

S0345-15 Beastly Sociology

22/23

Department

Sociology

Level

Undergraduate Level 3

Module leader

Rebekah Fox

Credit value

15

Module duration

10 weeks

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

N/A

Module aims

This module will:

- (1) explore the significance of animals to society and culture - both historically and contemporaneously - and how changing relations between society and nature, human and animal have been conceptualised sociologically;
- (2) explore the philosophical and moral underpinnings of social and cultural attitudes and practices towards animals and their implications for animal welfare and animal rights;
- (3) investigate how human-animal relations relate to social change and the way non-human animals are incorporated into social relations;
- (4) explore the ways in which society, social action, agency and notions of the self have been understood and ask whether they can be mobilised to analyse the place(s) of animals in society and culture;
- (5) investigate the implications for sociology of post-humanist critiques of anthropocentric understandings of the world.

This module explores the place of animals in society and culture and how this varies cross-

culturally and over time. It will address the importance of animals to the organisation and development of society, exploring notions of 'co-evolution', 'domestication' and 'human exceptionalism' and the philosophical and moral underpinnings of human-animal relations. Animal studies, as a newly-emerging interdisciplinary area of study, draws on different theoretical traditions to make sense of its subject matter. Sociology has been particularly slow to take up the challenge of studying animals and the module will investigate why this should be so and whether studying animals poses a particular problem for sociology as a discipline. It will consider different aspects of human-animal relations and how taking animals into consideration might challenge our understandings of society.

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

- (1) What is an animal? Introduction to the module and to human-animal studies
- (2) Co-evolution and social change - domestication
- (3) Animals in industrial society – from beasts of burden to fashion accessories
- (4) Kinship with animals
- (5) Cultures of meat eating and farm animals
- (6) Cultures of masculinity
- (7) Social movements, animal welfare and animal rights
- (8) Species, social construction and power – animal ethics
- (9) Post-humanism and the animal challenge to sociology

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Explain how relations between humans and animals have changed over time
- Evaluate different ways of theorising human-animal relations
- Critically assess the material and cultural significance of animals in different types of society
- Research, using a range of methods, the key social, political and ethical issues influencing the position of animals in contemporary societies

Indicative reading list

- Baker, S. (1993). *Picturing the Beast: Animals, Identity and Representation*, Manchester: Manchester University Press
- Benton, J (1992) *The Medieval Menagerie: Animals in the Art of the Middle Ages* London: Abbeville Press
- Berger, J (2009) *Why look at animals?* Penguin Books
- Birke, L (1994) *Feminism, animals and science*, Open University Press
- Carter, B and Charles, N (2011) *Human and other animals: critical perspectives*, Palgrave
- Cudworth, E (2011) *Social Lives with Other Animals*, Palgrave
- Franklin, A (1999) *Animals and Modern Cultures: A Sociology of Human-Animal Relations in Modernity*, London: Sage Publications
- Fiddes, N. (1992) *Meat: A Natural Symbol*. London:Routledge.

Grandin, T and Johnson, C (2006) *Animals in translation*, Bloomsbury
Haraway, D. (2003). *The Companion Species Manifesto*. Chicago: Prikly Paradigm Press
Haraway, D (2008) *When Species Meet*, University of Minnesota
Irvine, L (2004) *If you tame me: understanding our connection with animals*, Temple University Press
Manning, A and Serpell, J. (1994) *Animals and Human Society*. London:Routledge.
Midgeley, M (1989) *Beast and Man: The Roots of Human Nature* London: Methuen
Rowlands, M (2008)*The Philosopher and the Wolf*, London: Granta

Subject specific skills

A systematic understanding of key aspects of the field of sociology and human-animal relations, including: acquisition of coherent and detailed knowledge, at least some of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of defined aspects of a discipline;

An ability to deploy accurately established techniques of analysis and enquiry within a discipline; conceptual understanding that enables the student:

An ability to devise and sustain arguments, and/or to solve problems, using ideas and techniques, some of which are at the forefront of a discipline;

An ability to describe and comment upon particular aspects of current research, or equivalent advanced scholarship, in the discipline;

An appreciation of the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits of knowledge;

The ability to manage their own learning, and to make use of scholarly reviews and primary sources (for example, refereed research articles and/or original materials appropriate to the discipline).

Transferable skills

An ability to apply the methods and techniques that they have learned to review, consolidate, extend and apply their knowledge and understanding, and to initiate and carry out projects;

An ability to evaluate critically arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts and data (that may be incomplete), to make judgments, and to frame appropriate questions to achieve a solution - or identify a range of solutions - to a problem;

An ability to communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences.

The qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:

- the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility
- decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts
- the learning ability needed to undertake appropriate further training of a professional or equivalent nature.

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	9 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Seminars	9 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Private study	132 hours (88%)
Total	150 hours

Private study description

Students are expected to read recommended texts in preparation for seminars and when undertaking formative or summative assessments. They are also expected to explore the issues raised in the lectures independently using the internet and other resources.

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Students can register for this module without taking any assessment.

Assessment group A1

	Weighting	Study time
Written Assignment (3000 words)	100%	

Feedback on assessment

Feedback is not required for third year examinations.

Availability

Courses

This module is Optional for:

- Year 3 of USOA-L301 BA in Sociology

This module is Unusual option for:

- UPHA-V7ML Undergraduate Philosophy, Politics and Economics
 - Year 3 of V7ML Philosophy, Politics and Economics (Tripartite)

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This module is Option list A for:

- Year 5 of ULAA-ML35 BA in Law and Sociology (Qualifying Degree) (with Intercalated year)

This module is Option list B for:

- USOA-L301 BA in Sociology
 - Year 3 of L305 Sociology with Specialism in Cultural Studies
 - Year 3 of L304 Sociology with Specialism in Research Methods