

PSYCHOLOGY 3000A: Human-Animal Interactions, Spring 2015

Instructor: Dr Jennifer Mather

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Class time: Spring 2015, T Th 1050-1205, AH 176.

Moodle: <http://moodle.uleth.ca/>

This course will examine the many situations and different types of interactions between humans and other animals, including the role of pets, animals raised as food, zoos and aquariums and animals used for entertainment. 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 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 do a Participation Log which includes finding an agency working on HAI as well as writing opinions about interactions that they see or hear of in the media. In groups, you will 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 observational research project instead of a final exam.

The GOALS of the course are as follows:

Information: you should learn a lot about the diversity and scope of our interactions with animals.

Values: you should learn about the attitudes we hold, the ethics of what we do with and to animals.

Skills: you should learn how to observe, interview, present orally and in a poster--important abilities.

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 times is contained on pages 6 and 7 of this outline—keep it and post it somewhere that will remind you which assignments are due at what time. There will be a little flexibility in oral and poster presentation times in case of illness or other disasters, 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 animals as the foundation for the courses, write a one-page report of **how you view animals**, and which of the three fundamental attitudes this most agrees with (due January 22nd). 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 in 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. Prepare a short report, about one typed page, with the organization name, scope, philosophical and organizational background and source of support. Be critical. This is due January 29th, and is to be saved in your Log as *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 20th. Prepare a short oral presentation (12 minutes) for class during January 27th or 29th. 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. I will be looking also for balance of the contributions by the presenters. 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 5th; this is *Opinion 3*.
- 4) Read about an **ethical issue** associated with human-animal interaction. Choose a topic and post it on moodle, by February 12th, no duplicates please. Remember to think about philosophical approaches. Prepare a poster for presentation (around class time) on March 10th or 12th; class time will also be allocated to poster preparation on February 26th (remember this is a standard means of communicating at scientific conferences). An outline of poster presentation techniques and possible topics is on page 5. Because the process of creating a poster is so important, class on February 24th 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 due March 17th and is *Opinion 4*. Note that because of this assignment, we will not

discuss issues that students have chosen for posters in class, at least before the poster presentation.

- 5) **Participation Log:** Essentially this is a summary of some of what you learned in class. Here I will find your four one-page Opinion papers—one on your philosophy, one on an organization, 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 more the better). 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, as well as number and appropriateness of references, and a minimum of one per week is expected. Please also include your Research Proposal (it is due to Dr Mather on March 19th and will be handed back with comments for a formal proposal on March 31st). Your log will be handed in on February 24th for evaluation, not marks, of entries so far, and all of it is due on April 14th, in class or by 1600 in the Assignment Box (in the hallway by C866) or to Dr. Mather's Office, C888. Note that some people do long, excellent Logs, so that doing the minimum results in minimum grades.

- 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 as a proposal for feedback on March 12th. Examples might be watching a veterinarian or a farm hand, seeing how people behave when feeding ducks (note: no statistics required but rewarded). A formal proposal is due March 31st 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 24th and 26th. On April 9th we will have an informal report of work in progress.

Because so much of the grade is dependent on working with others, everyone will evaluate all group members for relative contributions, averaging 100%. Many groups will see all members as fairly equal contributors, but sometimes the contributions are unequal and the excellent leader gets rewarded and the slacker downgraded. I have previously set evaluations to range from a low of 80% and a high of 120%, this can make a huge difference in your grade.

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. If you are interviewing someone who is sensitive about it, we can arrange a Consent Form for you.

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)? Is it a good thing to spay or neuter pets so they won't produce unwanted offspring? Should cities have leash laws for cats (Lethbridge is worried about that)? Should we allow seismic blast that the oil companies use for looking for underwater sources when it hurts whales' ears? Should the US drill in the calving ground of the Porcupine caribou herd, and are there ways they can prevent disruption? Is the killing of animals for food justified, or should we all turn vegetarian? Are Disney films producing warped views of animal behaviour and is this a problem? Are zoos and aquariums good or bad for animals?

SCHEDULE

January 8 th	Discussion of course outline, weightings of assignment and grade boundaries.
January 13 th	Lecture: philosophical approaches.
January 15 th	Lecture: philosophical approaches. Grouping for assignment.
January 20 th	Interview discussion.
January 22 nd	Lecture, Opinion 1 due.
January 27 th	Interview presentation 1.
January 29 th	Interview presentation 2, Opinion 2 due.
February 3 rd	Lecture.
February 5 th	Lecture, Opinion 3 due.
February 10 th	Lecture.
February 12 th	Lecture, poster topic due.
February 17 th to 21 st	Reading week.
February 24 th	Lecture..
February 26 th	Lecture, Participation Log in.
March 3 rd	Poster discussion/preparation time.
March 5 th	Lecture.
March 10 ^h	Poster presentation 1.
March 12 th	Poster presentation 2.
March 17 th	Lecture, Opinion 4 in.
March 19 th	Lecture, Informal research proposal in.
March 24 th	Research preparation
March 26 th	Research preparation
March 31 st	Lecture. Formal research proposal in.
April 2 nd	Lecture.

April 7th	Lecture.
April 9 th	Informal research reports.
April 14 th	Lecture, Participation Log in.
April 16 th	Summary, feedback, group evaluations.
April 21st	4:00 PM, Report of Observational Study due. Please drop off in the drop box by the Psychology Office, C866 in the hallway or to Dr. Mather's Office at C888.

Assignments: Weighting will be posted on moodle after we have decided in the first class.

Individual: Opinions (four)
 Participation Log

Group: Interview
 Poster
 Observational Study
 Proposal
 Report