

The Rights of Nonhuman Animals

PHIL 294-02

Spring 2012

Main 003
TR 3:00-4:30

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Course Description

In this course, we will be exploring fundamental philosophical questions associated with extending human rights to nonhuman animals, as well as philosophical contributions to a number of lively debates on this matter. Our first

question can be posed by borrowing from the title of James Nickel's classic work in human rights: How can we make sense of the idea that nonhuman animals have rights? What are the reasons that can be given in favor of recognizing such rights, and what are some of the objections to this idea? What role does the concept of personhood play in these discussions? From here we will go on to look at debates over animal rights from two different perspectives. The first will be the perspective of animal species. If at least some human rights ought to be extended to at least some nonhuman animals, to which ones and what rights should they have? Our second perspective will be that of setting, including animals in the wild, research lab, and both factory and non-factory farms. With regard to the latter we will ask how the issue of the rights of nonhuman animals is also an issue of environmentalism, particularly with respect to climate change. At a number of points along the way, we will pause to reflect on how granting rights to nonhuman animals would impact public policies and everyday habits of living. In considering these questions, it is anticipated that you will not only gain greater critical insight into what it may mean for nonhuman animals to have rights but for what it means for us as rational animals to have them as well.

Learning goals

The learning goals for this course are organized around three themes: substance, skills, and self-awareness.

With respect to substance, this course is designed to help you acquire a critical understanding of: (a) philosophical perspectives on the moral and legal rights of animals; (b) current debates involving key issues in animal rights; (c) theoretical approaches animating these debates; (d) policy and practice implications of animal rights; and (e) how protecting the rights of animals might have positive impacts on understanding and protecting the rights of humans.

The design of this course is also intended to assist you in developing key skills central to philosophy in particular and, more generally, to the liberal arts. By the end of this semester, you should be: (a) better able to read and analyze philosophical writing with an inquisitive and thoughtful mind; (b) more adept in "doing" philosophy, including forming philosophical questions, framing ethical issues, and constructing philosophical lines of thought; (c) more proficient in analytical and argumentative writing; and (d) more understanding of and able to participate in the participatory give-and-take involved in philosophical dialogue.

Self-awareness as a philosophical learning goal has its roots in Socrates' dictum that "the unexamined life is not worth living." I hope this course will expand your capacities for (a) reasoning about moral issues associated with nonhuman animals, particularly issues of animal welfare and animal rights; (b) reflecting on your own moral attitudes and practices regarding animals; and (c) respecting well-reasoned philosophical positions, even when these positions may be at odds with your own beliefs.

Texts

Marc Bekoff and Jessica Pierce, *Wild Justice: The Moral Lives of Animals* (University of Chicago, 2009)

Paola Cavalieri and Peter Singer, *The Great Ape Project: Equality Beyond Humanity*. (St. Martin's Press, 1993) Abbreviated C&S in course schedule

Lori Gruen, *Ethics and Animals: An Introduction*. (Cambridge, 2011)

Bernard E. Rollin, *Animal Rights and Human Morality*. 3rd edition. (Prometheus Books, 2006)

Cass Sunstein and Martha Nussbaum, *Animal Rights: Current Debates and New Directions*. (Oxford, 2004). Abbreviated S&N in course schedule

Academic Integrity

In this class, we will strive to have an environment geared as best as possible toward facilitating individual learning and which models best scholarly practices. With this in mind, please know that in reviewing your work, I will adhere to the College's *Academic Integrity Policy* as published in the *Student Handbook*.

Through the gift of your attention, you not only offer yourself more opportunities to be involved in class discussion, but you also help support the integrity of the learning environment. For your own sake and that of your fellow students, kindly take your phones off the "ring" setting and refrain from texting, tweeting, googling, likealittling, etc. while in class.

Coursework

There will be three writing assignments for this class. The first two assignments will be single-authored; for the third, which will also be presented in class, you will partner with another student. Through writing these papers, as well as through your oral contributions to the class, you will have the opportunity to develop your skills as an active participant in the construction of philosophical knowledge.

For the first paper, you will be asked to develop and defend your position on any question related to the philosophical foundations of animal rights. For the second paper, you will be asked to take a position on one of the debates associated with a particular aspect of animal rights, and to state your case. Each of these papers should be 5-6 pages long.

Your work on these papers will unfold both within a philosophical context and also within the context of Macalester's writing requirement. As the language of that requirement states: "*Macalester seeks to ensure that all students receive instruction in writing that gives attention to writing as a process (writing is rewriting), and that provides students individually with feedback on the mechanics and substance of their writing.*" With this in mind, if this course satisfies your W requirement, you will be expected to revise initial drafts of these papers in light of comments you receive, and resubmit them in a final form. For those of you who have already satisfied your W requirement, you will be required to revise and resubmit your first paper, and have the option to do so for your second. You will have one week from when your drafts are returned to you to turn in your second, and final, version of your paper.

For your third, co-authored, paper, 10-12 pages in length, you may choose to go in one of several directions. You may decide to focus on a question related to justifications for or debates over animal rights, for example: how well does Nichels's framework for human rights work to justify the rights of nonhuman animals? Or, you may decide to think about the relationship between protecting animal rights and protecting human rights—for example, the connection between the rights of animals in agricultural settings and the rights of humans to a clean and healthful environment. Another option would be to analyze a public policy issue related to animal rights, or to develop a particular policy related to animal rights and argue for it, in an area where you believe a policy gap currently exists.

A draft of this paper, which you will be circulating via Moodle to the class as a whole, will be due on 17 April. You will also be presenting this paper in class. Before you turn it in in its final form, you will have benefited in two ways from the feedback of your peers. First, each of you will be reading everyone else's paper and offering a comment or a question prior to the day on which the authors present it in class. Second, following the presentation of each paper, there will be time for a short discussion. When you turn in the final version of this paper during the last week of classes, you will be asked to include a one-page reflection piece showing how you took into account the feedback of your peers in moving the thought in your paper from a draft to a final stage. We will go over this entire process more thoroughly in class.

Late papers will be accepted without penalty if you have a good reason for turning it in late and you let me know in advance of the due date. *Unexcused late papers will be accepted up to one week after the due date, but you will lose half a grade (e.g. A- to B+) on the first day your paper is late, and every two days thereafter.*

Coursework evaluation

Your final grade for this class will be based on the following percentages:

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| First paper draft | 10% |
| First paper final | 15% |
| Second paper, draft | 15% |
| Second paper final | 15% |
| Third paper | 20% |
| Oral presentation | 10% |
| Class participation | 15% |

Because this is a philosophy course, there will be ample opportunity for you to contribute to class discussions. I will expect that each of you will come to our class meetings having done the readings for that day and prepared to make a contribution. Your class participation grade will be based on the quality of your contributions to class discussion, and so only indirectly on attendance.

Class Schedule

Please come to each class meeting prepared to talk about the reading assignment for that particular day. This schedule may change at the professor's discretion. Any changes will be announced in class and also e-mailed to the class distribution list.

Week One

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| 24 January | Welcome and orientation to the course |
| 26 January | The contemporary framework of human rights: a compact overview: James Nickel, <i>Making Sense of Human Rights</i> , selections from Chapter 1, available on Google Books |

Week Two **Making sense of animal rights**

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| 31 January | Lori Gruen, Chapter 1; Bernard Rollin, Chapter 1 |
| 2 February | Rollin, Chapter 2; Steven Wise, "Animal Rights: One Step at a Time"; Lesley Rogers and Gisela Kaplan, "All Animals are <i>Not</i> Equal," S&N, pp.19-50; 175-202 |

Week Three **Making sense of animal rights, cont'd**

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| 7 February | Richard Posner, "Animal Rights: Legal, Philosophical and Pragmatic Perspectives"; Peter Singer, "Ethics Beyond "Species and Beyond Instincts," S&N, pp. 51-92 |
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9 February Ingmar Persson, “A Basis for (Interspecies) Equality,” C&S, pp.183-193

Week Four Questions of animal personhood

14 February Gary Francione, “Animals—Property or Persons?,” S&N, pp. 108-142; Robert Mitchell, “Humans, Nonhumans and Personhood, C&S, pp.237-247

16 February Gruen, Chapter 2

Visiting Speaker: Keith Streff, Senior Humane Agent and Director of Humane Investigations for the Animal Humane Society. He is one of only two professional humane agents in Minnesota, and will give a presentation on the question: “What is Humane?”

First Paper Due

Week Five Animals as members of a moral community

21 February Bekoff & Pierce, Chapters 1 and 2

23 February Bekoff & Pierce, Chapters 3, 4, and 5

Week Six Thinking animal rights from a species perspective: The Great Ape Project

28 February “A Declaration on Great Apes”; Tom Regan, “Ill-Gotten Gains”; “Dale Jamieson,” “Great Apes and the Human Resistance to Equality”; Steve Sapontzis, “Aping Persons—Pro and Con,” C&S, pp. 4-7; 194-205; 223-227; 269-277

1 March Stephen Clark, “Apes and the Idea of Kindred”; Cavalieri and Singer, “The Great Ape Project—and Beyond”, C&S, pp. 113-125; 304-312

For part of today’s class meeting, we will watch the film “Cousin Bonobo”

Week Seven The use of animals in medical and scientific research: The debate over animal rights and humanitarianism

6 March Rollin, Chapter 3

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| 8 March | Gruen, Chapter 4 Macalester philosophy professors Geoff Gorham and Joy Laine will be joining us for today's discussion. |
| Week Eight | Spring break |
| 13 March | No class meeting |
| 15 March | No class meeting |
| Week Nine | Animal rights and animals in captivity |
| 20 March | Dale Jamieson, "Against Zoos" and "Zoos Revisited" (both available online) |
| 22 March | Gruen, Chapter 5 Visiting speaker: Lori Gruen (philosophy, environmental studies, and feminist, gender and sexuality studies, Wesleyan), author of <i>Ethics and Animals: An Introduction</i> Professor Gruen will also be presenting in the philosophy department's speaker series immediately following class. |
| | Second Paper Due |
| Week Ten | The rights of animals in the wild |
| 27 March | Gruen, Chapter 6 |
| 29 March | Field trip to Como Park Zoo (including a photographic exhibit of black bears in the wild) |
| Week Eleven | Animal rights and animals in agriculture |
| 3 April | Gruen, Chapter 3 and Chapter 7, pp.195-199; Rollin, Chapter 5 |
| 5 April | Wolfson and Sullivan, "Foxes in the Hen House: Animals, Agribusiness, and the Law," in S&N, pp.205-233 Visiting speaker: Paul Thompson (Philosophy, Michigan State). Paul sits on the scientific advisory committee of |

United Egg Producers, which represents nearly all egg farmers in the US.

Immediately following class, Professor Thompson will present the fourth annual Henry West Colloquium in the philosophy department's speakers series.

Week Twelve

The rights and moral status of companion animals

10 April

Rollin, Chapter 4; Nussbaum, "Beyond 'Compassion and Humanity,'" in S&N, pp.299-320

Joining class for today's discussion will be Katie Westling, founder of PAW: A Pet Care Company in Minneapolis

12 April

No class today—your professor will be out of town giving a talk. Please use the time to work on your third paper in library; e-mail me following the class with two sources you have found in the library for your presentation.

Week Thirteen

Valuing animal and human rights together

17 April

Jane Goodall, "Chimpanzees—Bridging the Gap," in C&S, pp. 10-18

Draft Third Paper Due for Class Circulation

19 April

Class presentations

Week Fourteen

24 April

Class presentations

26 April

Class presentations

Week Fifteen

1 May

Weather permitting, we will have a final class discussion, along with treats and beverages (a tailgate party!) as we observe canine socializing at the airport dog park, 28th Avenue in Minneapolis.

4 May
(Friday)

Third Paper Due

Final papers may be turned in to me in my office during our final exam time, 10:30—12:30 AM

