

SOCI 438¹

Issues in Contemporary Sociology: Critical Animal Studies

Instructor:

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Course Description:

This course will introduce students to the relatively new and rapidly growing field of critical animal studies (CAS). Critical animal studies is rooted in and engages with critical theory, from a variety of disciplines, as well as social justice activism. This course draws on this range of critical theories to better understand and challenge the commonly held beliefs about animals and the human-animal relationships that permeate our lives, specifically as we see them play out within the food, science, fashion, entertainment, and pet industries. Critical animal studies critiques the entire social system that facilitates and enforces the exploitation, property status, and institutionalized oppression of animals, and challenges the human/non-human animal divide. As such, critical here refers to an active engagement with the various socially constructed ideologies and biases that influence our relationships with other animals and our daily interactions with them.

In this course, therefore, we will examine the most influential philosophical and contemporary discourses around the human-animal relationship, and how critical animal studies intersects with various other critical theory, such as environmental, feminist, anti-racism, disability, and queer theory. An underlying theme of this course will be the re-evaluation of our understandings of animals, their role within human societies, and a reconsideration of our responsibilities to them, on both an individual and collective, societal, level.

Course Objectives:

By the end of the course, students will:

- understand what critical animal studies is, its key theories and principles, and how it differs from work within animal studies and human-animal studies
- understand the concept of intersectionality and how critical animal studies is an intersectional approach that looks at the ways in which animal issues intersect with other social justice issues
- be able to use a critical animal studies perspective to inform their own relationships with animals, both in their academic work and outside of it

Course Pre-requisites:

- Minimum fourth-year standing and declared Honours or Major in Sociology
- Or, permission from the department

Required Resources May Include:

No required texts

¹ This outline is only intended to give an overall sense of the course. A detailed course outline will be made available in August before the first day of class. Only that outline is to be considered official.