

Animals and Human Affairs Online Syllabus

Fall 2023

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COURSE OVERVIEW: This interdisciplinary course serves as an introduction to animal life, human and animal interrelationships, and national and international policies and their implementations that support animal life now and into the future. The course is divided into four thematic sections. The first section introduces animals and provides an initial look at how animals are at risk and how we know this. The second section of the course provides a brief overview of the history of animals, taking a long view, and especially asks how we can put current losses of animal biodiversity in context with losses at other points in animal and earth history. The third portion of the course discusses key human animal interrelationships in the context of animal evolution, covering examples across the animal Tree of Life. This section focuses less on current farm or ranch practices per se, although some mention of these do occur. Instead, this course explores how domestication has happened in key case studies, including bees in Asia Minor, silkworms in the orient, turkeys in the Americas, horses in Ukraine and Kazakstan, and sheep by farmers in the Fertile Crescent in Africa, the middle East and Western Asia. We also discuss discoveries of how coral reefs form based on theories from Darwin, and why corals are so unique as an ecosystem, how four fish have impacted how and what we eat and the fish populations we consume, and our American history with oysters. These vignettes are meant to cover enough examples to show breadth and depth of human-animal interrelationships. The last portion of the course is focused on how humans have decided to protect and manage animal diversity. What species are under threat, what are those threats, how do we know, and how have governments and international agencies responded? What is the science behind observing animals in the wild and understanding how to develop indicators of population and species losses? The course is meant to ultimately have a positive message about human and animal interrelationships and the work being done to assure continued health of humans and the planet.

Fall 2021:

Aug. 23 - Aug. 25 (Week 1) *Module 1.* Animal Life in Crisis

Aug 28- Sept. 1 (Week 2) *Module 2.* Discovering species and reconstructing their relationships and the Metazoan Tree of Life

Sept. 4- 8 (Week 3): *Module 3.* The Rise of Animals

Sept. 11-15 (Week 4): *Module 4.* Major events in the history of animals. **Exam #1 end of this week.**

Sept. 18-22 (Week 5): *Module 5.* Introduction to the non-bilaterian animals.

Sept. 25- Sept 29 (Week 6): *Module 6.* The importance, and imminent losses, of coral reefs.

Module 7. Animal parasites, how common are they and how do we combat the worst of them?

Oct. 2-Oct 6 (Week 7): *Module 8.* An Introduction to the Lophotrochozoans and oysters on the half shell

Oct 9-13 (Week 8): *Module 9.* Introduction to the real rulers of the planet and our first domestication example - the European honeybee. **Exam #2 end of this week**

Oct 16-20 (Week 9): *Module 10.* The domestication of *Bombyx mora*, the silk moth, its importance in

economies, and the spread of silk across trade routes.

Oct 23-Oct 27 (Week 10): *Module 11.* The Deuterostomes and the cost of invasive sea urchins and star fish

Oct. 30-Nov 3 (Week 11): *Module 12.* The rise of chordates and the importance of fish to human ways of life

Nov 6-10 (Week 12): *Module 13.* A New World domestication and domestication as a process - Turkeys

Nov 12-17 (Week 13): *Module 14.* The rise of mammals, a timeline for the domestication of sheep, and the importance of wool.

Nov 20 - Nov 24 (Week 14): *Thanksgiving Break week – catch up and paper (no modules)*

Nov 27-Dec 1 (Week 15): *Module 15.* The rise of mammals and humans; domestication of horses and its consequence in human history. **Exam 3 end of this week.**

Dec 4-Dec 8 (Week 16) *Module 16.* Policy frameworks and novel ways to observe biodiversity in the 21st century. **Final exam due at end week of Week 16.**

REFERENCE MATERIAL:

The following books are useful but not required. They are all fun reads! We will also read some other material from primary and secondary literature that will be made available via the course website and that will form the basis for some of your assignments. I routinely bring in new articles and press relevant to the course. I have copies of these and can provide a limited number to folks, if you want them!

Useful material:

The Annihilation of Nature: Human Extinction of Birds and Mammals, by Gerardo Ceballos, Anne H. Ehrlich, and Paul R. Ehrlich

A Movable Feast: Ten Millennia of Food Globalization, by Kenneth Kiple

The Big Oyster: History on the Half Shell, by Mark Kurlansky

Four Fish: The Future of the Last Wild Food, Christopher Lane

The Horse: The Epic History of Our Noble Companion by Wendy Williams

FORMAT AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES: This course is an interdisciplinary special-topics course and the focus is on synthesis of material rather than simply memorizing content. Midterms (3 of them, with a synthetic final due the last day of classes) are fill-in-the-blank and essay based with a premium on synthesis. Theory and how we “know what we know” will feature. Core guiding concepts will provide a critical scaffold for the course.

Learning objectives include: 1) Understanding the broad outlines of animal diversity and how it came to be over the last 650 million years of evolution, and how we know; 2) Understanding current threats to animal diversity, why it matters for human health and well-being, and efforts to preserve biodiversity; 3) Understanding key interrelationships between humans, how humans have made decisions regarding use of animals, the histories and origins of domestication, and how humans have modified animals through selective breeding. How do we gather evidence of past domestication?; 4) Understanding how domestication changes humans – how much do our domesticated animals impact our lives and ; 5) Understanding how policy frameworks have been develop to protect animal species; 6) Analyzing debates about how to develop policy for animal biodiversity; 6) Using new tools to assess knowledge gaps in animal diversity and develop reports of how well policy frameworks are being met; 7) Synthesizing knowledge from human-animal interrelationships past and present in order to understand the 21st century challenges facing how we manage and sustain animal resources; 8) Developing the ability to link data to knowledge to policy actions, and advocate how this linkage can be strengthened.

Emailing Instructor: Email is the least likely way to get a response from the Instructor in a timely manner, but I will do my best to respond. However, a response cannot be guaranteed. Connect via Canvas will likely work better and given the course is online, I try *really hard* to be responsive. I am also happy to set up a zoom call if need be. All “office hours” are now “zoom meetings”.

The first week and one on one “mandatory” zoom meeting: Online teaching and learning is hard and it really helps if we get to know each other, even just a little bit. So I do have a mandatory one on one zoom meeting that I want to set up with each of you, that I want to arrange in weeks 4-6, once the class is really going and you know how exams work etc. I also want to set up two “everyone together” zoom calls with the hopes that most of you can make one time or the other the 2nd week of class. This is a chance for us to get to know each other and connect more about the class. I realize people have busy lives so these are not 100% mandatory but they do count towards your participation grade. I will not count the first week mandatory meeting against you if you can’t make it due to scheduling conflicts etc.

Weekly Zoom Sessions: While they are not mandatory, I have learned the class is just much more interesting and fun if we have zoom sessions regularly to cover any questions and to talk over stuff. We’ll plan for once a week but this is still a new part of the course, and it may be that we’ll skip some weeks. I will try to make those interactive by having some new tidbit or news story that is relevant to the class that you can quickly skim before the session. I will set a time for those but want to be able to find the best compromise given people have busy schedules. Because I cannot guarantee that there is a time everyone can make, *these are extra credit and will add 1% to your score if you can and do participate.*

Quizzes: I have learned that quizzes and this course don’t mix as well as I like, based on previous feedback and my own impression of the course – a lot of the material is focused on synthesis and quizzes have to be more “pick an answer”. So, I still have quizzes and you still need to take them, but ***they are extra credit only*** – and can help shift you from a B+ to A- etc. I will apply extra credit based on mean centering and scaling the overall individual performance – the best scoring quiz taker gets 2% extra credit and the worst scoring 0% with everyone else in between.

Grading:

Exams:

Midterm 1: 15% of final grade. (75 points total)

Midterm 2: 15% of final grade. (75 points total)

Midterm 3 : 15% (75 points total)

Final Synthesis: 18% (90 points total)

Other assessments:

Class assignments: 25% (125 points total)

Class participation in weekly zoom sessions: 1% extra credit

Quizzes: up to 2% extra credit.

Short paper or video presentation: 12% of final grade + up to 1% extra credit (60 points)

There are no set number of As, Bs or Cs given out in this course (no strict curve). Grading will be based on naturally occurring sets of breaks between high scoring, medium scoring and lower scoring students. If everyone does well, everyone gets As. I will consider improvement a criterion for grading. If you do much better on the final compared to the midterms, we will downweight the midterm scores and upweight the final.

Short Paper/Presentation

There is a 4-8 page double spaced paper AND/OR 10-15 oral presentation (with multimedia aids) assigned for this course. You will get a full assignment from the instructor in mid-September, and the paper is due latest on December 1 (so that I have time for grading them). The paper or presentation

should be short review paper on a topic of interest about animal domestication or animal biodiversity policy. It should focus on more than one and preferably many (3+) papers on the same topic from the primary literature (that means a scientific paper and not the Internet, although you can use the Internet to find the papers!). You may cover any topic related to animal domestication or conservation policy, but the instructor asks that you discuss what you choose to cover with them before starting. You can accrue up to 3% extra credit towards the final grade by doing both a paper AND a presentation, and if those are both excellent, the joint effort can bump you as much as half a grade (from say a B+ to A-).

Expected Behavior and Honor Code

I expect each class member to behave as is befitting a professional situation like attending a class. The simple rules are: attend class, participate, and know campus policy about expected classroom behavior. I will treat each member with all respect as long as we feel that is reciprocated. Cheating will not be tolerated and we expect all students to follow codes of ethics as outlined by the University of Florida (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>). **Regarding cheating: You can study together but you must independently complete exams *without notes* i.e. exams are “closed book”.** In order to enforce these rules, the course is HonorLocked but if you have extenuating circumstances, you can always let me know. In return for your great behavior, I promise to be respectful back, and do whatever I can to make the the online learning experience great!

Finally, I understand that new tools can be helpful in enhancing your understanding, such as ChatGPT, but I am really good at sleuthing whether your answer is your own or from an AI. You must be able to form ideas and concepts in your own head, rather than rely on machines to do this for you. AI-based answers are a form of cheating and I will enforce honor code rules related to use of such tools. To be clear, I understand these tools *can* be helpful, so use them in moderation and with care -- and remember to frame thoughts yourself.

Policy regarding Religious Observance:

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, the instructors will discuss accommodations on a case by case basis. Reasonable requests will almost always be granted.

Policy regarding sexual harassment

The University of Florida policy on Discrimination and Harassment (<http://hr.ufl.edu/manager-resources/policies-2/sexual-harassment/>) will be adhered to strictly. Any student who believes s/he has been the subject of discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status can make a formal complaint report to the Institutional Equity and Diversity officer and/or to the Dean of Students Office/Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (DSO/SCCR). Resources and reporting options can be found online at <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/resources/victims>.

Policy regarding inclusion and diversity: Students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives are welcomed and expression of diversity encouraged, especially in a course that covers so much diversity itself. The diversity that students bring to this class is viewed as a resource, strength and benefit.

U Matter, We Care

Your well-being is important to the University of Florida. The U Matter, We Care initiative is committed to creating a culture of care on our campus by encouraging members of our community to look out for one another and to reach out for help if a member of our community is in need. If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu so that the U Matter, We Care Team can reach out to the student in distress. A nighttime and weekend crisis counselor is available by phone at 352-392-1575. The U Matter, We Care Team can help connect students to the many other helping resources

available including, but not limited to, Victim Advocates, Housing staff, and the Counseling and Wellness Center. Please remember that asking for help is a sign of strength. In case of emergency, call 9-1-1.

Policy on Course Feedback

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.