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Office Hours: Tuesdays from 12:30-1:30pm EST (**please email me by Monday at 5pm EST to notify me you plan to attend so that we can figure out a specific time within this window of time**).

## **Expository Writing 20: Animals and Politics**

### **COURSE OVERVIEW**

Nonhuman animals play a major role in the lives of human animals. Yet, their contribution and impact is often ignored or understudied due to anthropocentric norms that are embedded in human systems and institutions. This course is an introduction to animals and politics through an interdisciplinary lens, drawing on political science, psychology, philosophy, sociology, and environmental science. In the course, we ask several questions. Why should humans care about animals and their wellbeing? How are (prejudicial) attitudes toward animals related to prejudicial attitudes toward humans (racism, sexism, homophobia...etc.)? What is animal agriculture's impact on the environment, and why have politicians failed to put this issue on the agenda? How is our relationship to animals central to understanding the causes and likelihood of pandemics like COVID-19? Is there an alternative to anthropocentrism in politics and society? In Unit 1, we begin by thinking through several prominent theorists' arguments about how and when humans should care about the wellbeing of animals. Should animals have rights? In this unit, you will also have a chance to interview friends and family members to gain an understanding of different perspectives on this question in your immediate and nearest 'community.' In the next unit, we turn our attention to four different areas that intersect with animals: the environment, health and pandemics, prejudicial attitudes (racism, sexism, homophobia...etc.), and political candidate evaluations. Students will have the opportunity to write an original research paper based on their own interests. Since even most disciplines and subfields are anthropocentric, there are many research questions that might benefit from 'bringing the animal in.' The semester will wrap up with a team-based capstone project that is presented to our community partner for the course. Based on your individual work in your research papers, the capstone project asks you to synthesize that work (within your team) to unlock your team's message to the world within a medium that YOU define (poster, art, social movement, website...etc.). What do you want the world to know about the collective research your team has done? You will also write a blog (500 words or 1000 words depending on whether you opt to write this as a team or individually) that you will pitch to an online journal or informational website of your choice.

### **Required Engaged Activities**

Zotero Session, TBD  
Community Partner Panel, TBD  
Transferability Class, TBD  
Capstone Event, TBD

The “Engaged Scholarship” components of this course **include multiple mandatory activities outside class time**. Your participation is required for all of these and **failure to attend will have a serious impact on your final grade**. More details will be provided on the first day of class. Please make sure that you are able to fit this course and all these activities into your schedule. If you cannot, this course might not be right for you.

Some of our writing goals will change unit by unit, as you take on the distinct challenge of writing several important versions of the academic essay. Other goals will remain our focus throughout the whole of the course: developing your critical thinking skills, learning how to give good feedback, understanding what to do with feedback, building on your capacity to be persuasive, and practicing good public speaking. With these goals in mind, we begin with these important premises:

**Writing is a process.** You will take notes on your reading; write and revise response papers; write drafts of your essays; and fully revise those essays. This continued process of drafting and revision is the primary work of this class, and is the main way your writing grows stronger. It’s worth noting that while inspiration is the moment we all hope for in our writing, it comes most readily when that inspiration is earned – in other words, when you have dedicated *sustained effort to that process* of reading, thinking, questioning, drafting, and revising.

**Writing is thinking.** That evolving writing process also allows you to develop your thinking with greater depth and meaning. Writing is one of the best ways to *figure out* your ideas. . . and so you should expect your ideas and arguments to evolve during the writing process. When you hand in a draft, you should not think that you are ‘done’ with the paper. The draft is part of a step to a final product, and the more work you put in, the more I will be able to help you.

**Writing is a conversation.** When you write, you are often in conversation with the sources you are writing about. You are likewise in conversation with your audience. You will express your ideas in your response papers, drafts and revisions, and your audience from this course will be responding to those ideas, telling you what their strengths are and where they can grow stronger. In addition to the feedback you get from your classmates, you will have individual conferences with me about each essay (these conferences are a required part of the course), and you will receive extensive written feedback from me throughout the semester.

In addition, throughout the semester, we will pay attention to the writing you will do (and are doing) **Beyond Expos**. We will explore common principles of academic writing – such as thesis, evidence, analysis and argument – which will be part of much of the writing you do at Harvard. Different occasions and disciplines also call for different approaches and conventions, and so we will also examine some of the ways those conventions have different inflections – or even very different appearances – in different disciplines.

The course is structured in the following units:

### **Unit 1: “Why should we care about the wellbeing of animals in society?”**

Animals play a very significant role in human life. Though—and lest we forget that we are all of us animals—perhaps it is fairer to say that nonhuman animals play a very significant role in human animal lives? Humans eat animals for food. We wear animals as clothing. In most legal frameworks across countries, those who abuse animals are punished because we know they are more likely to hurt other humans. Scholars say that thinking differently about animals is crucial to solving some of our most existential problems related to the environment, to pandemics, and to human health (like cancer, diabetes, and heart disease). The list could go on, and on, and on. Yet, while at first glance, these reasons may seem like good ones, some might say that none of them are good enough because they are speciesist. Otherwise put, they conceptualize animals as means toward human ends, justifying nonhuman animal lives as worthy only in so far as they benefit or help humans. So, then, what is a good reason for caring about the wellbeing of animals in society? We will read the works of scholars like Peter Singer, Arne Naess, Gary Francione, Shelly Kagan, Saskia Stucki, and Paul Shapiro.

### **Research Paper: “Bring the Animal in!”**

What’s so awesome about this research project is that you will have the chance to be really creative. The prompt is pretty simple: Find a puzzle or problem that relates broadly to the topic of animals and politics/society. What’s a solution?

There are many ways that animals intersect with human matters. I (strongly) encourage you to investigate the role of animals in another area that you care about. That’s what is going to be the most enriching and rewarding part of this—that you investigate your own interests. We’ll cover four areas in class: the environment, health and pandemics, prejudicial attitudes (racism, sexism, homophobia...etc.), and elections.

For some of you, the prompt might seem very daunting! So, I’ll also propose a puzzle that you can think about, and you’re welcome to pick that if you feel like the open-ended nature of the assignment feels a little too overwhelming.

### **Capstone Project and Blog: “What’s your team’s message?”**

Through our partnership with our community partners, you will have a chance to engage outside the classroom on this topic. In your teams, you’re going to create something that synthesizes all of your individual contributions to the topic of animals and politics in your research papers. If someone read all of your projects, what would be key takeaways? What are the commonalities? What are important differences to make clear? What’s your team’s message to the outside world? Your presentations to our community partners will be 10 minutes long (in teams). Following this, you will write a blog and pitch it somewhere!

## HOW THE COURSE WORKS

On many class days, some of the texts we turn to will be your own writing: your response papers, drafts, and revised essays will be part of what we read and discuss. All writing you do for this class is public – in other words, it may be chosen as one of the examples for us to consider. If there is ever a particular piece you *don't* want others to see, please just let me know.

There are no texts that you need to purchase for this class. Everything that is required reading or watching is available on the course website in the Reading Folder. For Units 2 and 3, you will be using online and library sources.

### Laptop Policy

Laptops are permitted, but if I notice that folk are not paying attention, I will take this privilege away. I'm allowing laptops because I would like to give everyone the option to keep their lives clutter free and environmentally friendly (without extensive printing, pens, binders etc.). In general, **I avoid printing** materials, so I am relying on you to engage closely and digitally with the materials I post on the Canvas website.

### Communication

The course works best when we treat it as a semester-long conversation about your writing. To make that conversation possible, there are a few important things to remember:

- **Conferences:** We will have three conferences throughout the semester, in between the first draft and final version of each essay. These conferences are our chance to work closely on your writing and to focus your work in revision, and are most worthwhile when you are the one to guide them. Please come to each conference prepared – having reviewed your essay and my comments, considered your questions, and begun to think about revision possibilities and strategies. You should plan on taking notes during our discussions. Since the schedule during conference days is so tight, **missed conferences may not be rescheduled.**
- **E-mail:** Rather than take up our class time with announcements and administrative arrangements (and there will be many of them), I use e-mail to communicate most of that information. As part of your participation in the course, **I ask that you check your Harvard or preferred e-mail account daily**; you are responsible for the information I post there. Likewise, I make sure to check mine **once every weekday** for questions from you. Please note that I don't check e-mail later than 7:00 p.m. I can answer most questions within 24-48 hours, except over the weekend.
  - **On Email Etiquette: Generally, it is fair to expect an email response that is as long as the original email. If you have a broad question that takes a couple of sentences to pose, but that requires a couple of paragraphs in response, then please think carefully about whether you need to send it. Chances are that a quick, micro-meeting will be more efficient. Similarly, if you find yourself writing an email to me that is getting very**

long (say, you're on a third long paragraph, for example), take a moment to think about whether you should be sending it—perhaps a quick, micro-meeting might be more efficient for both of us.

- **Be RESPECTFUL of my time and of me. If you ask a question that I have already answered on a handout that is on Canvas or if I have already covered the information in class, I will make a note. Your best bet is to always ask peers first OR double check everything that is on Canvas before you email me.**

### **Class Participation**

One of the benefits of Expos is its small class size. That benefit is best realized when every student participates fully in the class; as in any seminar, you learn much more from formulating, articulating, and questioning your own thoughts than from simply listening to what others have to say. Our time together is largely devoted to discussion and small-group work. Therefore, you are responsible for being in class, prepared, and on time, each time we meet. "Being prepared" means that you have given careful thought to the reading and writing assigned for the day, and that you are ready to offer ideas and questions to open our discussion.

### **Grades**

Paper 1: 20%

Research Paper: 45%

Capstone Presentation and Blog: 25% (15% and 10%, respectively)

Participation: 10%

### **Attendance and Lateness**

Because Expos has a shorter semester and fewer class hours than other courses, and because instruction in Expos proceeds by sequential writing activities, your consistent attendance is essential. **It is an official program-wide policy that if you are absent without medical or religious excuse more than twice, you are eligible to be officially excluded from the course and failed.** On your second unexcused absence, you will receive a letter warning you of your situation.

You are expected to let me know promptly if you have missed or will miss a class; you remain responsible for the work due that day and for any new work assigned. Apart from religious holidays, only medical absences can be excused. In those circumstances, you should contact me before class (or within 24 hours); you may need to provide a note from UHS or another medical official, or from your Freshman Dean. Absences because of special events, such as athletic meets, debates, conferences, and concerts are not excusable absences. If such an event is very important to you, you may decide to take one of your two allowable unexcused absences, letting me know in advance. If you wish to attend an event that will put you over the two-absence limit, you must directly petition the Director of Expository Writing, who will grant such a petition only in extraordinary circumstances and only when your work in the class has been exemplary.

## WRITTEN WORK

### Submitting Essays

You will turn in most assignments to the appropriate dropbox on the course website. Please be sure to **check the ‘Calendar and Logistics’ document** (there is one for every unit, in the unit folder) for details on when things are due, and **pay careful attention to the general guidelines about format, etc. explained there.**

When you are uploading documents to Canvas, you are responsible for submitting versions that I can open. (The document must either be in Microsoft Word or be easily compatible; your file should end in .doc or .docx.) It is also your responsibility to ensure that the file you are sending is not corrupted or damaged. If I cannot open or read the file you have sent, the essay will be subject to a late penalty.

All work you submit to the course is for public readership – in other words, we will use essays and excerpts from the writers in the class (possibly yours!) as some of our texts this semester. If at any point you submit a draft or revision that you would prefer other students not read, please let me know that – but please don’t make that request about everything you turn in this semester.

### Deadlines

For many class meetings, you will have due a response paper or some other reading or writing exercise to help you develop the essay for that unit. Our work together in class will also often be based on those assignments. For those reasons, it is imperative that you turn your work in on time.

All deadlines in the course are firm. Except in the case of medical or family emergency, **I do not grant further extensions.** Essay drafts or revisions turned in after the deadline will be penalized a third of a letter-grade on the final essay for each day they are late. **If you cannot meet a deadline due to a medical emergency, you must contact me right away and produce a note from UHS; in the event of a family emergency, you must contact me right away and will be required to ask your dean to contact me by e-mail or phone.**

### Revision

Because of the emphasis this course places on revision, the schedule is designed to allow you as much revision time per essay as possible – always at least a week after the draft conference. Since you’ll have a significant span of days in which to revise, **the expectations for this aspect of your work in the course are high.**

### Completion of Work

Because this course is a planned sequence of writing, it is an official Writing Program policy that *you must write all of the assigned essays to pass the course*, and you must write them within the schedule of the course (not in the last few days of the semester after you have fallen behind). If you fail to submit at least a substantial draft of an essay by the final due date in that essay unit, you will receive a letter reminding you of these requirements. The letter will specify the new date by which you must submit the late work. If you fail to submit at least a substantial draft of the essay by this new date (unless you have documented a medical problem), you are eligible to be officially excluded from the course and failed.

### **Policy on Collaboration**

The following kinds of collaboration are permitted in this course: developing or refining ideas in conversation with other students or through peer review of written work (including feedback from Writing Center tutors). If you would like to acknowledge the impact someone had on your essay, it is customary to do this in a footnote at the beginning of the paper. As stated in the *Student Handbook*, “Students need not acknowledge discussion with others of general approaches to the assignment or assistance with proofreading.” However, all work submitted for this course must be your own: in other words, writing response papers, drafts, or revisions with other students is expressly forbidden.

### **Academic Honesty**

Throughout the semester we’ll work on the proper use of sources, including how to cite and how to avoid plagiarism. You should always feel free to ask me questions about this material. All the work that you submit for this course must be your own. Any student submitting plagiarized work is eligible to fail the course and to be subject to disciplinary action by the Honor Council.

### **Writing Center**

At any stage of the writing process – brainstorming ideas, drafting, or revising – you may want some extra attention on your essays. The Writing Center (located on the garden level of the Barker Center) offers hour-long appointments with trained tutors. I can't stress strongly enough the benefit of the service they provide—regardless of the "strength" or "weakness" of the essay, any piece of writing benefits from further review and a fresh perspective. Visit the Writing Center's web site at <https://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu/> to make an appointment. Tutors also hold drop-in office hours at other campus locations; see the Writing Center website for details.

### **Submitting Essays**

Following the guidelines below will ensure that I can focus on your ideas and your prose when I read your essays, rather than devoting time to issues of formatting, pagination, etc. The guidelines apply both to essay drafts and revisions. Forgetting to check your essays for these matters can result in a lower grade for the essay.

All essays should adhere to the standard format:

- double-space in a reasonable, 12pt font, with one-inch margins
- number all pages and paragraphs
- include your name, the course title, my name, the date, the essay number and your essay title on the first page (don't use a title page)
- include your name on each subsequent page
- proofread thoroughly for typographical, grammatical, and punctuation errors. Consistent errors will lower the grades on your essays.

- use the APA in-text citation method to document your sources, and include a correctly formatted list of Works Cited. Consult the [Harvard Guide to Using Sources](#) for the appropriate citation information.

**Please consult the relevant ‘Calendar and Logistics’ document for details on what needs to be submitted with each draft and revision.**

**And a word to the wise:**

*Keep a copy of all your work*, and be sure to avoid computer disaster: you should both regularly save your work and periodically print working drafts as you write (in other words, you should never be in the position of having "finished" an essay or revision with nothing to show for it if your computer crashes).