

Topics in Animal Ethics

Autumn 2022

Class times: M & W, 1:30 – 2:50pm

Location: Cobb Hall, Room 107

Email: claudiahoggblake@uchicago.edu

Office: Stuart Hall, Room 210

Office hours: T & Th, 2-3pm

Office hours sign-up sheet: [Claudia Hogg-Blake Office Hours Autumn 2022](#)

In this course we will ask: what is the moral status of nonhuman animals, and why? Does species matter morally, or only the particular features of any given individual? We will consider different approaches to incorporating animals within various ethical theories, and their implications for the morally permissible treatment of animals. For example, is it ever okay to kill a nonhuman animal, and if so, which animals and under what conditions? Is it okay to breed animals for companionship, and if so, what do we owe to our animal companions? And, finally, given the history of domestication, what should be the legal and political status of domesticated species? As we consider these questions, we will reflect on the further question of how one arrives at a philosophically sound ethical position – the relative roles of reason, emotion, and feeling – and the kinds of materials that get one there.

****A Note on Content**:** The topic of animal ethics inevitably raises some potentially upsetting material. Please be mindful of this as you approach the course materials and in class discussion. Please give warning before giving graphic descriptions, and consider what your purpose is in giving such a description. We will discuss as a class the philosophical and ethical value (or lack thereof) of confronting such material. Nobody is required to read, listen to or watch anything that will cause them excessive distress. If, upon reflection, you decide that you would rather skip a particular reading, viewing, or discussion, please let me know and we can work together to come up with an alternative exercise for you.

Learning Goals

By the end of this course:

- 1) Students will be conversant in some key theories and debates concerning the moral status of animals and their ethical treatment.
- 2) Students will be able to recognize and appreciate what is at stake philosophically in such debates, and the philosophical difficulty to which such issues give rise.
- 3) Students will have developed their own informed and philosophically sophisticated point of view within these debates, and will have the skills to continue pondering these issues in a philosophically rigorous way.

More generally, students will have gained and/or developed the following philosophical skills:

- 4) Comprehending, analyzing and evaluating philosophical arguments;
- 5) Developing one's own rigorous philosophical arguments, using insights gained from (a) the study of philosophical arguments and debates in the academic cannon; (b) philosophical dialogue with one's peers; and (c) reflection on one's own experience;
- 6) Effective, clear written and verbal communication of one's philosophical insights and arguments.

Assessment

- A) Participation. There are a variety of ways to participate in this course, including: engaging thoughtfully in in-class discussion, utilizing Canvas discussion boards, coming to office hours to further discuss issues raised by the course materials or in class discussion. Different forms of engagement work better for different individuals. You should be doing at least one of these things. **(10%)**
- B) In-class presentation: 10-15 minute presentation outlining the argument of that week's text and raising a couple of questions for discussion. I will send out a sign-up sheet where you can choose which class to present in. **(15%)**
- C) Paper 2: 5-6 page paper developing your own philosophical argument in response to a prompt **(35%)**:
- D) Paper 3: 7-8 page paper developing your own philosophical argument in response to a prompt, or in response to a question of your own. **(40%)**

Expectations

No prior experience studying philosophy is required for taking this course. This course will serve both as an introduction to the philosophical method for those who are new to studying philosophy, and as an opportunity for returning philosophers to further develop and hone their philosophical skills.

Students are expected to attend all class sessions ready to discuss that session's readings. To prepare for class discussion, students should:

- (a) Read all assigned texts slowly and carefully, taking note of key points (you may want to use some combination of highlighting or underlining key points, and rewriting key points in your own words.
- (b) Outline the overarching argument of each text (your notes should help here). What is the conclusion? How has the author tried to establish this conclusion (what are the premises given, and how are they meant to support the conclusion)?
- (c) Reflect on the arguments of the text: Do the premises support the conclusion in the way intended? Are the premises themselves convincing? Are any parts of the text/argument puzzling? Are there parts that you don't understand? Make a note of any issues you would like to discuss.

This preparatory work is difficult, but students will find that it gets easier with practice and with continual in-class feedback.

Students are responsible for keeping up-to-date with all course-related correspondence, via Canvas and email.

Students are expected to complete all assignments to the best of their ability, in a timely manner. However, I understand that there may be times when things make it difficult to complete work by the deadline (whether they be related to physical and mental health, family and relationships, financial stress, or something else). Whatever the reason, you may obtain an extension by filing out and submitting a form through Canvas (more instructions to follow) – the form does not require you to give a reason for the extension, and you do not need to await a response from me, but you do need to submit the form.

Finally, if you are having difficulties with the course, for whatever reason, please get in touch with me sooner rather than later, so that we can work together to find a solution.

Plagiarism

Passing another's work off as one's own constitutes plagiarism and will not be tolerated. Students found to be plagiarizing another's work will receive an F grade for the course. Students who are unsure about what constitutes plagiarism should ask the instructor. See here for more information: <https://studentmanual.uchicago.edu/academic-policies/academic-honesty-plagiarism/>.

Accessibility

The University of Chicago is committed to ensuring equitable access to academic programs and services. If you have or think you may have a documented disability, and require reasonable accommodations to get the most out of this course, contact Student Disability Services and please let me know as soon as possible of any accommodations you require. More information can be found here: <https://disabilities.uchicago.edu/>.

If you encounter obstacles to learning, as a result of, for example, personal or life circumstances or dynamics within the classroom, please come and talk to me so that I can either address the issue or provide accommodations (such as deadline extensions) to help you to get the most out of this course.

Norms of Discussion

Our guiding norm for in-class discussion is to approach one another's distinctive perspectives and contributions with *respect* and *curiosity*. The philosophy department provides the following helpful guidelines for participation in class discussion (from <https://philosophy.uchicago.edu/about/who-we-are/diversity-and-inclusion>):

1. Be **collaborative**. Don't dominate conversation; give others the space to contribute.

2. Be **charitable**. Acknowledge the reasons for, and insights in, what other people have to say.
3. Be **courteous**. Avoid condescension, dismissiveness and other varieties of rudeness.
4. Be **judicious**. When weighing whether, or how long, to press a given line, keep in mind the stakes of the discussion. Don't nitpick for the sake of nitpicking.
5. **Avoid giving needless offense**, such as in the description of cases or thought experiments.
6. **Keep in mind that tentativeness is not a confession of ignorance**, nor self-assurance a guarantee of truth.

COVID-19 Precautions and Mask Policy

In light of the ongoing danger of coronavirus – where even seemingly mild cases of infection can cause long-term, adverse neurological effects, chronic illness and long-term disability – I want to minimize the risks associated with participating in this class. In order to make the classroom accessible to everybody, including those who are immunocompromised or have health conditions that make them more vulnerable, I ask you all to please take the following precautions:

- Wear a face mask when you are in the classroom.
- Do not come to class if you are sick, even if you don't think it is coronavirus.
- Do not come to class if you are testing positive for coronavirus, even if you do not feel unwell.
- Do not come to class if you have been exposed to coronavirus in the past five days, even if you do not feel unwell and/or have tested negative (the CDC advises waiting five days after an exposure before testing, in order to avoid false negatives).

I really appreciate your vigilance – it shows respect and concern for your classmates and lays the ground for a good learning environment. For those who must miss sessions as a matter of precaution, we can work together to make sure you get caught up on work.

Course Materials

The only book you need to buy/borrow is Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2011). I have ordered copies to the Seminary Co-op bookstore. We will not be reading that until November (see schedule of readings), so there is no need to buy it straight away if you are not yet sure whether you will be taking this course. All other texts/materials will be available on Canvas.

Schedule of Readings

(Note: Slight alterations to the schedule of readings may occur as the course progresses. I will let you all know in advance if readings change.)

- Wk 1 9/28 INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE
Mary Midgley, "Getting Animals into Focus"

I. MORAL STATUS AND MORAL PERSONHOOD

- Wk 2 10/3 Frances Kamm, "Moral Status"
Christopher Morris, "The Idea of Moral Standing," in *Oxford Handbook of Animal Ethics*
- 10/5 Michael Tooley, "Are Non-Human Animals Persons?" in *Oxford Handbook of Animal Ethics*
Mark Rowlands, "Are Animals Persons?"
- Wk 3 10/10 Sarah Chan and John Harris, "Human Animals and Non-Human Persons", in *Oxford Handbook of Animal Ethics*
Mary Midgely "Is a Dolphin a Person?"

II. Animal Interests and Animal Rights

- 10/12 Peter Singer, "All Animals are Equal"
Bernard Rollin, "Animal Pain"
- Wk 4 10/17 Tom Regan, "The Case for Animal Rights" (paper)
Tom Regan response to Peter Singer in *The New York Review of Books* ([The Dog in the Lifeboat: An Exchange](#))
- 10/19 Martha Nussbaum, "Beyond 'Compassion and Humanity': Justice for Non-Human Animals" in in Nussbaum and Sunstein (eds) *Animal Rights: Current Debates and New Directions*

MIDTERM PAPER TOPICS ASSIGNED FRIDAY 10/20

- Wk 5 10/24 Korsgaard, "Fellow Creatures: Kantian Ethics and Our Duties to Animals"

III. Killing and Eating

- 10/26 Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics*, chapters 4 & 5
- Wk 6 10/31 Documentary: *Peaceable Kingdom*
Mary Midgley, "Emotion, Emotiveness, and Sentimentality"
- 11/2 Cora Diamond, "Eating Meat and Eating People," in Nussbaum and Sunstein (eds) *Animal Rights: Current Debates and New Directions*

MIDTERM PAPERS DUE SUNDAY 11/6, 11:59PM

IV. SPECIES AND "SPECIESISM"

- Wk 7 11/7 Peter Singer, "Speciesism and Moral Status"
James Rachels, "Drawing Lines," in Nussbaum and Sunstein (eds) *Animal Rights: Current Debates and New Directions*

11/9 Eva Kittay, "The Personal is Philosophical is Political"

V. Companion Animals

Wk 8 11/14 Francione, Gary, "Animal Rights and Domesticated Nonhumans"
Tony Milligan, "The Ethics of Animal Training" in Christine Overall (ed) *Pets and People: The Ethics of Our Relationships with Companion Animals*
Optional: Hribal, Jason (2006) 'Jessie, a Working Dog'

11/16 Keith Burgess-Jackson, "Doing Right by Our Animal Companions"

Friday 11/18: Final paper topics assigned

Thanksgiving Break 11/21 – 11/25

VI. Animal Citizens?

Wk 9 11/28 Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, *Zoopolis*, chapters 1, 2 & 3

11/30 Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, *Zoopolis*, chapters 4 & 5

Wk 10 12/5 COLLEGE READING PERIOD

FINAL PAPERS DUE 12/10 AT 11:59PM