

Animal Minds

Spring 2018



Description

This course will examine animal minds from a primarily philosophical perspective. We will start with a survey of philosophy of mind and cognitive ethology. What is a mind, and who or what can have one? How can we learn about animal minds, and what are the main research methods that scientists use to study them? We will then ask what, as far as we know, animal minds are like. How do animals perceive the world? Do they have memories? Self-awareness? Language? Rationality? Pleasure and pain and emotion? Finally, we will consider the philosophical implications of our answers to these questions. What, if anything, does this discussion tell us about the human/nonhuman divide, and about the nature, value, and meaning of human and nonhuman life?

General Information

- Time: MW 2pm-3:15pm
- Place: SILV 501
- Instructor: Jeff Sebo
- Email: jeffsebo@nyu.edu
- Office: 285 Mercer, #908
- Office hours: MW 3:30pm-4:30pm or by appointment

Readings

This course will draw primarily from the following books: Kristin Andrews, *The Animal Mind*, Robert Lurz, *The Philosophy of Animal Minds*, Jeffrey Masson and Susan McCarthy, *When Elephants Weep: The Emotional Lives of Animals*, Sara Shettleworth, *Cognition, Evolution, and Behavior*, and Clive Wynne, *Animal Cognition: The Mental Lives of Animals*. All required chapters will be made available as PDFs. You can also find these books at online retailers.

Grading

Your grades will be determined as follows:

- **Papers (70%):** You will write two research papers and submit them to animalminds2018@gmail.com. For each paper, you can either create your own prompt (provided that you clear it with me in advance) or select from prompts that I create. Each paper will be 8 pages long and account for 35% of your grade. The first will be due 3/25 at 11:59pm, and the second will be due 5/14 at 11:59pm.
- **Presentations (10%):** You will give a 10-15 minute presentation. For your presentation, you will find a scientific article related to the topic of discussion for that day, summarize the article, and then raise some questions or comments about this research and its implications for animal minds. You will also send an outline to animalminds2018@gmail.com at least 24 hours before class.
- **Daily Writing (10%):** Prior to each session, you will send an email to animalminds2018@gmail.com with the subject heading Last Name Date (e.g. Smith 1/24) that briefly (a) summarizes a main idea from each reading for that day and (b) presents a question or comment about these ideas. This assignment is due at least 30 minutes before class each day and will be graded Pass/Fail.
- **Attendance and Participation (10%):** I expect regular attendance and participation from all students.

Policies

- **Late Assignments:** Late papers will lose 1/3 letter grade for each day late. Late DW assignments will be accepted for half credit up until the start of class. Extensions and incompletes will be granted only in exceptional circumstances. If you want to request either, you must do so in advance.
- **Academic Dishonesty:** Plagiarism results in failure in the class and referral to a dean. Plagiarism includes: not citing sources, copying material without quotes or references, and more. You are subject to the CAS guidelines on plagiarism: <https://cas.nyu.edu/content/nyu-as/cas/academic-integrity.html>.
- **Academic Accommodations:** Academic accommodations are available to any student with a chronic, psychological, visual, mobility, learning disability, or who is deaf or hard of hearing. Students should please register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980.

NYU Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities
726 Broadway, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10003-6675
Voice/TTY Fax: 212-995-4114
Web site: <http://www.nyu.edu/csd>

Schedule

- **Week 1 - Introduction**

1/22 - No Class

1/24 - Franz Kafka, "Report to an academy"

- **Week 2 - Comparative psychology**

1/29 - Kristin Andrews, "Getting to know other minds"

1/31 - Kristin Andrews, "The science of other minds"

- **Week 3 - Philosophy of mind**

2/5 - John Heil, "Cartesian dualism," "The identity theory"

2/7 - John Heil, "Functionalism," "The intentional stance"

- **Week 4 - Perception**

2/12 - Clive Wynne, "Other ways of seeing the world ? I: physical dimensions"

2/14 - Peter Carruthers, "The problem of other minds"

- **Week 5 - Learning**

2/19 - No Class

2/21 - Clive Wynne, "Detecting cause and effect"

- **Week 6 - Memory**

2/26 - Clive Wynne, "Remembering"

2/28 - William Roberts, "The questions of temporal and spatial displacement in animal cognition"

- **Week 7 - Mindreading**

3/5 - Sara Shettleworth, "Social intelligence"

3/7 - José Luis Bermúdez, "Mindreading in the animal kingdom"

- **Week 8 - Spring Break**

3/12 - No Class

3/14 - No Class

- **Week 9 - Language**

3/19 - Sara Shettleworth, "Communication and language"

3/21 - Elisabeth Camp, "A language of baboon thought?"

- **Week 10 - Rationality**

3/26 - Kristin Andrews, "Thinking: Beliefs, concepts, and rationality"

3/28 - José Luis Bermúdez, "Animal reasoning and proto-logic"

- **Week 11 - Consciousness**

4/2 - Peter Carruthers, "Animals and conscious experience"

4/4 - Rocco Gennaro, "Animals, consciousness, and I-thoughts"

- **Week 12 - Pain**

4/9 - Colin Allen, "Animal pain"

4/11 - Sahar Akhtar, "Animal pain and animal welfare"

- **Week 13 - Emotion**

4/16 - Jeffrey Masson and Susan McCarthy, "Love and friendship," "Grief and sadness"

4/18 - Robert Roberts, "The sophistication of non-human emotion"

- **Week 14 - Moral patienthood**

4/23 - Kristin Andrews, "Moral minds"

4/25 - Jeff Sebo, "The moral problem of other minds"

- **Week 15 - Moral agency**

4/30 - Jeffrey Masson and Susan McCarthy, "Rage and dominance," "Compassion and rescue"

5/2 - Richard Joyce, "Moral language and moral emotions"

- **Week 16 - The Human/Nonhuman Divide**

5/7 - Thomas Nagel, "Death," "The absurd"