

Philosophy of Human-Animal Relationships

PHIL 23028
Winter 2024

Class times: Mondays and Wednesdays, 1:30-2:50pm

Location: Hinds Laboratory, 184

Course Instructor: Claudia Hogg-Blake (she, her, hers)

Email: claudiahoggblake@uchicago.edu

Office: Stuart Hall, Room 202-A

Office hours: T & Th, 11:15am – 12:15pm. **You must sign up by 9am on the day you want to meet.** If both of these office hours clash with another class, you should email me to find another time to meet.

Office hours sign-up: calendly.com/claudiahoggblake

Intimate relationships – primarily relations of companionship – between humans and non-human animals are ubiquitous but not often the subject of philosophy. This is a shame, since such relationships are important and interesting, providing rich ground for philosophical reflection. In this course, we will philosophize about such relationships, drawing on memoir as well as academic philosophy. How, we will ask, are we to understand such relationships? What is their nature? How are they possible? And what do they demand of us?

Texts

You will need to purchase the following three texts. All other readings will be available on Canvas. they are all available from Amazon and elsewhere.

- (1) Catherine Raven, *Fox and I: An Uncommon Friendship* (Spiegel & Grau: New York, 2021). ISBN 978-1-954118-11-9.
- (2) Yi-Fu Tuan, *Dominance and Affection: The Making of Pets* (Yale University Press: New Haven, 2004). ISBN 978-0300102086.
- (3) Jon Katz, *A Good Dog: The Story of Orson, Who Changed My Life* (Random House: New York, 2007). ISBN 978-0-8129-7149-1.

Course Objectives, Expectations and Assessment

Our goal in this class is engage in philosophical reflection on the nature and ethics of human-animal relationships. Our main learning objectives are:

- (1) To get a sense of the distinctive philosophical questions that arise when considering relationships between humans and animals, as well as of how we might go about answering these questions.
- (2) To engage critically with what other philosophers have said about these issues.

- (3) To apply philosophical frameworks to an understanding of real-life interactions/relationships and, in turn, to draw upon real-life accounts/experiences to develop, critique, and refine these philosophical frameworks.

Participation and Engagement

Read the Syllabus

You are expected to read the syllabus for the course. You cannot fully engage with the course if you do not know what is expected of you. **I will not respond to emails that ask questions that are already answered in the syllabus.** To ensure that you know what is expected of you, there will be a short quiz about the syllabus, to be completed by Monday of second week, on Canvas.

Communication

You are responsible for keeping up with all communications, via email and Canvas notifications, about the course. 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.

Participation and Engagement in Class

You are expected to attend every class session unless you are unwell, have been exposed to coronavirus, or have some other good reason to miss class. If you do need to miss a session, you should email me in advance to let me know. Unexcused absences will negatively affect your participation grade. If you are sick or have been exposed to coronavirus or other serious illness, but still want to participate, email me in advance and I will provide you with a Zoom link.

You are expected to be engaged during class time, and participation in class discussion is encouraged. During discussion, we should approach one another's contributions with curiosity and respect. Please follow these departmental norms of discussion (<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.

Engagement with the Texts

You are expected to carefully read, think about, and take notes on the assigned reading(s) before each class. Be sure to set aside ample time to do this. Read slowly.

Assignments and Exams

Pre-Class Assignments

To ensure that you arrive in class having engaged with that session's readings and ready to discuss them, a few guiding questions will be given for each reading, and you are required to submit brief written responses (no more than 300 words total) to these questions in advance of each class.

Written responses should be submitted by 11am on the day of each class, via the Canvas discussion boards. These pre-class assignments will be the primary mode of assessment of your participation and engagement with the course materials. To get full credit, these assignments should show an honest effort toward accurate textual interpretation and analysis, with clear citation of the text, as well as improvement in response to feedback. **You will not get credit for late submissions of pre-class assignments unless you have written to me in advance and have been granted an extension.** Since the purpose of these pre-class assignments is to prepare you for class, extensions will only be granted if you have a good reason, such as sickness or emergency.

Capstone Project

Your main assignment for this course will center upon an engagement in, and reflection upon, an actual human-animal interaction. In reflecting upon this interaction, you will draw upon, and perhaps critique or further develop, philosophical frameworks presented in our assigned texts. You will present your findings to the class and then write a philosophical paper reflecting on your human-animal interaction.

The interaction can be with any animal of your choosing, within the constraints of considerations of safety and ethics. It might be, for example, your family dog or cat, a friend's pet rat, a pig at a farm animal sanctuary, or an animal at a city animal shelter. It could even be, for example, a bird or squirrel you encounter in your yard or in a park, though if you do choose to engage with a non-domestic animal, you should prioritize the safety and comfort of yourself **and** the animal, and be aware of any legal restrictions on interaction. **Do not interact with any dangerous animals, and do not put yourself in danger when interacting with any animal.** All animal interactions are at the student's own risk. If you do not feel comfortable with this assignment, please let me know and I am happy to provide an alternative assignment.

The assignment will have three main components:

- (1) Engage in a human-animal interaction, keep a notebook in which you record and reflect on the nature of this interaction.
- (2) Engage in an in-class panel discussion in which you present your reflections. Presentations/panel discussion will take place on Wednesdays in Weeks 5-9. There will be a sign-up sheet for these and you should sign up by Monday of Week 2.
- (3) Write up a 5-7 page philosophical paper/reflection.

More detailed instructions will be given in due course.

Assessment breakdown:

1. **Syllabus quiz, 1%.** To ensure that you have read the syllabus and understand the course policies, there will be a short quiz, on Canvas, on the contents of the syllabus. To get credit you must answer all questions correctly, which will require you to read the syllabus.
2. **Attendance and engagement in class, 15% (1% per session).** Be present and engaged in each class session. Follow the departmental norms of discussion.
3. **Pre-class written responses, 14% (1% per response).** No more than 300 words answering questions about the reading. Due **11am Mondays and Wednesdays.**
4. **Capstone Project, 45%**
 - a. **Reflection notebook (5%)**
 - b. **In-Class Presentation & Discussion (15%)**
 - c. **Final paper (25%)**
5. **Final Exam, 25%.**

Sickness and Class Etiquette

Please do not come to class if you are sick, or suspect you might be sick, with something contagious, including (but not limited to): cold, flu, coronavirus, stomach virus. This is to prevent you from getting your classmates or instructors sick!

Please note that I am immunocompromised and therefore at high risk from coronavirus. I continue to take precautions against contracting and/or spreading coronavirus and I ask that you do the same while in my classroom.

- I ask that all students **wear a mask** in my classroom.
- **Do not come to class if you are sick.**
- I also ask that you **take precautions if you have been exposed to coronavirus**, even if you are not (yet) showing symptoms. The best precaution you can take in this scenario is to wait a few days and then take a PCR test, and do not come to class until you have a negative PCR test (note that negative results from rapid antigen tests are not reliable, though positive results from rapid antigen tests are highly reliable). In the meantime, you can attend class over Zoom.

If you are sick or have been exposed to coronavirus or other serious illness, but still want to participate, email me in advance and I will provide you with a Zoom link.

Thank you for helping to ensure that the classroom is a safe and accessible space!

Citing Sources, Academic Honesty, and Plagiarism

When you are writing a paper, be sure to distinguish between when you are presenting your own ideas or thoughts and when you are presenting or drawing on somebody else's ideas or thoughts or writings. When you are presenting, drawing on, or developing somebody else's ideas, say so. You

should always cite your sources, whether you are directly quoting from them or only paraphrasing. Here is some useful information on how to cite your sources from our campus library: [Home – How do I cite resources? – Library Guides at Uchicago](#)

And from the Purdue Writing Lab:

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_formatting_and_style_guide.html

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/>. Using a bot/AI to write your paper for you constitutes plagiarism. Do not have a bot write your paper for you! It will be a bad paper and will most likely be detected.

Accessibility

If you have ADA accommodations, please let's discuss what you need. I will ask you for documentation from Student Disability Services (SDS) if I haven't received it already. If you are unsure whether you qualify for ADA accommodations, by all means contact Student Disability Services at 773-702-6000, or disabilities@uchicago.edu. You can also report an access barrier, ask for services in a particular university facility, and more at <https://equalopportunityprograms.uchicago.edu/accessibility/request-an-accommodation/>

If you are concerned that you may have a learning disability or are otherwise struggling with your schoolwork, Student Health and Counseling Services has an academic skills assessment program (called by the acronym, ASAP) that may be able to help you sort out what is going on: <https://wellness.uchicago.edu/mental-health/academic-skills-assessment-program/>

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.

Please let me know if you need to miss class or adjust deadlines to accommodate religious observance. We will work something out.

Campus Resources

There is information here about the resources available to you on campus: [Campus resources | University of Chicago \(uchicago.edu\)](#)

And see here for resources offered specifically by the Center for Diversity and Inclusion: [About Us | Center for Identity + Inclusion | The University of Chicago \(uchicago.edu\)](#)

Schedule of Readings

Note: The readings listed under each session should be read *in advance* of that session.

Week 1	1/3	<i>Intro to the course</i> No reading	
Part 1: Between Species			
Week 2	1/8	Derrida, “The Animal That I Therefore Am”	
	1/10	Barbara Smuts, “Encounters with Animal Minds” Elisa Aaltola, “Empathy, Intersubjectivity, and Animal Philosophy”	
Week 3	1/15	MLK Day – No class	
	1/17	Donna Harraway, “Encounters with Companion Species” Barbara Smuts, “Between Species: Science and Subjectivity”	
Part 2: The Nature and Ethics of Human-Animal Relationships: Love, Friendship, Domination			
	Mondays: Philosophy		Wednesdays: Memoir
Week 4	1/22	Rachel Nussbaum Wichert & Martha Nussbaum, “Can There Be Friendship Between Human Beings and Wild Animals?” Cynthia Townley, “Animals as Friends”	1/24 Catherine Raven, <i>Fox and I: An Uncommon Friendship</i> , pp. 1-89.
Week 5	1/29	Tony Milligan, “Animals and the Capacity for Love” Tony Milligan “Animals and Love”	1/31 Catherine Raven, <i>Fox and I: An Uncommon Friendship</i> , pp. 90-193. <i>Research panel discussion</i>
Week 6	2/5	No class – take a break ☺	2/7 Catherine Raven, <i>Fox and I: An Uncommon Friendship</i> , pp. 195-286. <i>Research panel discussion</i>
Week 7	2/12	Yi-Fu Tuan, <i>Dominance and Affection: The Making of Pets</i> , Chs 1, 2, 5, 6, 7	2/14 Jon Katz, <i>A Good Dog: The Story of Orson, Who Changed My Life</i> , pp. 3-83 <i>Research panel discussion</i>

Week 8	2/19	Vikki Hearne, <i>Adam's Task: Calling Animals by Name</i> , selected chapters (TBD)	2/21	Jon Katz, <i>A Good Dog: The Story of Orson, Who Changed My Life</i> , pp. 85-168. <i>Research panel discussion</i>
Week 9	2/26	Francione, Gary, "Animal Rights and Domesticated Nonhumans" Tony Milligan, "The Ethics of Animal Training" Tony Milligan, "Dependent Companions"	2/28	Jon Katz, <i>A Good Dog: The Story of Orson, Who Changed My Life</i> , pp. 171-231. <i>Research panel discussion</i>
Final Paper Due Tuesday March 5th 12pm (noon)				
Final Exam Due Friday March 8th by 12pm (noon)				