

PSYCHOLOGY 3000: Human-Animal Interactions

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Class time: Spring 2012, MWF 1400-1450, D 634.

This course will examine the many situations and different types of interactions between humans and other animals. We will begin by discussing the several philosophical bases for these interactions and continue by thinking of the people, the animals we affect and the ethical issues that arise because of these interactions. The emphasis in this course will be in learning by doing, although Dr Mather will lecture about special situations that deserve a closer look, such as animal pain, the special adaptations of dogs, pet therapy and the three Rs of animal research. Class members will find an agency that works with animals and outline it for the class web site, interview an individual who works with animals and present his or her situation to the class, prepare a poster presentation on an ethical issue to do with these interactions and complete a final observation assignment instead of a final exam (these three assignments will be completed in pairs). As class participation is important, you will also keep a Participation Log.

Because these are oral and poster presentations which need time to prepare, some class time will be allocated to these activities. A schedule for the class time is contained on page 3 of this outline—keep it and post it somewhere that will remind you which assignments are due at what time. There will be some flexibility in oral presentation times in case of illness or other disasters, but less so for the posters, so you must be prepared to be prompt. If you have any disability which interferes with your ability to complete the assignments, check with the Disabilities Office and come and talk to Dr Mather.

Evaluations for assignments will be decided in the first class meeting by consensus between class and instructor. Because this is an assignment-based course, the marks will usually be high. Thus the A grade range will begin at 85%, the B one at 75% and the C at 65%, with the lower ¼ of the grade range in the – category and the higher in the + one. In the first class I will ask permission to change the grade boundaries slightly at the end of the semester in the interest of fairness.

ASSIGNMENTS:

- 1) By the second week of class, when we have discussed the philosophical bases of human attitudes to animal as the foundation for the courses, write a one-page outline of **how you view animals**, and which of the three fundamental attitudes this most agrees with (due January 18th). What is the place of *Homo sapiens* in the animal kingdom? What control ought we to

have over animals? Do we plan for the immediate or long term future? Do we have moral obligations to all or only some of the species on the planet? How should we behave to act ethically towards them? This is Opinion 1 and will be the beginning of your Participation Log.

Once we have set this foundation for the course, the rest of the semester will be a mixture of lectures, time to work on assignments, and presentations to the class.

- 2) Find and **describe an organization** (whose scope must be national or international) concerned with human-animal interactions. Register your choice on the class web site set aside for this. The sooner you make a choice the better, as you must check the web site and make sure you are not duplicating the choice of another pair. Prepare a short report, about one typed page, with the organization name, scope, philosophical and organizational background and source of support. This is due January 20th, and is to be posted on the web site and saved in your Log. After this, go to this web site and find a posting on one organization, preferably quite different in focus from the one you described. Find out how it came into existence and speculate on where it is going. Enter a one-page typed report in your Participation Log by January 30th; this combination is Opinion 2.
- 3) **Interview** a person who works with animals. Discuss his/her philosophy, specifics of the contact with animals and attitudes to them, whether this is for remuneration. Class time will be allocated to discussion on interviewing techniques on January 18th. Prepare a short oral presentation (10 minutes) for class during January 23rd to February 1st. Power point accompaniment for the presentation is appropriate but not required. This presentation will be graded on content of the interview, linkage to the areas covered by the class and by the competence of the presentation. See Page 4 on techniques and subjects for interviewing people. Again, listen to others' presentations and make a one-page report for your Log on one of them, by February 3rd; this is Opinion 3.
- 4) Read about an **ethical issue** associated with human-animal interaction. Choose a topic and again post it on the class web site, no duplicates please (see above). Remember to think about philosophical approaches. Prepare a poster for presentation during class on February 29th to March 5th; class time will also be allocated to discussion of poster construction and presentation on February 27th (remember this is a standard means of communicating at scientific conferences). An outline of poster presentation techniques and possible topics is on Page 4. Because the process of creating a poster is so important, class on February 13th will be devoted to discussion and demonstration of poster presentation. Also, the grade for this assignment will be allocated half to the poster itself and half to the information presented on it and given during discussion with evaluators during the presentation. After the posters, choose one topic and make a one-page report in your Log about it; this is Opinion 4.
- 5) **Participation Log:** Essentially this is a summary of some of what you learned in class. Here I will find your five one-page Opinion papers—one on your philosophy, two on an organization (your original and the opinion), one on an interview subject and one on an ethical issue. These mini-

papers will be typed but do not need a title page. No references will be required for the Philosophy Opinion, but at least one will be required for each of the other Opinion papers. The Log is cumulative but the Opinion entries should be completed by the dates noted in the Course Outline. The Log is also a place to note questions you asked in class (and answers) or questions you wanted to ask but did not, and opinions. The number of these is totally up to you, but Logs will be graded on quantity and quality of entries. Please also include your Research Proposal (though this one is due to Dr Mather on March 19 and will be handed back with comments). Your log will be handed in on March 9th for evaluation of the Opinion papers, and all of it is due the last day of class, April 18th, in class or by 1600 in the Assignment Box.

- 6) The Final Assignment (instead of a Final Exam) will be an **observational study** of some simple human-animal interaction. One way to find a study is to check back with our list of organizations and find someone associated with one of them, or you might have got ideas from an interview or ethical poster. Describe it and write a very short scientific report on what you saw. Examples might be watching a veterinarian or a farm hand, seeing how people behave when feeding ducks (no statistics expected). A proposal is due March 26th to Dr Mather. It will be promptly returned, and its approval is necessary for you to continue the study. Class time will be spent in describing methods for and practicing observation, and in discussing the components of a research report on March 19th to 23rd, and again on April 11th as a discussion of work in progress.

INTERVIEWING SOMEONE ABOUT HUMAN-ANIMAL INTERACTIONS

Who works with animals? Lots of people. Examples are farmers, wildlife specialists, researchers, veterinarians, hunters, pet shelter workers, animal trainers and people who raise animals for pets. Many of them are in easy reach of us in Lethbridge, and I will have some specific suggestions for those of you who don't find one. We should discuss whether you could do an interview via e-mail, which would make your choices much wider though it might not make the job easier. Interviewing someone about a part of their life takes a bit of time and care. It involves trust, listening and respect as you go through the interview.

TRUST: People will talk freely when they trust the listener. To get this trust, you have to start out making the person comfortable with both you and what you want to find out. So you have to get them at ease before you start working on the information part. You can start with finding 'common ground' with the person, maybe you have a pet, or maybe you're thinking of getting into a career that the person does-- or maybe you even talk about the weather. Some people may be worried about confidentiality, you can assure them up front that you will not use their name if they prefer (ask them), you can tell them why you are doing this class assignment and explain who will hear your report. Lots of people don't like having their conversation recorded, think carefully about doing this.

LISTENING: As the interview goes on, the person should relax and give answers to your inquiries. Try to stay away from 'yes-no' questions, you want them to tell you lots that you might not get if you go at them directly. Have general ideas of the categories of information you want, but don't pepper them with questions. Let them 'run on', use phrases like "that's interesting, can you tell me more" or "Why do you think that's important", encouraging noises such as "Mmmhmm", "very interesting" and "Oh, I see" to keep your subject talking.

RESPECT: This is not about you but about him/her. Don't disagree, thank the person for the opportunity of doing the interview, show interest and value their opinions and information even if you don't necessarily agree with them. Smile, show you value what the person's saying beyond just 'doing it because it's an assignment'.

What do you want to know? You'd like to know what the person does with and around animals. It would be interesting to find out what the good and bad parts of the hobby or job or avocation with animals are. You'd really like to see how the person views animals, particularly the one s/he works with, and you can ask how the situation might cause moral or ethical issues to arise and how they are handled (but be careful with this one). These four areas can be the basis of your presentation of the interview to the class as well.

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

Posters are like other presentations but more fun. The work essentially is done before you get to the class, it is all there in front of people. When they ask questions you have to know, but the poster tells them a lot before they get to you.

INFORMATION: You do need to know as much when you do a poster as when you do an oral presentation. But it's divided into two parts, what the poster tells everyone and what you tell them when they ask questions and get beyond the basics. For the first part, you have to figure out what the essentials are, you can only put down what really matters and it has to be said clearly.

For the second part you have to read up and think about what others might ask you, be ready with facts and details that can't go on the poster but you might need to persuade people. You can put a couple of references on the poster or have them ready to hand out to people who really want to know.

PRESENTATION: This is the most important part of a poster. You only have a small part of your information to present--what's most important and most interesting? This part of it has to be visible from 2 metres, make sure that it is and that it's not so crowded that readers lose the important stuff in the crowd. Posters should be eye-catching. You can start with something informal and attention-getting to draw your audience in. You can use pictures, diagrams or graphs to help make you point more vividly. Titles have to be big to be seen. Colours in print, background or in the pictures are particularly useful, but don't make the poster so crowded or dazzling that your audience don't get the message.

Ethical issues can be anything, make sure they involve direct person-animal interaction. Please try to get issues that are much larger than the local community, we need local people for the interview and observation. Is raising hens in battery cages immoral? Who is right in the British fight over outlawing fox hunting? Did we do Keiko the killer whale a favour when we released her (and was it worth all that money)?

SCHEDULE

January 9th Discussion of course outline, weightings of assignment and grade boundaries.

January 11th Lecture: philosophical approaches.

January 13th Lecture: philosophical approaches. Pairing assignment.

January 16th Lecture: philosophical approaches.

January 18th Interview discussion, Opinion 1.

January 20th Lecture. Organization evaluation on web site.

January 23rd Interview presentation 1.

January 25th Interview presentation 2.

January 27th Interview presentation 3.

January 30th Interview presentation 4. Opinion 2.

February 1st Interview presentation 5.

February 3rd Lecture. Opinion 3.

February 6th Lecture

February 8th Lecture

February 10th Lecture.

February 13th Poster discussion.

February 15th Lecture.

February 17th Lecture.

February 27th Poster preparation time.

February 29th Poster presentation 1.

March 2nd Poster presentation 2.

March 5th Poster presentations 3.

March 7th Lecture. Opinion 4 and Log in.

March 9th Lecture.

March 12th Lecture.

March 14th Lecture.

March 16th Lecture.

March 19th Research discussion.

March 21st Research discussion.

March 23rd Research discussion.

March 26th Lecture. Research proposal in.

March 28th Lecture.

March 30th Lecture.

April 2nd Lecture.

April 4th Lecture.

April 11th Research discussion.

April 13th Lecture.

April 16th Lecture.

April 18th Summary, feedback, observations. Final draft of Log in.

April 21st, 4:00 PM, Report of Observational Study due.