

Deep History and Domestication:

The Animal Side of Human Life

UH3004 / Spring 2014 /CRN: 16590

Tues. 2-3:50 / Hillcrest 132

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Domestic animals are essential to our lives: They provide calories that fuel our bodies, companionship as pets, inspiration for our collective imaginations, and service as guardians, hunters, and scientific research subjects. These contemporary relationships have historical antecedents stretching back to the emergence of humanity as a species. Indeed the process of domestication was an essential part of the development and diversity of human culture. This Honors Colloquium will examine the cultural and biological implications of domestication for humans and other species, using examples extending from the first archeological evidence of domestication to the recent past. Drawing on recent research in the life sciences and behavioral sciences we will also consult the texts and analytical tools of humanists and social scientists in order to understand how the process of domestication has shaped and continues to inform the human experience. We will question the chronological and conceptual divide we assume exists between natural history and the history of human culture and civilization. The course should also help us to appreciate the role of animals in shaping human histories, and to consider the possibility that non-humans might generate their own histories.

Requirements:

1. Attendance and Participation:

This course will be conducted in a seminar format that is intended to promote active learning and give students a primary role in the presentation and discussion of the course material.

Everyone is expected to attend every class meeting. Your classmates should be confident that you will come to class having read the assignment and prepared to discuss it.

2. Weekly Blogging (more is better):

While this syllabus provides a road map to the course, a large part of our work together will be constructed, elaborated and refined in the blogosphere. I am interested in deepening and expanding on our in-class discussions and research endeavors and hope that this experiment with blogging will help us create the course together in an immediately accessible, professional, enduring and transparent medium.

So, your first task is to set up a blog on VT's secure WordPress site. Follow the directions here: <http://blogs.lt.vt.edu/>. Once you have a blog, please send me the URL (anelson@vt.edu) and I will add it to the mother blog for the course (<http://blogs.lt.vt.edu/domesticates14/>). Please do this by **Friday, January 24 at 5:00 pm**.

You are required to blog at least once per week about the assigned readings, and you are required to comment on another person's blog at least twice per week. There is no assigned length or format for your blogging. I just ask that you engage the readings thoughtfully and substantively, and that you explore and play with the many nuances of the blogging modality. You might comment on the author's theoretical/methodological framework or relate the assigned text to other readings for the course, other perspectives you have encountered elsewhere, and the thoughts, questions, and responses of your classmates on their blogs. You may also respond to the text's major arguments in more personal terms, as long as you engage those arguments carefully. **Individual blog posts are not graded**, but will be considered holistically as evidence of your general commitment to the course and its content.

2a. Blogging Schedule:

Post regular posts by midnight Sunday.

Post thoughts for discussion by 5 pm Monday.

Read and comment on the posts before class on Tuesday.

3. Discussion Leaders:

Each week a volunteer (or two, depending on the final size of the class) will be in charge of leading class discussion. Discussion leaders should be especially familiar with the assigned readings, and will post a list of themes for discussion on their blogs on Monday before 5pm. They will be "in charge" of leading discussion during class, and are welcome to consult relevant book reviews or other texts on the assigned topic if they wish. They are not required to make a formal presentation to the class, but might want to provide a short (5 minute) introduction to the material to get things started. I will be available to answer questions and move the discussion forward when necessary. Each student will serve as a discussion leader at least once, and probably twice during the semester.

4. Deep History and Domestication Research Project and Presentation:

Everyone will choose a domestic animal species as the subject of a deep history research project. This is NOT a formal research paper, but rather an original inquiry and thought piece, based on interdisciplinary research about how one might approach an integrated history of, say, Angus cattle and human society across the entire chronological expanse of their relationship. You will use an array of sources and materials from a variety of disciplines. The goal of this assignment is to provide a case study for thinking about the cultural interface between ethnography and ethology and between history and natural history.

The final project will take the form of a web site affiliated with your blog and a presentation to the class at the end of the term. The blog format will allow us to collaborate and share insights across the various projects, while your web pages will allow you to create, showcase and disseminate your findings.

We will begin working on this assignment early in the semester. Periodic oral “progress reports” in class will provide you with some feedback from me and your peers, and help you make timely progress. Short written assignments related to your project will also be due along the way. We will be talking in more detail about the specific requirements for this assignment in a couple of weeks.

6. Reading:

The following books have been ordered at the University and Tech Bookstores:

Juliet Clutton-Brock, *Animals as Domesticates. A World View through History* (Michigan State University Press, 2012)

Rob Dunn, *The Wild Life of Our Bodies. Predators, Parasites, and Partners That Shape Who We Are Today* (Harper, 2011)

Richard W. Bulliet, *Hunters, Herders and Hamburgers. The Past and Future of Human Animal Relationships* (Columbia University Press, 2005)

Brad Kessler, *Goat Song. A Seasonal Life, A Short History of Herding and the Art of Making Cheese* (Scribner, 2009)

Ceiridwen Terrill, *Part Wild. Caught Between the Worlds of Wolves and Dogs* (Scribner, 2011)

Piers Vitebsky, *The Reindeer People. Living with Animals and Spirits in Siberia* (Mariner Books, 2006)

Additional readings will be posted on Scholar or on Reserve in Newman Library.

Grades:

Course grades will be calculated as follows:

Regular attendance and class participation	30%
Regular blogging	30%
Leading Class Discussion	15%
Deep History and Domestication Research Projects Response	10%
Deep History and Domestication Research Project – Web pages /written assignments	15%

Honor Code:

Students in this course are expected to abide by the University Honor code: “I have neither given nor received unauthorized assistance on this assignment.” Feel free to work with your classmates on the assignments and to share ideas with others. But assignments you hand in or publish on your blog or web page must reflect your own thinking and work. Please make sure to acknowledge ideas that are not your own.

Special Needs:

If you feel you need an accommodation because of a disability please make an appointment to see me during office hours.

Schedule: Subject to change if necessary. I see this course as a collaborative learning endeavor and will make every effort to tailor the readings to the group's emerging interests. If changes are necessary I will post them on Scholar and announce them in class.

Week 1: Introduction: History, Natural History, Deep History

Jan. 21

Week 2: Guns, Germs and Steel

Jan. 28

watch: Diamond, *Guns Germs and Steel*, pt. 1

Utube: <http://youtu.be/WtY-1UL00A4>. Or Newman Library: DVD 534 c. 2

read: Dunn, *Wild Life of Our Bodies*, ix-xiv, 3-14;

Mary C. Stiner and Gillian Feeley-Harnik, "Energy and Ecosystems" in Andrew Shryock and Daniel Lord Smail, *Deep History. The Architecture of Past and Present* (2011) (Scholar)

Week3: Doing Deep History in a Post-Domestic Age

Feb. 4

read: Bulliet, *Hunters, Herders, and Hamburgers* 1-79

Week 4: Theories of Domestication (1)

Feb. 11

read: Bulliet, *Hunters, Herders, and Hamburgers* 80-142;

Clutton-Brock, *Animals as Domesticates* 1-18;

Tim Ingold, "From Trust to Domination: An Alternative History of Human-Animal Relations," in *The Perception of the Environment. Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (2000) (Scholar)

Week 5: Theories of Domestication (2)

Feb. 18

start: Research Project

listen: Radiolab - *New Nice*, 2009. <http://www.radiolab.org/story/91696-new-nice/>

read: Edmund Russell, "Evolutionary History: Prospectus for a New Field," *Environmental History* vol. 8, no. 2 (2003): 204-228 (Scholar)

Ratliff, Evan. "Animal Domestication: Taming the Wild - Pictures, More From *National Geographic Magazine*," March 2011.

<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2011/03/taming-wild-animals/ratliff-text>

Dunn, *Wild Life of Our Bodies*, pp. 143-199

Week 6: Wolves and Dogs

Feb. 25

read: Terrill, *Part Wild*, pp. 1-139

Week 7: Herders (1)

Mar 4

continue: Research Project (part 2)

read: Dunn, *Wildlife of Our Bodies*, pp. 11-139

Bulliet, *Hunters, Herders and Hamburgers*, pp. 143-173

===== Spring Break=====

Week 8: Research Week (class will not meet)

Mar. 18

read: Terrill, *Part Wild*, 141-221

Week 9: Herders (2)

Mar. 25

read: Kessler, *Goat Song* (2009)

Week 10: Herders (3)

Apr. 1

read: Vitebsky, *The Reindeer People* (2006) 3-59, 259-310, 370-395

April 6 — Research Project Draft Due (Google Drive)

Week 11: Blogging Break / Research Blog Building Session

Apr. 8

Week 12: Research Week

Apr. 15

Week 13:

April 22

read: Darwin, *The Variation of Animals and Plants Under Domestication* vol. 1 [(1868) 1998], forward (by Harriet Ritvo), v-xiii, Introduction, 1-14, Ch.1, 15-50; Brantz, "The Domestication of Empire" (2007) 73-93

Week 14: Of Mice and Men

April 29

read: Burt, *Rat*, 7-48, (89-114)

Rader, "The Multiple Meaning of Laboratory Animals: Standardizing Mice for American Cancer Research, 1910-1950" in *Animals in Human Histories*, ed. Mary J. Henninger-Voss (2002), 389-438

Kenneth J. Shapiro, "A Rodent for Your Thoughts: The Social Construction of Animal Models" in *Animals in Human Histories*, pp. 439-471

May 4 — Final Research Project Due

Week 15: Awards Ceremony / End of Semester Party

May 6

read: Terrill, *Part Wild*, pp. 223-241

Dunn, *Wild Life of Our Bodies*, pp. 233-259