Syllabus -- Of Beasts and Books

New York University Core Curriculum

CORE-UA 400: “Of Beasts and Books”

TR 9:30-10:45am

Faculty

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Office hours T 3-5 and by appointment

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and by appointment

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Jeanne Proust jeanneproust@gmail.com

Office hours: Tuesday 11:00-12:00, and Thursday 12:00-1pm, by appointment - send me an email.

Required readings

Selection of texts on NYU classes, plus additionally:

Barber, Medieval Bestiary

Richard de Fournival, Bestiary of Love

Chrétien de Troyes, Knight of the Lion

La Fontaine, Fables
**Attendance and participation**

Attendance is mandatory. Students are allowed no more than three unexcused absences in total (including lectures and recitations). Any more will affect your participation grade, leading to a deduction of one point per unexcused absence. Penalties will also attach to late arrival in class, as the discretion of the instructor.

Active participation in class is likewise mandatory. Students must read the assigned readings in advance of lectures, attend their Recitations already bursting with thoughts and ideas to discuss, and contribute vigorously to class discussion. Participation in lectures, in the form of questions or responses, is also required.

Since the course readings are available on NYU classes and the use of online resources is recommended for certain sessions, the use of computers is allowed – especially of e-readers or tablet computers – for academic purposes only. Abuse of computing devices for any other purposes (such as social media) will be penalized.

**Assignments**

In Recitation, students will be set weekly writing assignment (guide length 250 words) responding to a text, image, or event in the week’s syllabus. Students must complete a minimum of 10 satisfactory responses to these prompts. For each response below the minimum, one point will be deducted from the participation grade.

Three writing assignments (guide length 3, then 4, and then 5 double-spaced pages) corresponding to each section of the course. Students are allowed an extension for one of these assignments. Extensions are counted from the Friday when the assignment was due to the next following lecture. Students may be recommended to rewrite and resubmit either of the first two essays at the discretion of the preceptor. The final grade for the assignment will be an average of the initial grade and the grade of the revised and resubmitted paper.

Final exam.

**Assessment**

*Positive assessment:*

Participation including weekly writing assignments (10%), attendance and class discussion (20%) = 30% in total; three short essays, graded 10%, then 15%, and then 20% respectively; final exam 25%.

*Negative assessment:*

Marks will be deducted for more than 3 unexcused absences or tardiness in attending (without prior notice and a valid excuse); for failure to submit work by the specified deadlines (one extension only is allowed, for one of the 3 graded papers; extensions are not allowed for the weekly responses); and for using computers in class or lectures other than for the immediate academic purposes of the class.

Deductions for unexcused absences:

- One percentage point will be deducted from the participation grade for all unexcused absences in excess of three.

Deductions for late work:
One percentage point will be deducted from the participation grade for each weekly response paper below the required minimum of 10 satisfactory responses.

Ten percentage points will be deducted for each of the graded essays for each late period, measured from one class to another (i.e. Friday recitation and Tuesday and Thursday lectures. Thus if a paper due on a given Friday is not submitted until the following Tuesday 10% is forfeited, if it is not submitted until the following Thursday this rises to 20% and submission a full week late results in a forfeit of 30%. The one extension students are allowed is from the Friday due date until the following Tuesday lecture)

Extra credit:

- Preceptors may be willing to agree to award extra credit to students who turn in more than the minimum 10 response papers.

**Detailed syllabus**

**Introduction: what is the connection between beasts and books?**

1--Tuesday 23 January. Introduction to the course. Some examples of animals that we read, and how we read them. **No preparation required.**

**Weeks 1-4: Beasts in the Pre-Modern Book of Nature**

1--Thursday 25 January. Beasts “in the beginning” and “at the end.” **Students to read the opening books of Genesis** (and compare with Derrida, *The Animal that therefore I am*, pp. 15-21), and Revelation Books 5-7 (and compare with Agamben, *The Open*, pp. 1-3).

**Recitation**: Students should read the fairy story “Puss in Boots” and write a short piece (guide length: 250 words) with reactions to/ questions about it. They should also read a short excerpt from Derrida, *The Animal that therefore I am*, pp. 3-7 and expect to discuss both texts together in class. Both texts are in the “Recitation" subfolder for this introductory class. **The written work should be handed to your preceptor in Recitation.**

2--Tuesday 30 January. Introduction to the medieval bestiary. **Students should read the following entries in Barber, Medieval Bestiary** and on the Medieval Bestiary website [http://bestiary.ca/](http://bestiary.ca/) : ant, antelope, ape, beaver, dove, elephant, hedgehog, lion, hyena, hydrus and crocodile, panther, pelican, phoenix, stag, siren, unicorn.

2--Thursday 1 February. The bestiary as natural history; the political and historical stakes of the concepts “animal,” “human,” “beast” and “nature.” **Students to read Agamben, The Open, chap. 9, Isidore, Etymologies, Book 12 and Shannon, “Eight Animals of Shakespeare.”**

3--Tuesday 6 February. The Second-Family bestiary and human lifestyle. **Students should read Medieval Bestiary, trans. Barber, and the Bestiary of Love**

3--Thursday 8 February. Lecture by Emily O’Brock on the Bestiary of Love by Richard de Fournival, doctor, bibliophile and poet. **Ensure Bestiary of Love has been thoroughly read.**

4--Tuesday 13 February. **Make time to visit Central Park Zoo.** Living Bestiaries: the spectacular history of zoos from antiquity to Versailles. **Students to read the essays by Sahlins and Senior.**
Weeks 4-9 Identification with/as animals in the medieval and early modern periods


5--Tuesday 20 February  Hunting and/as identification. St Eustace, St Julian, and Guigemar Read the lai of Guigemar.

5--Thursday 22 February. Lecture by Aubrey Korneta. Animals and the lais of Guigemar, Guingamor, and Bisclavret. Read the lais of Guingamor and Bisclavret.

[First essay due in Recitation on Friday 23 February]

6--Tuesday 27 February. *Yvain*. The Knight of the Lion. Introduction to the text. Read lines – 580 (pp. 3-20).

6--Thursday 1 March. *Yvain*. The Knight of the Lion continued. Read to line 3484 (to p. 104).

7--Tuesday 6 March. *Yvain*. The Knight of the Lion lines 3485-4702 (pp. 105 - 141).

7--Thursday 8 March. *Yvain*. The Knight of the Lion concluded. Complete reading this text.

Monday 12 March - Friday 16 March Spring break - no class.

8--Tuesday 20 March. The “savage mind” and the child’s mind. Fairy stories by Perrault. Students to read “Little Red Riding Hood” and “Puss in Boots.”

8--Thursday 22 March Fairy stories contd. Students to read “Donkey Skin” and “Beauty and the Beast.”

9— Tuesday 27 March. Ongoing identification with animals: heraldry, badges, stags, boars, wolves, lions

Weeks 9-14 Do animals speak to us?

9--Thursday 29 March. Introduction to the genre of the fable. Selected fables of “Aesop.” Two theories about “how animals mean” in fables. Students to read the texts on Classes for this session about how animals mean, plus the selected fables of Aesop that are posted there.

10--Tuesday 3 April. Medieval Fables. Theology and comparative psychology in the Middle Ages: Aristotle’s and St Bernard’s views of animal souls. Students to read excerpts from Aristotle and St Bernard.

10--Thursday 5 April. Medieval Fables. Students to read selected fables by the medieval woman author Marie de France.

[Second essay due in Recitation on Friday 6 April]

11--Tuesday 10 April. Lecture by Jeanne Proust. Philosophy and Science in the Early Modern period: Montaigne, More, Descartes. Students to read the texts by these authors on Classes.
11--Thursday 12 April. Early modern fables. Introduction to La Fontaine. Students to read the following La Fontaine fables: “The Cicada and the Ant” (p. 3) (and compare with Aesop 138, Marie de France 39); “The Crow and the Fox” (p. 3) (compare Aesop 10, MF 13), “The Wolf and the Lamb” (p. 11) (cf. Aesop 28, MF 2); plus the “discourse to Mme de la Sablière” (p. 145 and following).

12--Tuesday 17 April. La Fontaine’s Fables in context. Students to read Senior, “When the Beasts Spoke,” plus “The Lion in love” by La Fontaine (edition, p. 35; cf. Aesop 18), and “The Bear and the Two Companions” (edition, p. 65), and “Epilogue to Books I-VI” (p. 78).


13--Tuesday 24 April. Animals before the law. Students to read Dinzelbacher, “Animal trials.”

13--Thursday 26 April. The pre-modern animal on trial. Film: “The Advocate / The Hour of the Pig.” Students to view the film, which is available on YouTube (with Spanish subtitles) and on Netflix. Screenings can also be arranged if needed.

14--Tuesday 1 May The Advocate contd.; conclusions

14--Thursday 3 May Final conclusions No preparation required

[Final essay due in Recitation on Friday 4 May]

Final Exam. A written exam of 1hr 50 mins comprising one long essay question and several shorter questions, will be taken at the assigned time in the end of term examination period, Thursday May 10, 8:00-9:50. [Note: there will be opportunity in the final recitation of the semester to discuss how to answer the kinds of questions asked.]