



phi3672a - Animal Ethics
Jane Compson

Syllabus

Contacting the Professor

Contacting the Class

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Contacting the Professor

Preferred: USE WEBCOURSES MAIL

E-Mail: jcompson@mail.ucf.edu (please use this address only if, for some reason, you cannot contact me through WebCourses course mail).

Contacting the Class

Use Webcourses: Discussion or mail functions

ECommunity: Emails

Course Description

This is a fully online course. Modules will be released weekly or bi-weekly. Each module will contain study notes and a series of assignments. Assessment will take place in the form of weekly online discussions, online quizzes, a final paper and an online final exam. This course also includes contemplative methods of learning in the form of exercises and reflective writing. You can read more about this below.

There are some fundamental questions that run through this course: do/should non-human animals have moral standing, and if so, why? How much moral concern should we have towards non-human animals? How can we decide what counts as 'appropriate' treatment? This course will encourage students to explore and develop a rational ethical basis for critically analyzing and understanding relationships between human and non-human animals. It will also provide a survey of some of the key areas of debate in the field of animal ethics, and will encourage students to **explore** key ethical theories and arguments, **analyze, discuss** and **critique** them, and **apply ethical reasoning** to specific issues in relation to non-human animals.

As part of our exploration of these questions we will look at various philosophical and practical questions:

- What qualities determine a being's moral worth and our moral responsibilities towards them?
- What are rights, and do non-human animals have them?
- What constitutes 'personhood'?
- Do animals suffer/experience emotions, and what difference does it make if they do?
- Is it morally acceptable to use animals for food, research, education or entertainment?

As an example, we will focus in particular on 'utilitarian' versus 'rights' views. For example, Peter Singer is an advocate of a utilitarian justification for the moral worth of animals, arguing (following Bentham) that the moral worth is connected with the capacity to suffer, and that the ethical soundness of a particular position can be evaluated by considering which particular course of action minimizes suffering (or maximizes pleasure or happiness) for the most sentient beings. This view is challenged by Tom Regan, an advocate of 'rights views'. Regan suggests that animals have certain inviolable rights to have their interests considered, irrespective of the consequences in terms of the suffering or pleasure of other beings.

This course is designed to help students develop knowledge, sensitivity and critical awareness in their thinking and practice about ethical issues in relation to non-human animals. This course also uses contemplative methods of teaching and learning (you will find more explanation about this in the introductory module). The reason that contemplative practices are used in this class is that are likely to increase attention, engagement and understanding of course materials, and therefore to increase the quality of your learning experience. They also offer an alternative 'way of knowing' that complements the logical, rational approach.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course:

- You will have **gained knowledge** about some of the history of animal ethics debates in the last century. You will have a critical understanding of some of the key issues in contemporary discussions about animal ethics, and an **analytical appreciation** of the different arguments and perspectives about these issues.
- You will be able to **discuss, compare, analyze** and **critique** a variety of perspectives on the question of the value non-human animals.
- You will be able to **recognize** that you have a position or 'worldview' and that it is one among many; it is a view that is part of a particular time and tradition, and which can be challenged and enhanced by other views.
- You will have developed skills in **applying** ethical theories to particular case
- You will have developed your own **critical thinking** abilities by completing guided analyses of articles.
- You will have engaged in **contemplative reflection** about your relationship with animals, and written **reflective responses** about this experience.
- You will have developed your ability to **reflect** on and **communicate** your own learning experience.
- You will have developed skills in discussion, including articulating your own position rationally and coherently, and providing fair and appropriate critical analysis and evaluation of the arguments of others.

Evaluation Procedures

Evaluation Procedure Table

Assignment Type	Description	Percent of Final Grade
Discussions	Every module, you will be expected to participate in a discussion assignment. Instructions will be released with each module.	20%
Contemplative Reflections	You will be asked to complete and reflect upon five contemplative exercises throughout the course.	20%
Quizzes	For most readings, you will be asked to take an online quiz to test your comprehension. Instructions will be released with each module.	20%
Final Paper	You will be asked to write a 1500 word paper on a particular issue we have discussed in the course, or a reflective paper on your experience of the contemplative exercises.	20%
Final Exam	Comprehensive exam on course materials	20%

Required Texts

- *The Animal Ethics Reader*, edited by Susan J. Armstrong and Richard G. Botzler, (Routledge, London and New York, 2003).
 - *Animal Rights and Human Morality*, Bernard E. Rollin, (Buffalo, Prometheus Books, New York, 2006).
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Sample Course Outline

The list below gives an *example* of the kind of subjects covered in the class. Each module will last one to two weeks. Each course may have additional readings and modules to those listed.

Section One: Introductory

In this section we will explore fundamental concepts about ethics and animal rights to equip us for the rest of the course.

Module 0 - Orientation

Module 1 - Introduction: What is ethics?

James Rachels, "A Short Introduction to Moral Philosophy" from *The Right Thing to Do* by James and Stuart Rachels (McGraw Hill, 2007), pages 1 to 28 (online reading in the Readings section of the site).

Susan J. Armstrong and Richard G. Botzler, "Animal Ethics: A Sketch of How it Developed and Where it is Now", from *The Animal Ethics Reader*, pages 1-11.

Section Two: Theoretical.

In this section, we will look at philosophical questions involving moral considerability – in other words, what qualities or abilities does a being need to possess before we feel a sense of moral responsibility towards that being? Where do we draw the line of moral concern? Do animals have rights? What are rights?

Module 2 – Determining Moral Considerability

Readings: Rollin, p.1-106.

Module 3 – Sentience and The Utilitarian View

James Rachels, "Second Example: Nonhuman Animals" from James Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, (McGraw Hill, 2007) **online reading**.

Peter Singer, "Practical Ethics" from *The Animal Ethics Reader*, pages 33-44

Module 4 – The Rights View

Tom Regan, "Practical Ethics" from *The Animal Ethics Reader*, pages 17-29.

James Rachels, "Are Consequences All That Matter?", pp. 103-106.(Online reading)

Bernard Rollin, *Animal Rights and Human Morality*, Chapter 2, "Animal Rights and Legal Rights."

Section 3: Applied Issues

Building on the theoretical foundations of the previous section, in this section we will look at practical questions about surrounding the treatment of animals. Is it morally acceptable to use animals at all? If so, where are the limits for acceptable use? Food? Research? Education? Can we protect animals without harming the environment?

Module 5 – Animals for Food

Readings: Reader, 27 David DeGrazia, "Meat-Eating", 30 Animal Agriculture Alliance, "Animal Agriculture: Myths and Facts", 32 William O. Stephens, "Five Arguments for Vegetarianism", 33, Carol J. Adams, "The Rape of Animals, the Butchering of Women"; 34 Katherine Paxton George, "A Feminist Critique of Ethical Vegetarianism".

Module 6 – Animals in Research

Readings: Rollin, pp. 133 -210, Reader, 40, Tom Regan: "The Case for Animal Rights"; 41, David DeGrazia, "The Ethics of

Animal Research: What are the Prospects for Agreement?", 42, Baruch A. Brody, "Defending Animal Research: An International Perspective."

Module 7 – The Ethics of Pets

Bernard E. Rollin and Michael D.H. Rollin, "Dogmatisms and Catechisms: Ethics and Companion Animals" (geddit?!), from *The Animal Ethics Reader*, pages 504-509.

Paul Shepard, "The Pet World", *The Animal Ethics Reader*, pages 510-512.

Freya Mathews, "Living with Animals", *The Animal Ethics Reader*, pages 516-519.

Module 8– Zoos.

Readings: Reader, 65, Tom Regan, "Are Zoos Morally Defensible?"; 66, Hutchins et al, "Ethical Considerations in Zoo and Aquarium Research".

Course Home

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