-FIGURING ANIMALS

Language

**March 9:** Metaphor, euphemism and other language techniques
Class visit from Professor Phillip Ackerman-Lieberman, Jewish Studies
Research assignment 2 due at the start of class.

*Required:
Lynch, Michael E. “Sacrifice and the Transformation of the Animal Body into a Scientific Object: Laboratory Culture and Ritual Practice in the Neurosciences.” *Social Studies of Science* 18, no. 2 (May 1, 1988): 265–89.


**March 11:** Communication

*Required

*Further reading


Materiality

**March 16:** When the world bites back

*Required

*Further reading

**Law & ethics**

**March 18:** Bioethics

*Required*

*Further reading*

**March 23:** Policy
Visit from Professor Ron Emeson, Dept of Pharmacology and Chair IACUC

*Required*

*Further reading*


**March 25:** Moral sensibilities

*Required*

*Further reading*

Emotion

**March 30:** Second nature?

*Required*

*Reading question:* How do activities with animals come to be culturally accepted? Is it possible to change people’s visceral, gut feelings? If so, how?

**April 1:** Learning to feel

*Required*

Space

**April 6:** Labs and fields

*Required*
Asdal, Kristin. “Subjected to Parliament The Laboratory of Experimental Medicine and the Animal Body.” *Social Studies of Science* 38, no. 6 (December 1, 2008).

*Further reading*

**April 8:** Civic space as intimate spaces

*Required*

*Reading question:* Jerolmac uses the phrase the “social experience of animals.” How does physical space affect the social experience of animals? How does medical spaces affect the social experience of animals?

*Further reading*
Professions

**April 13:** Veterinary medicine
Chapter summary (final analysis section I) due at the start of class.

**Required**

**Further reading**

**April 15:** Interviews with authors
Research assignment 3 due at the start of class.

**April 20:** Quiz 3 and wrap up

**April 22:** Final analysis due