

## **Animals, Place and Politics: Doing Multispecies Ethnography (CHID 250/GEOG 295)**

Instructor: Katie Gillespie  
Email: [katieag@u.washington.edu](mailto:katieag@u.washington.edu)  
Office hours by appointment

Peer Facilitator: Sarah Olson  
Email: [srolson4@u.washington.edu](mailto:srolson4@u.washington.edu)

### **Course Description/Goals:**

*Multispecies ethnographers are studying the host of organisms whose lives and deaths are linked to human social worlds...Multispecies ethnography centers on how a multitude of organisms' livelihoods shape and are shaped by political, economic and cultural forces.*

(Kirksey and Helmreich 2010: 545)

Students enrolled in this course will gain a better understanding of the place of animals in society and the experience of animals within systems of commodity production and use. We will explore pets/companion animals, animals in entertainment, animals in the food system, and animals in medical research as case studies in order to theorize notions of power and difference, ethics and responsibility, and creativity in reimagining the status quo. This course will push the boundaries of how we think about different ways of being in the world.

In particular, students will have the opportunity to explore the place of animals in society through time spent in the classroom and at Pigs Peace Sanctuary. As a lens through which to understand the lives of other-than-human animals, we will focus our work together on the 'multispecies ethnography', a methodological trend in anthropology dedicated to understanding the inner lives of animals and the impacts on their lives and bodies of their encounters with humans.

Time spent in the classroom will be dedicated to engaging with readings, film and presentations related to the subject of animals in society and understanding the theory behind our ethnographic fieldwork. Our time at Pigs Peace Sanctuary will be dedicated to conducting an ethnography of a pig who lives there and a geography of the sanctuary itself. Each student will be paired with a pig and will work with that singular animal throughout the term. Through our work together, we will explore creative possibilities for pushing new boundaries in how we think about politics, ethics and interspecies relationships in our private and public lives.

## **Course Requirements:**

Required Texts:

- *The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating*, Elisabeth Tova Bailey
- *The Chimps of Fauna Sanctuary*, Andrew Westoll

### ***About Pigs Peace Sanctuary***

On Fridays, the class will travel together to Pigs Peace Sanctuary in Stanwood, WA for an experiential learning component to the course. You can learn about the sanctuary here: <http://www.pigspeace.org>

NOTE: Please review guidelines for visiting Pigs Peace to ensure your safety and the safety and care of the animals at the sanctuary:  
<http://www.pigspeace.org/main/visiting.html>.

We will be at the sanctuary for about 4 hours each time we visit, so you are welcome to bring food to store/eat in the education center. However, the sanctuary is a place of peace for animals - out of respect for the animals there, please do not bring any food containing animal products onto the sanctuary grounds.

### ***Participation/Discussion***

Success in the course is dependent upon attendance and participation in seminar meetings and sanctuary visits. One goal of the course is to create an environment where all students (even those who tend to be on the quiet side) feel comfortable contributing to the discussion. In order to participate fully and be a dynamic member of the classroom community, it is imperative that the readings be completed prior to our seminar meetings. Readings should be completed in time for class on the day they are listed on syllabus so that we can discuss them in class.

Success in the course is also dependent on the timely completion of the written assignments for the course.

## **Required Assignments:**

### ***Ethnography (due July 21):***

During the quarter, you will be working on conducting an ethnography of a pig at the sanctuary. Please read the following pieces on multispecies ethnography to frame considerations for how to conduct multispecies ethnographies of pigs at the sanctuary (these should be read in time for the July 5<sup>th</sup> Canvas Post about these texts and **should also be used in your ethnography**):

- Kirksey, Eben and Stefan Helmreich (2010). “The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography,” *Cultural Anthropology*, 25 (4): 545-576.
- García, Maria Elena. “Loving Guinea Pigs in Peru: Life, Death and the (Im)possibilities of Collaborative Multispecies Ethnography,” DRAFT

*The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating* should also serve as a framework for understanding one particular way of doing multispecies ethnography, as well as encourage you to think carefully about different ways of being in the world. Through these ethnographic projects, you should consider (depending on the particular pig you work with) topics such as: disability, reproductive politics (breeding, sterilization, etc.), abuse and neglect, inter- and intra-species friendship and love, trauma and recovery, emotion and intellect, encounters of conflict among pigs, the role of the pig in capitalism, the impacts of capitalism on the pig, and so on.

Your ethnography should be a minimum of 8-10 pages. You will be given a journal for field notes, which I hope you will use to take notes during your time at the sanctuary and during your reflections afterward. The organization and layout of your ethnography can take any form, but should consider in depth:

1. **Your positionality as a researcher in relation to the pig you are studying.** What is your relationship to pigs and farmed/companion/research animals? What limitations and/or advantages do you see in your ability to tell this pig’s story? What difficulties are there in interpreting an Other’s perspective, especially when that Other is a member of another species?
2. **A geography of the sanctuary.** How do you understand the sanctuary *as a place*? What ethical and political commitments guide life at the sanctuary? How are the spaces designed with the pigs in mind? In other words, how is the sanctuary a place, first and foremost, for animals and not humans? What role does the sanctuary as a place play in society? How does the sanctuary fit into a capitalist economy (e.g., how is the sanctuary funded, how does the sanctuary challenge the commodification of the animal, and does the sanctuary commodify animals?)? Does it challenge our ideas of how animals should/could live? What ethical ambiguities do you see in the sanctuary model?
3. **An ethnographic analysis of the pig you are studying.** Who is this pig? What does she like and dislike? What things are meaningful to her? How does she spend her time? What is her background? Does she carry any lasting trauma from her time before the sanctuary? How does the sanctuary allow pigs to flourish and what are your ethical concerns about pigs at the sanctuary? In addition to your own fieldwork on the pigs at the sanctuary, you should talk with your classmates and conduct further research on pigs more generally. The

book, *Whole Hog*, by Lyall Watson, is a useful resource. Judy Woods, the sanctuary director is also very happy to answer any questions you have. She is a wealth of information and a revolutionary in pig care.

4. **Reflection on multispecies ethnography.** Multispecies ethnography is a new kind of methodology and there is much room for exploration and evolution in how this ethnographic work is done. What have you learned through this process? What aspects of your research should be essential aspects of multispecies ethnographies in the future? How would you change your ethnographic approach if you did this project again? Why are multispecies ethnographies important? How do the readings from Week 1 on ethnographies inform your work and what are the limitations of the perspectives outlined in the readings?

### **Journal (*due Tuesdays*):**

Students should keep a journal (in a notebook, Microsoft Word document, blog, or otherwise) detailing reactions/responses to the course material and their time at the sanctuary. These responses can be written in an informal style and students should write **at least one 2-page entry per week (total of 4 entries for the term)**. Entries should engage specifically with points of interest in the readings, in class discussion, sanctuary visits, etc. and should demonstrate critical thinking. NOTE: these should be separate writing exercises from your field notes.

### **Canvas Posts (*see below for due dates*)**

Canvas posts are due periodically throughout the quarter. These should be one page (single-spaced) in length and will respond to a specific prompt provided on the Canvas Discussion Board. In addition to your own posts, you will be required to respond substantively to two other students' posts. Canvas posts are worth 3% of your grade; each response to your classmates' posts is worth 1% for a total of 5% per post/responses.

### **Grading:**

- Class Participation 30%
- Ethnography 40%
- Journal 20% (5% per entry)
- Canvas Posts 10% (5% per post/responses)

### **Disability Resources for Students:**

Your experience in this class is important to me, and it is the policy and practice of the University of Washington to create inclusive and accessible learning environments

consistent with federal and state law. If you experience barriers based on a disability or temporary health condition, please seek a meeting with DRS to discuss and address them. If you have already established accommodations with DRS, please communicate your approved accommodations to me at your earliest convenience so we can discuss your needs in this course.

Disability Resources for Students (DRS) offers resources and coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities and/or temporary health conditions. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process between you, your instructor(s) and DRS. If you have not yet established services through DRS, but have a temporary health condition or permanent disability that requires accommodations (this can include but not limited to: mental health, attention-related, learning, vision, hearing, physical or health impacts), you are welcome to contact DRS at 206-543-8924 or [uwdrs@uw.edu](mailto:uwdrs@uw.edu) or [disability.uw.edu](http://disability.uw.edu)

### **Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct:**

Plagiarism (using another person's work as your own) will not be tolerated. If you need a refresher on how plagiarism or cheating is defined, please refer to the University of Washington's Statement of Student Academic Responsibility: <https://depts.washington.edu/grading/pdf/AcademicResponsibility.pdf>

### **Course Schedule:**

#### **WEEK 1**

#### **Tuesday June 23rd - *IN THE CLASSROOM***

Introductions

#### **Thursday June 25th - *IN THE CLASSROOM***

Complete Privilege Worksheet at home and bring to class ready to discuss.

Discuss:

Elisabeth Tova Bailey, *The Sound of a Wild Snail Eating*

Breeze Harper, "Race as a 'Feeble Matter' in Veganism"

#### **Friday June 26th - *AT THE SANCTUARY***

Meet Judy Woods, Pigs Peace Sanctuary Director; Tour and introduction to the sanctuary; Meet pigs you will work with; Begin fieldwork.

***\*\*Due Sunday June 28th by midnight post on Canvas in response to:***

Bob Torres, “Taking Equality Seriously” and the film *Our Daily Bread*.  
Available at: <http://topdocumentaryfilms.com/our-daily-bread/> \*\*

**\*\*Due Tuesday June 30th by the beginning of class, respond to two classmates’ posts\*\***

## WEEK 2

### Tuesday June 30th - *IN THE CLASSROOM*

In class, viewing of *Ghosts in Our Machine* (60 mins)

**\*\*Journal Entry #1 due\*\***

Discuss:

Kristen Hens, “Ethical Responsibilities Towards Dogs: An Inquiry into the Dog-Human Relationship”

Stuart Spencer et al, “History and Ethics of Keeping Pets: Comparison with Farm Animals”

### Thursday July 2nd - *IN THE CLASSROOM*

Discuss:

Randy Malamud, “The Problem with Zoos”

Rosemary-Claire Collard, “Putting Animals Back Together, Taking Animals Apart”

Michael Berens, “Elephants are dying out in America’s zoos” Available here:  
[http://old.seattletimes.com/html/nationworld/2019809167\\_elephants02m.html](http://old.seattletimes.com/html/nationworld/2019809167_elephants02m.html)

### Friday July 3rd - *NO CLASS*

**\*\*Due Sunday July 5th by midnight post on Canvas in response prompt about:**

**Kirksey and Helmreich “The Emergence of Multispecies Ethnography” and Garcia “Loving Guinea Pigs in Peru”\*\***

**\*\*Due Tuesday July 7th by the beginning of class, respond to two classmates’ posts\*\***

## WEEK 3

**Tuesday July 7th - *IN THE CLASSROOM***

**\*\*Journal Entry #2 due\*\***

Discuss:

Jonathan Safran Foer, Excerpts from *Eating Animals*

Kathryn Gillespie, “Sexualized Violence and the Gendered Commodification of the Animal Body in Pacific Northwestern US Dairy Production”

**Thursday July 9th - *IN THE CLASSROOM***

In class, watch *Peaceable Kingdom* (78 minutes) and discuss.

**Friday July 10th - *AT THE SANCTUARY***

Fieldwork with pigs

**WEEK 4**

**Tuesday July 14th - *IN THE CLASSROOM***

**\*\*Journal Entry #3 due\*\***

In class, watch *Maximum Tolerated Dose* (90 minutes) and discuss.

**Thursday July 16th - *IN THE CLASSROOM***

Discuss *The Chimps of Fauna Sanctuary*

**Friday July 17th - *AT THE SANCTUARY***

Fieldwork with pigs & thank you lunch with Judy.

**WEEK 5**

**Tuesday July 21st - *IN THE CLASSROOM***

**\*\*Journal Entry #4 due\*\***

Please look around and find something hopeful related to the topics of the class to share. Please also be prepared to share some key insights from your ethnographies.

**\*\* Final Ethnographies due either in class or via email by midnight on Tuesday July 21<sup>st</sup> \*\***