

History 2888G

A History of Animals

Winter 2026

Instructor: **Professor Aldona Sendzikas**

Email: **asendzi2@uwo.ca**

Office: **Department of History, Lawson Hall 1222**

Office Hours: **TBA**

This is a **draft** outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.



(**Photo credits:** Messenger dogs, France, 1918/AWM Eo2318; Brown bear, National Zoo, perhaps early 20th century/Smithsonian Institution Archives, MAH-18157; Ham the Chimp prior to flight in a Mercury space capsule, 31 January 1961/NASA; President Clinton poses with his dog Buddy for a portrait on the South Lawn of the White House, 6 April 1999/William J. Clinton Presidential Library, P71350-27; Animal Liberation march, San Francisco, 2015/Donny Moss.)

This is a draft outline. 2025-26 version. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.

Course Description

The course examines the animal-human relationship throughout history, including humans' use of animals as resources and entertainment; the rise of ethical frameworks concerning the treatment of animals; animals in art, religion, and culture; and the evolution of pet-keeping. Our relationship with animals is complex—sometimes symbolic, often exploitative—and history helps us to understand why we treat animals as we do.

Prerequisite(s):

Registration in any program at the second year or above.

Course Syllabus

Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

- Be able to demonstrate a general knowledge of humans' interactions with animals through history, and some of the many ways that animals have impacted the lives of humans, as well as the impact that humans have had on the lives of animals;
- Be able to articulate and critically analyze some of the many opinions that exist concerning the role and status of animals in society;
- Be able to describe and understand how humans' perspectives on animals have been influenced by philosophical, cultural, religious, utilitarian, and other factors, and how these perspectives have changed over time;
- Have learned how to analyze both primary and secondary sources in order to study and understand human-animal relationships throughout history;
- Have practiced academic writing skills, including: forming a thesis statement, developing an argument, and communicating it effectively in written form;
- Have improved oral communication skills through weekly discussion.

Expectations:

- Attendance at all lectures. (If you are feeling sick, please stay home!—but be sure to ask a classmate for a copy of their lecture notes for that day.)
- Completion of each week's assigned readings in preparation for discussion.
- Courtesy and respect towards other members of the class.
- Be present! Put away cell phones and other electronic devices during class. Laptops may be used to take notes and to refer to online course materials; they are NOT to be used for any other purpose during class.
- Completion and prompt submission of all written assignments.
- Academic integrity.

Course Materials

Required Texts:

- Margo DeMello, *Animals and Society: An Introduction to Human-Animal Studies* (NY: Columbia University Press). This book is available online. **You can access it free-of-charge** through the Western Libraries website, or by using this link:

This is a draft outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.

<https://doi-org.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/10.7312/deme19484>

If you prefer a hard copy, this book is available for purchase at the campus bookstore or through other booksellers, such as Chapters/Indigo or Amazon.ca, for approximately \$50.00. (We've used this book in previous years, so keep an eye out for used copies as well!) Either the 1st edition (2012) or the 2nd edition (2021) is acceptable.

- One novel—a work of fiction, the plot of which centres around human-animal relations--of the student's choosing (a list of titles to choose from will be provided.) These novels can be accessed online, at no charge, through the Western Libraries website.
- Additional weekly articles and other materials will be assigned and made available online on the OWL course website.

Methods of Evaluation

Assignments and Marks Distribution:

- | | |
|--|-----|
| • Short paper (based on a novel of the student's choosing)
(4-5 typed, double-spaced pages) (due March 25 th) | 20% |
| • Weekly reaction papers, written in class (250-400 words each,
or 1-2 single-spaced handwritten pages), written in class | 20% |
| • Midterm exam (written in-class, February 25 th) | 30% |
| • Final exam (during April exam period) | 30% |

Class Format:

Each class session will begin with a lecture. This will be followed by an opportunity for class discussion. Discussions will be based on the lecture, as well as the assigned readings for that week. Please make sure you have completed the readings before the start of class, so that you are prepared to participate.

Written Assignments

In addition to one short paper of 4-5 pages, students will be required to write and submit a weekly reaction paper. These reaction papers will be written in class. They will be in response to a question posed by the instructor in class, based on the day's topic, lecture, readings and discussion.

Grades assigned to these reaction papers will, together, constitute 20% of the student's final grade. (Two of the reaction papers—*i.e.*, the two papers receiving the lowest grade—will not be counted towards the 20% total. This is to accommodate student absences, as make-up assignments will not be available for students who miss writing a reaction paper due to absence from class.)

The short paper is to be completed outside of class time, and submitted by the specified time on the due date, electronically and in Word format, via the submission link on the OWL course

This is a draft outline. Please see the course site on OWL Brightspace for a final version.

website. (By using the submission link on the course website, your paper will automatically be submitted to Turnitin.com.) A late penalty of 2% for each day (including Saturdays and Sundays) will be incurred for papers submitted after the due date. Papers will not be accepted more than 10 days after the due date.

Further instructions regarding the above assignments will be provided in class.

Midterm Exam:

There will be a 2-hour midterm exam that will be written in class on February 25th. It will consist of short answer and essay questions. No electronic devices, books, notes, etc., will be permitted during the exam.

Final Exam:

There will be a 2-hour final exam that will take place during the April exam period. It will have the same format as the midterm exam, but will focus on material covered since the midterm exam. No electronic devices, books, notes, etc., will be permitted during the exam.

Students are advised not to make travel plans or other commitments for April until the university publishes the exam schedule.

Absences and Missed Exams:

Make-up tests, midterms, and exams can only be approved by Academic Advising. Please see https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html for department procedures and requirements involving make-up tests and exams.

Absences and Missed Lectures:

In the event that you must miss a lecture, due to illness or any other reason, it is your responsibility to obtain a copy of the day's lecture notes from a fellow student, and to review these notes before the next lecture.

Absences and Missed or Late Assignments:

Please note that HIST 2888G is an essay course. According to Western's Academic Handbook, an essay course "...must be so structured that the student is required to demonstrate competence in essay writing to pass the course." In this course, that means that, in addition to receiving an overall passing grade in the course, students must complete and submit the short paper, as well as at least seven (7) of the weekly reaction papers, in order to pass the course, regardless of grades received for other assignments.

Additional Statements

Communication policies:

The best way to contact me is by e-mail. (Please write “HIS 2888” or simply “Animals” as the subject line of your e-mail.) It is unlikely that I will be able to answer your e-mail immediately, but I will do my best to respond within 48 hours. You are also welcome to speak with me in person after class, or to drop by my office to see me during my office hours. You can also e-mail me to request a meeting over Zoom.

I am available to answer your questions about the course, review your assignments with you, help you with study tips, *etc.*—or just to chat with you. So don’t be shy about dropping by; I appreciate the opportunity to get to know each of you better (and perhaps to hear about your pets or other animals in your life!)

Use of electronic devices:

Students may use laptops during class to access course readings and to take notes, but not for any other purposes. The use of other electronic devices (cell phones, audio or video recording devices, *etc.*) is not permitted during class. No electronic devices are permitted during the midterm exam or the final exam.

Use of generative artificial intelligence (AI):

The goals of this course include learning to think critically, to evaluate historical sources, to use your analysis of these sources to create and support an argument, and to communicate your argument clearly. The use of AI bypasses these important learning activities.

Therefore, you may not make use of generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, in this course. Any use of such tools for assignments in this course may be considered a form of academic misconduct and handled accordingly.

If AI use is suspected, the instructor will ask for research notes and/or drafts of assignments, outlines, and other material used in preparing your assignment. Students must keep all notes, outlines, and first drafts until after the release of final grades for the course.

And finally...

Please review the Department of History’s shared policies and statements for all undergraduate courses at: https://history.uwo.ca/undergraduate/program_module_information/policies.html for important information regarding accessibility options, make-up exams, medical accommodations, health and wellness, academic integrity, plagiarism, and more.