

Fall 2009, Morse Academic Plan V55.0400- 010
Conversations of the West: Topics: “Animal humans”

New York University
Professor Jacques Lezra
Department of Comparative Literature
13-19 University Place
Office Hours: T 11-12, 2-3:30

Lecture: MW 3:30-4:45 405 Silver

Preceptors: Sage Anderson Office hours W 10-12 <sage.anderson@nyu.edu>
Magali Armillas-Tiseyra Office hours W 1-3 <mat373@nyu.edu>
Lori Cole Office hours M 1-3 <lori.cole@nyu.edu>

Sections:	011	Sage Anderson	R08:00am - 09:15amWS 25W4 C-19
	012	Sage Anderson	R09:30am - 10:45amWS 25W4 C-19
	013	Magali Armillas-Tiseyra	F08:00am - 09:15amWS 25W4 C-11
	014	Magali Armillas-Tiseyra	F09:30am - 10:45amWS 25W4 C-11
	015	Lori Cole	F09:30am - 10:45amWS 25W4 C-16
	016	Lori Cole	F11:00am - 12:15pmWS 25W4 C-16

“One might go so far as to define man as a creature that has failed in its effort to keep its animalness...” So writes the German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk. What sort of animal *were* we? Where, how and by whom has the line between the human and the animal been drawn? With what consequences for our “human” understanding of the world? Of concepts like the “soul,” “society,” politics, the family? Is the line between the human and the animal drawn differently in different genres—in literary works, theological treatises, natural histories, paintings, films? We will come at these questions from different angles, following them in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures, pre-Socratic and other classical works (Ovid, Pliny, Euripides), in early modern responses to these questions (in works by Marie de France, Shakespeare, Montaigne, Descartes, Caravaggio, Rembrandt, Michelangelo, Titian), in essays by contemporary philosophers and advocates (Singer, Derrida), and in films that treat the blurring of borders between humans and animals (Walker, Yulie).

Course requirements: Attendance at lecture and recitations. Militant participation in discussion. Weekly response assignments. (1 p. double spaced, due to your TA by 10 am on Wednesdays.) Two essays (no weekly response on the weeks in which the essays are due) (4-5pp double spaced). In-class midterm OR Visual Assignment (4-5 pp. double spaced), and final exam.

Grading:	Attendance, discussion, and short weekly recitation assignments:	20 %
	Two essays:	40 %
	Mid-Term OR Visual Assignment:	20 %
	Final:	20 %

Unpleasant observation regarding computer use in lecture and in section: You may use your laptop *to take notes* during lecture. Computers may *not* be used in section. It is highly disrespectful—insulting, in fact—to your teacher to check email, IM, go on FaceBook, etc. during lecture. Worse—other students find it distracting. Lecture halls, however, are not police-states in small. We will not parade the aisles constantly, checking that you are making appropriate use of your laptops. If, however, we receive complaints or notice that students are abusing, I will prohibit the use of laptops in lecture altogether.

Course books are available at the University Book Store. Screening times for the films will be announced.

Schedule of readings and assignments

September	9 W	Introduction: Animal humans Genesis 1 and Genesis 22 Caravaggio, “Sacrifice of Isaac” Yeats, “Leda and the Swan”	
	14 M	Plato, <i>Phaedrus</i>	
	16 W	Plato, <i>Phaedrus</i>	
	21 M	Euripides, <i>The Bacchae</i>	
	23 W	Euripides, <i>The Bacchae</i> **Essay 1 due in lecture**	
	28 M	Ovid, <i>Metamorphoses</i> Aristotle, <i>On the Motion of Animals</i>	
	30 W	Ovid, <i>Metamorphoses</i> Titian, “The Rape of Europa” Velazquez, “Las Hilanderas (The Fable of Arachne)”	
	October	5 M	Apuleius, <i>The Golden Ass</i> Pliny, <i>Naturalis Historia</i>
		7 W	Apuleius, <i>The Golden Ass</i> Pliny, <i>Naturalis Historia</i>
		12 M	**No class—visit Metropolitan Museum on your own in preparation for Visual Assignment
14 W		The Gospel of Luke	
19 M		The Gospel of Luke	
21 W		Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologica</i> 1, q. 75	
26 M		**In-Class Midterm Examination OR **Hand in Visual Assignment	
28 W		Marie de France, <i>Bisclavret</i> Agamben, “The Ban and the Wolf”	
November	2 M	Marie de France, <i>Bisclavret</i> Agamben, “The Ban and the Wolf”	
	4 W	Walker, <i>Werewolf of London</i> (1935)	
	9 M	Walker, <i>Werewolf of London</i> (1935)	
	11 W	Montaigne, “Of Cannibals”	
	16 M	Montaigne, “Apology in Defense of Raymond Sebond”	
	18 W	Montaigne, “Apology in Defense of Raymond Sebond”	
	20 F	**Essay 2 due by the end of the day on Friday, Nov. 20**	

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November 23 M Descartes, *Discourse of Method*
Derrida, "The Animal That Therefore I Am"
Singer, "All Animals Are Equal..."
25 W Descartes, *Discourse of Method*
Derrida, "The Animal That Therefore I Am"
Singer, "All Animals Are Equal..."

Thanksgiving

December 30 M Cervantes, "The dialogue of the Dogs"
Hearne, "How to say 'Fetch!'"
2 W Shakespeare, *Midsummer Night's Dream*
7 M Shakespeare, *Midsummer Night's Dream*
9 W H.G. Wells, *The Island of Dr. Moreau* and *Island of Lost Souls* (Wylie, 1933)
14 M Last Day of Classes
H.G. Wells, *The Island of Dr. Moreau* and *Island of Lost Souls* (Wylie, 1933)
Clarice Lispector, "The Chicken"
****Take-Home Final Exam Prompts Distributed****
17 R ***Final Exam period begins***
21 M **** Take-Home Final Exam Due****



Bibliography:

These are the editions I have ordered. You should try to make use of them, since the class readings will be keyed to page numbers in these translations.

Plato, *Phaedrus*, Albert Keith Whitaker (Editor), Stephen Scully (Translator). Focus Publishing/R. Pullins Company

Euripides, *Bacchae* (Cambridge Translations from Greek Drama), David Franklin (Editor). Cambridge University Press

Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Denis Feeney (Introduction), David Raeburn (Translator). Penguin Classics

Apuleius, *The Golden Ass*, E. J. Kenney (Introduction, Translator). Penguin Classics

New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha, augmented 3rd College Edition.

The Lais of Marie de France, Glyn S. Burgess (Introduction, Translator), Keith Busby (Introduction, Translator). Penguin Classics; 2nd edition

Descartes, Rene. *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy* (Paperback). BN Publishing

Shakespeare, William. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, A. R. Braunmuller (Editor), Stephen Orgel (Editor), Russ McDonald (Introduction). Penguin Classics

Wells, H.G. *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. Bantam Classics