



California Institute of Integral Studies

ANIMAL ETHICS: ECOFEMINIST/ECOWOMANIST PERSPECTIVES

PARW 6421, 3 units, Fall 2021

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Ancient spiritual wisdom and contemporary scientific findings both refute Descartes' assertion that nonhuman animals are automatons devoid of consciousness or feeling. Nonetheless, the view of animals as machines undergirds many of our modern practices, such as factory farming and animal experimentation. How have Western philosophical trajectories, economic systems, and linguistic practices led to our ethical myopia concerning animals? What is the relationship between sexism, racism, and "speciesism"? How can we better align our spiritual, philosophical, and ecological wisdom with our actual practices toward our fellow species? In addition to exploring these questions, this course will highlight the emergence of veganism as an ethical response to animal exploitation and food injustice. Particular attention will be paid to ecofeminist and ecowomanist analyses of the links among sexism, racism, and speciesism.

COURSE DATES

This is an online course that will blend asynchronous and synchronous learning. The course begins on August 31 and ends on Dec 13. Asynchronous content will be hosted on Canvas. Synchronous classes will take place via Zoom on the dates listed below.

All listed times are Pacific Standard Time (PST):

Tues, 8/31, 11am-1pm

Wed, 9/15, 3-5:30pm

Wed, 10/6, 3-5:30pm

Wed, 11/3, 3-5:30pm

Wed, 12/8, 3-5:30pm

U.S. Holidays: Sept 6 (Labor Day) and 11/25-11/26 (Thanksgiving Holiday). See Appendix at end of syllabus for additional dates, such as add/drop deadlines.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

When this course is complete, students will be able to:

- Understand the interrelationship between human and nonhuman oppression, resistance, and transformation.
- Synthesize ecofeminist and ecowomanist perspectives on the nonhuman world.
- Analyze and contrast human-animal ethics in at least two distinct religious traditions.
- Integrate perspectives on animal ethics with scholarship on food justice and environmental justice.
- Apply their learning toward the articulation of a personal ethical standpoint vis a vis nonhuman animals.

REQUIRED TEXTS

1. Adams, Carol and Lori Gruen, eds. 2014. *Ecofeminism: Feminist Intersections with Other Animals and the Earth*. New York: Bloomsbury.
2. Akhtar, Ayesha. 2019. *Our Symphony with Animals: On Health, Empathy, and our Shared Destinies*. New York: Pegasus Books.
3. Harper, A. Breeze. 2010. *Sistah Vegan: Black Female Vegans Speak on Food, Identity, Health, and Society*. Brooklyn, NY: Lantern Books.
4. *Kemmerer, Lisa. ed. 2011. *Sister Species: Women, Animals, and Social Justice*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
5. Rodriguez, Sartya, ed. 2018. *Food Justice: A Primer*. Sanctuary Publishers.

*Sister Species is available as an e-book via the CIIS library. The others are not.

We'll also be reading excerpts from additional texts, including the following that are available as CIIS e-books. Other articles will be posted on Canvas.

Cordeiro-Rodrigues Luís, and Les Mitchell, eds. 2017. *Animals, Race, and Multiculturalism*. The Palgrave Macmillan Animal Ethics Series. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kemmerer, Lisa. 2011. *Animals and World Religions*. Oxford Scholarship Online

Waldau, Paul, and Kimberley C Patton. 2006. *A Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science, and Ethics*. New York: Columbia University Press.

COURSE ASSESSMENT MEASURES

Attendance and Active Participation, 25% Ongoing

Attendance consists of three parts:

- 1) Engaging in Canvas discussions during posting weeks. Posting weeks will begin on Wednesday and end on Tuesday. I will let you know how much you are required to post each posting week, but it will usually be 1-2 original posts plus 1-2 responses to peers. To enhance the multi-media component of the course, one of your posts during the semester should be in audio or video form.
- 2) Attending group Zoom calls. If you need to miss **one** call, you can make up the points by watching and responding to the recording.
- 3) Participating in small group projects. You will have opportunities to meet in small groups both during Zoom meetings and outside of scheduled classes. One of the small group projects will be to review a film together. Additional details will be discussed during the first day of class and posted on Canvas.

Please note that per CIIS policy, you cannot pass a course if you are absent for more than 20% of class sessions, regardless of the reason for your absences.

Personal Ethical Praxis, 35%

Praxis, as defined by liberatory educator Paulo Freire, refers to the interplay of action and reflection. Building on this concept, your praxis project will have 3 components: an initial reflection paper, a personal action that you will commit to during the semester, and a final paper.

Part 1: Initial Reflection. 2-5 pages. Informal writing, no citations needed.

Due Sept 6

Please use the following questions as a starting point for your inquiry. You do not need to answer every question posed.

- Where do nonhuman animals fit into your philosophy or worldview? What messages have you received about animals as a child, through your religion, schooling, etc?
- If you have animals in your life (e.g. pets, visitors to your garden, etc), how would you describe your relationship to them?
- How would you describe your relationship to the animals that you use or consume? (e.g. for food, clothing, entertainment, medical testing, etc).
- If you have never considered such questions before, why do you think that might be the case?

Part 2: Personal Ethical Action. Considering your own relationship with nonhuman animals, identify a specific practice you would like to undertake this semester that supports animal well-being. Please select something that feels manageable, both in terms of time commitment and difficulty. We will have check-ins about this action throughout the semester. Share your personal commitment on Canvas by **Sept 20**

Part 3: Final Reflection Paper. 6-8 pages.

Due Dec 10

Begin my reviewing your initial paper and noting what you have learned since that time. Have your perspectives on human-animal relationships shifted? If so, how? How would you answer the same questions from this new vantage point?

Another part of this paper will involve a reflection on your personal ethical praxis. What thoughts and feelings arose for you as you engaged this project? What have you learned? What texts have been most influential in shaping your thinking? What personal commitments to animal ethics do you intend to maintain after this course? Cite at least 3-5 texts from our course.

Please include your initial reflection paper as an appendix to this assignment (the appendix does not count toward your page count). You are also welcome to add poetry, photos, or other creative work to your paper.

Research Paper, 40% (6-8 pages MA; 10-12 PhD, max 15)

Due Date: Variable

Select a topic that is meaningful to you and that addresses the interconnections of animal and human interests. Develop an original thesis based on your research and support it with evidence from both the course readings and outside research. Your paper should be double-spaced, 12pt font, and be submitted in Word format. Use Chicago Style; either endnotes or footnotes are fine. Page counts are not inclusive of works cited pages.

Choose your own due date: To eliminate the need for extensions and to allow you to consider your own schedule when carving out time for writing, you will determine your own due date within the parameter of the semester. I encourage you to submit your paper by the third week or November so that you have time in December to focus on your final paper; however, you have until the very end of the semester (Dec 15) to turn this in. No extensions will be given after that. Please send us your intended due date and a rough idea of your topic (it's OK if this changes later) by Sept 30.

POLICIES & RESOURCES

Evolving Curriculum

Please note that we may make modifications to the course calendar, based on student needs & interests, discovery of new research, availability of guest lecturers, and other factors. Changes will be made clear on Canvas and announcements that are sent out on Canvas supersede what is indicated on the syllabus.

Appointments and Emails

I hold office hours Tues, Wed, and Thurs afternoons; please email me to set up an appointment. If you have a quick question, please email both me and Denise Hinson, our TA. Please give me up to 2 business days to respond. If you require a lengthy response, it may be better to schedule an appointment.

Accessibility and Well-Being

It is our goal to create a learning experience that is as accessible as possible. If you anticipate any issues related to the requirements of this course, please meet with me so that we can explore potential options. Students with disabilities may also wish to work with the CIIS Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) for additional resources, including official accommodations. Learn more about OSAS at <https://ciisedu.sharepoint.com/sites/student-affairs/SitePages/OSAS.aspx>. CIIS also provides students with wellness services and support for emotional challenges. Visit <https://www.ciis.edu/student-resources/health-and-wellness>

Incomplete Policy:

CIIS has adopted the following Incomplete Policy to be applied across the university: Permission to be given an “I” grade is given only in the following circumstances:

- a. medical reasons documented by a health-care professional.
- b. a family emergency verified with supporting documentation.
- c. decision by the faculty member based on exceptional pedagogical reasons.

For reasons “a” or “b,” students are given a maximum of two semesters to finish their coursework. Please note that in many cases, a shorter extension will be granted (e.g. one month or one semester). Also note that reason “c” was developed for serious extenuating circumstances only; in this case, a maximum of one semester is granted for the Incomplete. If you believe that you will need to request an incomplete for this course, please let us know as soon as possible – Incompletes will not be granted on the day or two before the final paper is due.

NOTE: I will be on sabbatical Spring 2022 and unable to work with students who have taken Incompletes; therefore, please plan ahead so that this won’t be necessary.

COURSE CALENDAR

Pre-Class Reading: Read at least the first half of *Our Symphony with Animals*.

MODULE ONE
8/31-9/21

Why Care? Exploring the Human-Animal Bond

Schedule

Tues, August 31 (**ZOOM**): Intro during WS Intensive (11-1PST)
Sept 1-7: Reading and Reflection Week
Sept 8-14: Online posting
Sept 15 (**ZOOM**): 3-5:30 PST
Sept 16-21: Make-up time if you missed Zoom; otherwise, begin reading for Module 2.

Texts

Our Symphony with Animals by Aysha Akhtar, M.D.
Sister Species, Ch. 6 & 7 (Sangamithra Iyer, Hope Ferdowsian)
Ecofeminism, Ch. 3 & 4 (Deborah Slicer, Josephine Donovan)
“Women, Anxiety, and Companion Animals, *Animaladies*, Heather Fraser and Nik Taylor (pending availability of text)
Podcast: “Genesis Butler: Hope is Empathy and Action for Animals,” Jane Goodall podcast. <https://news.janegoodall.org/2021/01/26/jane-goodall-hopecast-podcast-ep-3-with-youth-activist-genesis-butler/2/#prettyPhoto> (this link takes you to podcast description only; you should be able to find the podcast on an app)

Assignments

Assignment 1: Initial Reflection Due Sept 6
Decide on your personal project by 9/20 and post on Canvas

MODULE TWO
9/22-10/19

Engaging Spirit: Animals and World Religions

Schedule

Sept 22-Sept 28: Indigenous Traditions (Posting week)
Sept 29-Oct 5: Ecofeminist/Ecowomanist Spiritual Traditions (Posting week)
Oct 6 (**ZOOM**): 3-5:30 pm
Oct 7-12: Reading week (Indic Traditions *and* Abrahamic Traditions)
Oct 13-19: Online Posting week

Texts

Indigenous Traditions:

- “Freeing Feathered Spirits” by Linda Fisher, pp. 110-116 of *Sister Species*
- “Animal Personhood in Mi’kmaq Perspective” by Margaret Robinson
- “Cree Worldview” Fikret Birkes
- “Indigenous Worldviews and Critical Animal Studies: Decolonization and Revealing Truncated Narratives of Dominance” Ruth Koleszar-Green and Atsuko Matsuoka
- Podcast: “Is Veganism Anti-Indigenous?” Jen Bell Rivera and Alisha Vavilakolanu “<https://thelishlife.com/blog/2021/1/29/is-veganism-anti-indigenous>”

Ecofeminist/Ecowomanist Spiritual Traditions:

- *Sistah Vegan*, Ch. 2 “Veganism and Ecowomanism”, also read at least one other chapter that addresses spirituality.
- “Wiccan Spirituality and Animal Advocacy” Dianne Sylvan
- “Wicca, Ecofeminism, and Animal Advocacy” Fireweed
- Part 3 of “An Ecofeminist Interspecies Goddess Theology: Healing the Relationships between Humans and Other Animals” Kasia Pereira.
- “Alice Walker on Ecofeminist Issues in Her Fiction: An Interview”
Pamela B. June

Indic Traditions

- Excerpts from *A Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science and Ethics*
- “Precious Human Birth” Norm Phelps
- “Sparrows and Lions: Fauna in Sikh Imagery, Symbolism, and Ethics” Eleanor Nesbitt
- “Bishnoism: An Eco Dharma of the People who are Ready to Sacrifice their Lives to Save Trees and Wild Animals” Alexis Reichert
- FILM: *A Prayer for Compassion*

**MODULE
TWO
Continued**

Abrahamic Traditions

- *Sister Species*, Ch 8 “Theology and Animals” Elizabeth Jane Farians
- Excerpts from *A Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science and Ethics*
- Read one chapter (Christianity, Judaism, or Islam) from *Animals and World Religions*
- “A Sacred Obligation” *Brotha Vegan*, Milton Mills, M.D.
- “Muslims and Meat Eating” Kecia Ali
- Select one Podcast:
“The Case of the Animals Against Man” The Golden Age of Islam
“Spiritual Activism: An Interview with Rabbi Sharon Brous.”
Shamayim: Jewish Animal Advocacy OR
“Christianity and Advocating for Animals” Compassionate Action for Animals

Assignment

Submit thoughts and intended due date on research paper by 9/30

**MODULE
THREE
10/20-11/23**

Interconnected Issues of Justice

Schedule

Oct 20-26: Reading & Research Week (Frameworks)
Oct 27-Nov 2: Online Posting Week
Nov 3 (ZOOM): 3-5:30
Nov 4-9: Make up time if you missed Zoom OR Reading Week (Read ahead for next two weeks)
Nov 10-16: Online Posting Week (Further Intersections)
Nov 17-23: Online Posting Week (Food Justice)

Texts

Frameworks:

- “Economic Basis of Animal Oppression” David Nibert
- *Ecofeminism*, Ch 1 and 12
- *Sister Species*, Ch 1, 3, & 4
- *Sistah Vegan*, Intro, Ch 1, 3

Further Intersections:

- *Ecofeminism*, Ch 6, 10, 13
- Excerpt from *Eternal Treblinka*, Charles Patterson
- “A Queer Vegan Manifesto” Rasmus Simonsen
- *Sister Species*, Ch. 5
- Excerpt from *Animals, Race, and Multiculturalism*

Food Justice

Excerpts from *Food Justice: A Primer*

Sister Species, Ch. 13

Ecofeminism, Ch. 11

“Why Loving Animals is not Enough” Vasile Stanescu

Assignments

Nov 24-30: Extended Holiday Break (CIIS closed Nov 25-26)

MODULE FOUR A New Lens: Anti-Speciesism in Daily Life

12/1-12/13

Schedule

Dec 1-8: Online Posting Week

Dec 9-13: Final Reflections and Goodbyes

Texts

- “You Are How You Eat? Femininity, Normalization, and Veganism as an Ethical Practice of Freedom” Megan Dean
- Excerpt from *Vystopia* Clare Mann
- *Sister Species*, Ch. 10
- *Ecofeminism*, Ch. 9
- Other TBD

Assignments

- Submit Research Paper if you have not already done so.
- Submit Final Reflection Paper by Dec 10

APPENDIX: Key Dates from CIIS Academic Calendar for Fall 2021

For Full Calendar, visit <https://www.ciis.edu/academics/academic-calendar>

8/3/21 (Tue) [Late Registration Deadline](#) | Tuition Payment Deadline

8/26/21 (Thu) Semester begins; [Audit Registration](#) opens

8/27/21 (Fri) [Late Payment Fee](#) applied

9/2/21 (Thu) Add Deadline | [Grade Option Selection Deadline](#) | Book buying period closes

9/6/21 (Mon) Labor Day Holiday (*buildings closed*)

9/14/21 (Tue) Drop Deadline | Deadline to file for a [Leave of Absence](#)

9/21/21 (Tue) Deadline to withdraw and receive 75% refund

9/22/21 (Wed) [Graduation Application](#) Deadline

9/27/21 (Mon) Second [Deferred Payment Plan](#) installment due

9/28/21 (Tue) [Late Payment Fee](#) applied

10/19/21 (Tue) Deadline to withdraw and receive 50% refund

10/21/21 (Thu) [Late Payment Fee](#) applied

11/25/21 (Thu) - 11/26/20 (Fri) Thanksgiving Holiday (*buildings closed*)

12/13/21 (Mon) Semester ends

12/14/21 (Tue) and 12/15/21 (Wed) Make-up days

12/23/21 (Thu) - 1/2/22 (Sun) Winter Holiday (*buildings closed*)

1/7/22 (Fri) Grades due