



"That's all, folks!"

The Fascination with Animals in American Literature and Culture



Room and time: Seminar Room (Attemsgasse 25, Top Floor, SR 34.D2), Wednesday, 11:45-13:15

First session: March 9, 2016 · **Course number:** 512.312

Lecturer: Univ.-Prof. Dr. Stefan L. Brandt · **Office hours:** Thursdays, 4-6 p.m. (Room DG-0036) · **Email:** stefan.brandt@uni-graz.at

Description: Perhaps more than other countries, the USA have developed a cult around animals, starting in the 1890s. Since Ernest Thompson Seton's *Wild Animals I Have Known* (1898) and Jack London's *The Call of the Wild* (1903), hordes of dogs, horses and other animals have populated the fictional realms of cinema, literature, and television. Disney films have added numerous animals to this list, in a long series of animated films beginning with *Dumbo* (1940) and *Bambi* (1942), leading all the way to *Finding Nemo* (2003), and a number of documentaries, from *The Living Desert* (1953) to the recent *Monkey Kingdom* (2015). What could explain this obsession with anthropomorphized animals who are sometimes seen as symbols of Darwinist survival strategies (e.g., Seton's gray wolf Lobo), personifications of the human desire for acceptance (as in E.B. White's 1945 tale *Stuart Little*) or even civil-rights activists (as the speaking horse 'Mister Ed' from the 1960s CBS sitcom)? The course will also look at representations of animal testing, the food industry, and animal aggression, as well as ecocritical approaches involving non-human creatures.

Teaching and Learning Method: This is an interactive course. Participation in group discussions as well as contributions to the discussion forum on the Moodle course site will be part of the final grade. Each meeting will be held by 'experts' who organize the session by means of questions, games, video clips, and group work. The most relevant facts will be conveyed in a short information block. The experts will upload their questions for the discussion forum 6 days in advance!

Materials: All texts will be made available on **Moodle**. Please watch films and TV episodes in the **Media Archive!**

Aims: The course will familiarize participants with the key goals of Animal Studies as well as the most important features of texts dealing with animals (composition, background, effect).

Assessment: **A) Regular attendance** (no more than 2 absences!); **active in-class participation**; **10 discussion forum entries (1/3)**;
B) Presentation as part of an **expert session** plus **3-page handout** and **forum questions** for fellow students (1/3);
C) 2-page research proposal and **10-page final paper (1/3)**.


Deadline for Final Papers: Wednesday, June 29, 2016, in class. There is no (!) extension of this deadline.

Syllabus

- 09 March** Introduction – *Why Look at Animals?*
Basic texts:
John Berger, "Why Look at Animals" (1977/80). [Moodle]
Margo DeMello, "Human-Animal Studies," from *Animals and Society* (2012). [Moodle]
- 16 March** The Animal as Mirror – *Nature Writing and the Invention of the Wild*
Main text (reading required):
Ernest Thompson Seton, "Lobo," from *Wild Animals I Have Known* (1898). [Moodle]
Companion texts (optional):
Theodore Roosevelt, "Nature Fakers" (1907) [Moodle]
Ernest Thompson Seton, "Raggylug," from *Wild Animals I Have Known* (1898). [Moodle]
Keywords: Conservationism; 'Humanity' of Animals; Morality; Nature Writing; Sociobiology; Wolf Metaphor.
- 13 April** Jack London's Naturalist Vision – *Atavism and Evolutionary Theory*
Main text (reading required):
Jack London, ch. 1 & 7 from *The Call of the Wild* (1903). [Moodle]
Companion text (optional):
Jack London, "The Story of Keesh" (1904), read on <http://www.online-literature.com/london/97/>
Keywords: Atavism; Darwin/Spencer; Evolutionary Theory; Naturalism; 'Speciesism' (C. Wolfe).
- 20 April** Of Mice, Clownfish, and Elephants – *The Animal as 'Other'*
Main example (viewing required):
Dumbo (1940, Disney). [Watch in the Media Archive!]
Companion texts (optional):
Matt Ruff, excerpts from *Fool on the Hill* (1988); *Finding Nemo* (2003, Pixar/Disney).
Keywords: Anthropomorphism; Disability; Disney; Marginalization; Mickey Mouse; Other; Quest; Solidarity.

- 27 April** **Tricksters, Crazy Ducks, and Rough Cowboys – Violence and Absurdity in the Animated Cartoon**
 Main example (viewing required):
High Diving Hare (1948). http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2bdtkf_bugs-bunny-ep-73-high-diving-hare_fun.
 Additional text (optional):
Duck Amuck (1953, dir. Chuck Jones), watch at <http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2j6pt1>.
 Keywords: Bugs Bunny; Chuck Jones; Daffy Duck; Looney Tunes; Merrie Melodies; Tex Avery; Trickster Figure.
- 04 May** **(Re-)Creating Wild Life – Animals in U.S. Documentary Cinema**
 Main examples (viewing required): *White Wilderness* (1958, Disney) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xMZlr5Gf9yY>.
Monkey Kingdom (2015, Disney), trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XXf9ja5drz0>.
 Additional text (optional):
The Living Desert (1953, dir. James Algar, prod. Disney).
 Keywords: Discovery Channel; Documentary; Fakery; Infotainment; Lemming Suicide Myth; Staging.
- 11 May** **Going Green – Ecological Awareness and Nature Preservation**
 Main example (viewing required):
Bambi (1942, Disney). [Watch in the Media Archive!]
 Companion texts (optional):
Flipper (1966-67, NBC); *The Lion King* (1994, Disney); *Happy Feet* (2006, Warner Bros).
 Keywords: Ecology; Environmentalism; *Free Willy* (movie); Green Screen; Hunting.
- 18 May** **(Hu-)Man's Best Buddies – Animals as Family and Friends in Young Adult Fiction**
 Main example (reading required):
 E.B. White, excerpts from *Stuart Little* (1945). [Moodle]
 Companion texts (optional):
Courage of Lassie (1946, dir. F.M. Wilcox); *Stuart Little* (1999, dir. R. Minkoff); *Cats & Dogs* (2001, dir. L. Guterman).
 Keywords: Anthropomorphism; Children's Books; Dogs; Domesticity; Family Culture; Pets; Young Adult Fiction.
- 25 May** **Political Animals – Animal Television and the Civil Rights Movement**
 Main example (viewing required):
Mister Ed, "Ed the Emancipator" (March 24, 1963, CBS). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F3XTGiDyBXQ>.
 Additional text (optional):
Mister Ed, "Ed the Beachcomber" (April 1, 1962, CBS). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TAXd_hKV_Uw.
 Keywords: Beatniks; Civil Rights; *Daktari*; Emancipation; Patricia Highsmith; Retaliation; Slavery/Segregation.
- 01 June** **Non-Humans as Guinea-Pigs – Animal Testing in the Horror Sci-Fi Genre**
 Main example (viewing required):
A Cold Night's Death (1973, ABC, dir. Jerrold Freedman). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vYFWAZ6QiUI>.
 Additional text (optional):
 Margo DeMello, "Animals and Science," from *Animals and Society* (2012). [Moodle]
 Keywords: Animal Lib; 'Critical Anthropomorphism' (Garrard); Gaze; Laboratories; Research/Science; Subjectivity.
- 08 June** **The Animal Empire Strikes Back – Tales of Terror and the Unknown**
 Main example (viewing required):
Jaws (1975, dir. Steven Spielberg). [Watch in the Media Archive!]
 Companion texts (optional):
The Birds (1963, dir. A. Hitchcock); *Piranha* (1978, dir. J. Dante); *Jurassic Park* (1993, dir. S. Spielberg).
 Keywords: Disaster Movies; Fear of the Unknown; Man vs. Nature; Moby-Dick; 'Natural Horror'; Shark Imagery.
- 15 June** **Mother Earth and Her Beautiful Creatures – (Native) American Animal Myths**
 Main text (reading required):
 Gary Snyder, *Turtle Island*, esp. "Mother Earth," "The Call of the Wild," "The Wilderness" (1975). [Moodle]
 Additional texts (optional):
 Native American Origin Myths (Heath Anthology); *Brother Bear* (2003, Disney).
 Keywords: 'Allomorphism' (Garrard); Coyote Imagery; Indigeneity; Native Origin Myths; Poetry; Turtle Metaphor.
- 22 June** **The Animal in Us: Allegories of Aggression, Suppression, and the Unconscious**
 Main example (viewing required):
Life of Pi (2012, dir. Ang Lee). [Watch in the Media Archive!]
 Companion texts (optional):
Equus (1977, dir. Sidney Lumet); *White Dog* (1982, dir. Samuel Fuller); T.C. Boyle, "Dogology" (1995).
 Keywords: Aggression; Allegory; Animal Cruelty; Animal Metaphors; 'Id' (Freud); Instincts; Zoomorphism.
- 29 June** **Animals as Food – The Ethics of Meat Production**
 Main text (reading required):
 Jonathan Safran Foer, excerpts from *Eating Animals* (2007).
 Additional examples (optional):
 Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle*, esp. ch. 1-3 (1906); *Food, Inc.* (2008, dir. Robert Kenner).
 Keywords: Animal Rights; Factory Farms; Food Factories; Junk Food; Veganism; Vegetarianism.

 Deadline
 Research Proposal TODAY!

 **FINAL PAPER DUE TODAY!**