

Political Theory and Animals

Spring 2013



Description

This course is an introduction to political theory, with an emphasis on how the central concepts of political theory apply to nonhuman animals. We will split our discussion into two main sections:

- **Theory:** What is the relationship between moral theory and political theory? If animals have moral status, then do they (or should they) have political and legal status too? We will consider these issues from a number of political perspectives, including utilitarianism, liberalism, communitarianism, marxism, feminism, and anarchism.
- **Practice:** How do these ideas apply to particular animals in particular situations? For example, should domesticated animals count as citizens? Should wild animals count as sovereign communities? What rights, if any, should animals have with respect to trials, contracts, property, and representation? And how can we put these ideas into practice?

General Information

- Time: Th 5:00–7:30
- Place: GODD B04
- Instructor: Jeff Sebo
- Email: jeffsebo@gmail.com
- Office: 285 Mercer, #902
- Office hours: W 1:00-2:00 or by appointment

Readings

The required books for this class are:

- Alasdair Cochrane, *An Introduction to Animals and Political Theory*
- Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights*
- Joan Schaffner, *An Introduction to Animals and the Law*
- Kimberly Smith, *Governing Animals: Animal Welfare and the Liberal State*

You can find these books at Bluestockings (172 Allen Street between Stanton and Rivington) as well as online. All readings not from the required book will be posted on blackboard.

Grading

Your grades will be determined as follows:

- **Papers** (70%): You will write two papers explaining and evaluating the views and arguments discussed in class. The first paper will be due on 3/17 and the second will be due on 5/12. Each paper will be about 10 pages long and will count for 35% of your final grade.
- **Presentations** (10%): You will give a 10-15 minute presentation. For your presentation, you will pick a political community and describe that political community's laws regarding nonhuman animals. You can pick any political community that you like, contemporary or historical, except the United States.
- **Daily Questions** (10%): At least one hour before each session, you will send me an email with (a) a short summary of one of the main claims from each assigned reading, and (b) a question or comment about that claim. These will be graded on a pass/fail basis.
- **Attendance and Participation** (10%): I expect regular attendance and thoughtful participation from all students. My assessment of the quality of your performance on these items will account for 10% of your grade.

Policies

- **Laptops/Cell Phones:** Laptops are allowed, but only for taking notes. Cell phones must be on silent.
- **Special Accommodations:** If you need special accommodations, please let me know so that I can properly assist you.
- **Academic Integrity:** Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. See the NYU College of Arts and Science policy on Academic Integrity for more information.
- **Late Papers/Extensions/Incompletes:** Late papers will be accepted, but will lose 1/3 letter grade for each day late. Extensions and incompletes will be granted only in exceptional circumstances. If you would like to request either, please do it well before the due date.

Schedule

- **1/31 - Introduction**
Alasdair Cochrane, "Introduction: animals and political theory"
Alasdair Cochrane, "Animals in the history of political thought"
- **2/7 - Utilitarianism**
John Stuart Mill, "Utilitarianism," "On liberty"
Alasdair Cochrane, "Utilitarianism and animals"
- **2/14 - Liberalism**
John Rawls, "A theory of justice"
Alasdair Cochrane, "Utilitarianism and animals"
- **2/21 - Communitarianism**
Charles Taylor, "Sources of the self"
Alasdair Cochrane, "Communitarianism and animals"
- **2/28 - Marxism**
Karl Marx, "The communist manifesto"
Alasdair Cochrane, "Marxism and animals"
- **3/7 - Feminism**
Carol Gilligan, "In a different voice"
Alasdair Cochrane, "Feminism and animals"
- **3/14 - Anarchism**
William Godwin, "An enquiry concerning political justice"
Brian Dominick, "Animal liberation and social revolution"
- **3/28 - Moral Status**
Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, "Universal basic rights for animals"
Alasdair Cochrane, "Animal rights without liberation"
- **4/4 - Legal Status**
Joan Schaffner, "Anti-cruelty laws"
Joan Schaffner, "Animal welfare laws"
- **4/11 - Domesticated Animals**
Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, "Extending animal rights via citizenship theory"
Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, "Domesticated animal citizens"
- **4/18 - Wild Animals**
Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, "Wild animal sovereignty"
Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, "Liminal animal denizens"
- **4/25 - Trials and Contracts**
Kimberly Smith, "Trials"
Kimberly Smith, "Contracts"
- **5/2 - Property and Representation**
Kimberly Smith, "Property"
Kimberly Smith, "Representation"
- **5/9 - Reform**
Kimberly Smith, "Reform"
Will Potter, "The way home"