**George Mason University** **Women and Gender Studies Program**

**WMST 450 DL1—WMST 550 DL1—GOVT 414 001—INTS 475 013—PHIL 694 DL3**

**FEMINIST ECOPOLITICS: GENDER, RACE & ANIMAL RIGHTS**

**Spring 2021**

**Tuesdays, 4:30pm—7:10pm**

**Class Location: Online**

**INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION**

**Rachel Lewis**

**Associate Professor**

**Women and Gender Studies Program**

**George Mason University**

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**Office Hours: Tuesdays, 2:00pm—4:00pm**

**Course Description**

This course offers an introduction to the interdisciplinary field of feminist animal studies. Topics and issues we will examine during the course of the semester include second wave feminist debates about the relationship between women, animals and environmental justice; the sexual politics of meat; black veganism; the connections between disability rights and animal liberation; post-humanist perspectives on gender, race and animal rights; queer and trans\* animacies; and postcolonial and transnational feminist approaches to animal rights. We will discuss literature on feminism and animal rights from a range of disciplines, including women’s and gender studies, queer studies, philosophy, anthropology, sociology, critical legal studies, and media and cultural studies, to name a few. In doing so, our primary goal will be to gain a better understanding of the ways in which animal rights discourses intersect with questions around gender, sexuality, race, class, nation, ability, and political economy. Other course goals include the following:

1. To get a sense of the potential scope of feminist, queer and anti-racist approaches to animal rights and become familiar with their language, theories, and methods of critical engagement
2. To consider what kinds of connections exist (or should exist) between the field of animal studies and animal rights activism
3. To become familiar with feminist, queer, intersectional, post-humanist and transnational perspectives on animal rights
4. To gain a better understanding of the intersections among animal oppression and speciesism, sexism and heteronormativity, ableism and disability discrimination, racism and classism, and capitalism and imperialism

**Required Texts**

* Mel Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012).
* Maneesha Deckha, *Animals as Legal Beings: Contesting Anthropocentric Legal Orders* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021).
* Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2008).
* Aph Ko and Syl Ko, *Aphro-Ism: Essays on Pop Culture, Feminism, and Black Veganism from Two Sisters* (New York: Lantern Books, 2017).
* Juno Salazar Parrenas, *Decolonizing Extinction: the Work of Care in Orangutan Rehabilitation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018).
* Harlan Weaver, *Bad Dog: Pitbull Politics and Multispecies Justice* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2020).
* Additional readings will be available online through Blackboard.

The required texts are available for purchase through the campus bookstore. Alternatively, you may purchase the course texts through any other bookstore or online retailer.

**Undergraduate Course Requirements**

* Class attendance and participation: 25% (includes any reading responses and study questions)
* One in class presentation on the assigned readings: 15%
* Two 3-4 page papers based on the assigned readings: 15% each (30% total)
* A final research paper (9-12 pages) on any issue pertaining to animal studies, due on Friday, May 7th via e-mail: 30%

**Graduate Course Requirements**

* Class attendance and participation: 30% (including one in class presentation on the assigned readings)
* One 6-8 page analytical essay: 20%
* Annotated bibliography for the final research paper: 10%
* A final research paper (15-22 pages) on any issue pertaining to animal studies, due on Friday, May 7th via e-mail: 40%

**NOTE: Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the assigned date. Any papers submitted after the due date will be subject to a late penalty.**

**Incompletes will not be awarded, except in cases of severe illness.**

**Attendance and Participation**

*Attendance:* your daily presence is critical to the success of the class. An excused absence requires proper documentation (i.e. a doctor’s note or written proof of participation in a University or work-related event). If you are more than 20 minutes late for class, your lateness will be considered ½ an absence. You are responsible for making up missed work and obtaining any materials that are handed out during the missed class. Be aware that repeated unexcused absences will impact your participation grade.

*Participation:* participation means coming to class ready and prepared to make an active contribution to our discussions. In class participation consists of all in class work (i.e. participation, class discussions, informal presentations, group work, writing, and quizzes).

**Undergraduate Presentations**

You will do the in class presentation in groups of two on a topic to be assigned early in the semester. Each presentation should be 12-15 minutes in length. The project will require strong collaboration on the parts of both group members in order to achieve a good grade.

**Undergraduate Papers**

You will write two 3-4 page papers—both of which will respond to an essay prompt and/or series of questions related to the assigned readings—and one final research-based paper. Essay prompts for the papers will be distributed two weeks before the due date for each of the papers. These prompts will include more detailed instructions and grading criteria. Additional research is not required for either of these papers, although it could prove useful for your argument. The final paper must utilize at least two of the course readings and five outside sources, using MLA citation style. An assignment sheet for the final paper will be distributed later in the semester.

The Writing Center on campus can also help you with your written assignments. For more information see: [http://writingcenter.gmu.edu](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/)

**For Graduate Students:**

This course follows a standard seminar format. Students are expected to attend class and contribute to each week’s discussion of the readings. More than one absence from class requires makeup work in the form of a four-page essay on the literature for the missed class. This work cannot count toward the student’s short essay.  
  
**Class participation** includes general participation in class discussion, leading class sessions, peer feedback on proposals and a presentation of a research proposal. In order to facilitate widespread discussion, students should come prepared with at least two questions for each class. Class participation also includes discussing research projects and providing peer feedback for proposals.  
  
**Leading class discussion**: Students assigned to the same day may collaborate on how to present the readings and the class discussion. Students should summarize the argument for the readings and then ask questions based on the thesis and supporting evidence. Students should prepare a minimum of five questions in all.

**Analytical essay:** Students will write one short paper analyzing the readings of one class session. In addition to examining the authors’ arguments, students may structure their essay in the following ways: What are the differences and commonalities in the themes and arguments across the literature? How well does the evidence support the argument or thesis? How do the themes and arguments of the literature fit in with other course readings? What are other approaches or questions that arise from the literature? The paper is due a week after the class of choice discussion.

**Proposal and annotated bibliography:** you should use at least ten to fifteen scholarly sources for the final research paper.   
  
On **March 30** graduate students will provide me with a hard copy of their research proposal and annotated bibliography.  
  
On **April 20** and **April 27 undergraduate and graduate** students will discuss their research projects.  
  
For the research proposal and annotated bibliography, students should include the following information as thoroughly as possible given the amount of research conducted.  
  
1. State the thesis or the question(s) you want to explore in your paper. What do you hope to get out of your research? Your thesis statement should be analytical, displaying your intention of making an argument related to a specific topic. Your paper should not just be descriptive but should focus on asking questions of your topic that address issues of efficacy, tactics, strategy, bias, methodology, etc. related to a particular problem or issue.  
  
2. Explain the importance of the theoretical topic. Why is this topic worthy of research? What is the public concern with this issue? What conclusions do you expect to reach?  
  
3. Write an annotated bibliography of at least ten scholarly sources. Summarize the text and then state how you believe it will help you with your research. Annotations should be brief, written in short paragraph form.

**Late or Missing Work**

Assignments are due as indicated above and/or as announced in class. You must complete all the assignments listed above to pass this class. Late assignments will be penalized by 20% for each day that they are late.

**Plagiarism and Academic Integrity**

All the work you submit in this course must have been written for this course and must originate with you in form and in content and with all sources fully and specifically acknowledged. In this course, the normal penalty for a violation of the code is an “F” for the term. Violations may also subject you to disciplinary action including the following: receiving a failing grade on an assignment; receiving a notation of a violation of academic integrity on your transcript; or being suspended from the University. You have the right to appeal any charges. For further information about the University’s policy regarding academic integrity see: <http://mason.gmu.edu/~montecin/plagiarism.htm>

Collaborative work of the following kinds is authorized in this course: peer review and critique of students’ essays by one another and, when approved by the instructor in particular cases, collaborative projects by pairs of students.

**University Policies**

I respect and uphold University policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance available to the physically handicapped, visually and/or hearing impaired student; plagiarism; sexual harassment; and racial or ethnic discrimination. All students are advised to become familiar with the respective University regulations and are encouraged to bring any questions or concerns to my attention.

**Students With Disabilities**

Disabilities will be accommodated in conjunction with the Office of Disability Resources. If you think you have a qualified disability and need special accommodations, you should notify me and request verification of eligibility for accommodations from the Office of Disability Resources as soon as possible. You will need to contact the office at 703-993-2472.

**Instructor-Student Interaction**

Please take advantage of my office hours or schedule alternative times to see me if those hours don’t work for you, especially when you are writing papers. I am happy to speak with students about any aspect of the course. You may also e-mail me with any questions and comments about the course. Don’t, however, use e-mail as a substitute for coming to office hours. If you have substantive questions or comments, please come and see me.

**Women and Gender Studies Commitment to Diversity Statement**  
The Women and Gender Studies program seeks to create a learning environment that fosters respect for people across identities. We welcome and value individuals and their differences, including gender expression and identity, race, economic status, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, national origin, first language, religion, age and ability. We encourage all members of the learning environment to engage with the material personally, but to also be open to exploring and learning from experiences different than their own.

**Women and Gender Studies at George Mason**

The Women and Gender Studies Program offers an interdisciplinary major and minor to undergraduate students. The minor is a 21-credit minor that works well with most majors and can be structured to fit your interests. Feminist scholarship has influenced many disciplines and the minor provides students with the tools necessary to engage with issues of gender, race, sexuality and class in various texts and contexts.

The Women and Gender Studies Center is located in the Johnson Center, Room 240K. The Women and Gender Studies Center organizes a variety of lectures, workshops, and activities relevant to campus life throughout the academic year. They also have a collection of over 1000 books relevant to Gender Studies, which students may check out with their George Mason ID card.

You can learn about the Women and Gender Studies Minor and the Women’s Center at: <http://www.gmu.edu/acadexcel/findex.html>

**Syllabus—Subject to Change**

**Week 1: Introduction**

T Jan. 26 Introductions, course overview

**Week 2: Feminist & Queer Ecopolitics**

T Feb. 2 Lori Gruen and Kari Weil (2012), “Animal Others—Editors’ Introduction” **(Blackboard)**

Lori Gruen, Kari Weil, Kelly Oliver, Traci Warkentin, Stephanie Jenkins, Carrie Rohman, Emily Clark, and Greta Gaard (2012), “Feminists Encountering Animals” **(Blackboard)**

Greta Gaard (1997), “Towards a Queer Ecofeminism” **(Blackboard)**

Lori Gruen (2014), “Facing Death and Practicing Grief” **(Blackboard)**

Maneesha Deckha (2012), “Toward a Postcolonial, Posthumanist Feminist Theory: Centralizing Race and Culture in Feminist Work on Nonhuman Animals” **(Blackboard)**

**HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON FEMINISM & ANIMAL RIGHTS**

**Week 3: Second Wave Feminism: Women, Animals & Nature**

T Feb. 9 Carol J. Adams and Josephine Donovan (1995), “Introduction” to *Animals and Women: Feminist Theoretical Explorations***(Blackboard)**

Joan Dunayer (1995), “Sexist Words, Speciesist Roots” **(Blackboard)**

Carol Adams (1990), “The Sexual Politics of Meat” **(Blackboard)**

Carol Adams (1995), “Woman-Battering and Harm to Animals” **(Blackboard)**

Catherine A. MacKinnon (2004), “Of Mice and Men: A Feminist Fragment on Animal Rights” **(Blackboard)**

**INTERSECTIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON FEMINISM & ANIMAL RIGHTS**

**Week 4: Black Veganism**

T Feb. 16 Breeze Harper (2010), “The Birth of the Sistah Vegan Project,” “Social Justice Beliefs and Addiction to Uncompassionate Consumption,” “Veganism and Misconceptions of Thinness as ‘Normal’ and ‘Healthy’: Sistah Vegans Break It Down in Cyberspace” **(Blackboard)**

Pattrice Jones (2010), “Liberation as Connection and the Decolonization of Desire” **(Blackboard)**

Aph Ko and Syl Ko (2017), *Afro-ism: Essays on Pop Culture, Feminism and Black Veganism from Two Sisters* (Foreword, chapters 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 12, 13, 15 & 18)

**Week 5: Disability and Animal Liberation**

T Feb. 23 Sunaura Taylor (2014), “Interdependent Animals: A Feminist Disability Ethic-of-Care” **(Blackboard)**

Sunaura Taylor (2017) “Animal Crips,” “Ableism and Animals” and “The Service Dog” **(Blackboard)**

Hannah Monroe (2019), “Ableism, Speciesism, Animals, and Autism: The Devaluation of Interspecies Friendships” **(Blackboard)**

Heather Fraser and Nik Taylor (2019), “Women, Anxiety, and Companion Animals: Toward a Feminist Animal Studies of Interspecies Care and Solidarity” **(Blackboard)**

**Week 6: Crazy Cat Ladies**

T March 2 Lori Gruen and Fiona Probyn-Rapsey (2019), “Distillations” **(Blackboard)**

Will McKeithen (2017), “Queer Ecologies of Home: Heteronormativity, Speciesism, and the Strange Intimacies of Crazy Cat Ladies” **(Blackboard)**

Fiona Probyn-Rapsey (2019), “The ‘Crazy Cat Ladies’” **(Blackboard)**

Stacy Alaimo (2016), “This is about Pleasure: An Ethics of Inhabiting” **(Blackboard)**

Watch *Cat Ladies* (Christie Callan-Jones, 2009) and *Feral Love* (Markie Hancock, 2016)

**POSTHUMANIST PERSPECTIVES ON FEMINISM & ANIMAL RIGHTS**

**Week 7: Feminism and Posthumanism**

T March 9 Donna Haraway (2008), *When Species Meet* (pp. 1-42, 133-143, 205-208, 249-301).

Susan McHugh (2012), “Bitch, Bitch, Bitch: Personal Criticism, Feminist Theory, and Dog Writing” **(Blackboard)**

**Week 8: Queer Animacies**

T March 16 Stacy Alaimo (2010), “Eluding Capture: The Science, Culture, and Pleasure of ‘Queer’ Animals” **(Blackboard)**

Noel Sturgeon (2010), “Penguin Family Values: The Nature of Planetary Environmental Reproductive Justice” **(Blackboard)**

Mel Chen (2012), “Introduction: Animating Animacy,” “Queer Animality,” and “Animals, Sex, and Transsubstantiation” (Chen, pp. 1-20, pp. 89-155)

**Week 9: Tranimacies**

T March 23 Harlan Weaver (2020), *Bad Dog: Pitbull Politics and Multispecies Justice* (selections)

Eliza Steinbock (2017), “Catties and T-Selfies: On the ‘I’ and the “We’ in Trans-Animal Cute Aesthetics” **(Blackboard)**

**POSTCOLONIAL AND TRANSNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON FEMINISM & ANIMAL RIGHTS**

**Week 10: Subaltern Animism**

T March 30 The Human Animal Research Network (2015), “Introduction” to *Animals in the Anthropocene: Critical Perspectives on Non-Human Futures* **(Blackboard)**

Yamini Narayanan (2017), “Street Dogs at the Intersection of Colonialism and Informality: ‘Subaltern Animism’ as a Posthuman Critique of Indian Cities” **(Blackboard)**

Adrian Franklin (2015), “Ecosystem and Landscape: Strategies for the Anthropocene” **(Blackboard)**

Watch *Kedi* (Ceyda Torun, 2016) and *Stray* (Elizabeth Lo, 2020)

**Week 11: Contesting Anthropocentrism**

T April 6 Maneesha Deckha (2021), *Animals as Legal Beings: Contesting Anthropocentric Legal Orders* (selections)

**Week 12: Decolonizing Extinction**

T April 13 Juno Salazar Parrenas (2018), *Decolonizing Extinction: the Work of Care in Orangutan Rehabilitation* (Introduction, Chapters 1, 3, 6 & conclusion).

**Week 13: Final Paper Presentations**

T April 20 Final Research Paper Presentations

**Week 14: Final Paper Presentations**

T April 27 Final Research Paper Presentations