

Animal Ethics

(Sample Syllabus: Introductory Level)

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Content Warning

Some of the materials that we will read and discuss in this course might be difficult for students from a variety of backgrounds. (These topics include: depiction and discussion of violence, torture, killing, euthanasia, and more.) Detailed content warning will be given prior to relevant units/readings. If you have any concerns about any elements of the course, or if there is any way that we can together make things easier to bear, please contact me by email, by Zoom, or in person.

Textbook

There is no required textbook; all readings and videos will be made available on Sakai.

1. Course Description

In this course, we will explore classic and contemporary issues in animal ethics. There are six units.

Unit 1: Moral Theories. We will start by learning key theories and concepts in normative ethics, including utilitarianism, rights theory (i.e., Kantianism), contractualism, and virtue ethics.

Unit 2: Animal Rights and Welfare. We will discuss philosophical arguments for animal rights and welfare grounded in different moral theories that we have learned in the previous unit.

Unit 3: Eating Animals. Is it morally wrong to eat meat? If so, why? How about cultured meat? We will explore ethical questions connected with factory farming and meat consumption.

Unit 4: Harming Animals. In this unit, we will examine arguments in defense of and against using animals in experiments and in sports (e.g., hunting).

Unit 5: Animals as Companions. We will move on to discuss a range of ethical questions arising from having animals as pets/companions. Is it morally objectionable to domesticate and confine animals (e.g., cats and dogs)? What do we owe to companion animals and non-companion animals? What moral considerations arise from euthanizing non-human animals?

Unit 6: Intersectionality. In our final unit, we will investigate the (conceptual, theoretical, and practical) connections between the oppression of non-human animals and human oppression.

2. Learning Objectives

This course has three learning objectives.

- You will be introduced to **key topics, ideas, and theories** in classic and contemporary debates in animal ethics.
- You will practice **key philosophical skills**, including: identifying and critically evaluating different perspectives on a complicated issue, forming your own views based on such evaluation, and clearly communicating your views in writing and in speech with interlocutors who may have different or opposing opinions while engaging in respectful dialogue.
- You will reflect on how the topics that we have discussed in class relate to **issues outside of the classroom** and form your own views on those issues.

3. Commitment to Respect and Diversity

Together as a class, we are fully committed to creating a safe learning environment for everyone involved, irrespective of their ability, age, economic status, ethnicity, first language, gender expression and identity, national origin, race, religion, sex, and sexuality. Personal offenses or discriminatory remarks toward others on any of these bases will not be tolerated in class under any circumstances.

Climate Surveys. During the semester, we will have *anonymous climate surveys* to ensure that everyone feels welcomed and respected during class discussions and lectures. If you have any concerns about the learning environment at any time during the semester, please let me know immediately.

4. Course Assignments and Assessment

The required assignments for this course are as follows:

Due Date	Assignment	Percentage
Daily	Attendance & Participation	10%
TBA	Group Discussion Facilitation	10%
Daily	Reading Responses	20%
2/14 (Tue)	Mid-term Quiz	10%
2/19 (Sun)	Paper I Outline (1 page)	1%
3/10 (Fri)	Paper I (3-4 pages)	9%
4/14 (Fri)	Paper II Outline (2 pages)	2%

5/1 (Mon)	Paper II (4-6 pages)	18%
5/8 (Mon)	Final Exam	20%

Attendance & Participation (10%)

You will meet this requirement in part by attending class regularly. But you will also need to regularly participate in discussions and in-class activities to get full points. There will be *alternative* ways of earning participation points; we will discuss a specific guideline for these assignments in class.

Cold-calling. In class, I will occasionally “cold-call” you and ask if you would like to share your thoughts. You can always feel free to “skip” a particular question or “opt-out” of being cold-called at any point during the semester for an entire class, a unit, or the rest of the semester.

Mid-semester estimate. In the mid-semester, I will release an *estimate* of your participation grade—this does not count toward your overall grade and only serves to give you a sense of how you have been doing so far. If what you see is not the grade you expected or wanted, come talk to me and we will discuss the ways to boost your grade!

Group Discussion Facilitation (10%)

Twice in the semester, you and your groupmates will lead discussion on an assigned reading. Your group will be in charge of: (i) coming up with a list of big group and small group discussion questions on that reading, (ii) facilitating big group discussion, and (iii) submitting a report of how it went. I will post a detailed guideline on Sakai. We will decide on the schedule on the first week.

Reading Responses (20%)

We will begin nearly every class by writing a short response to that day’s reading. Typically, I will ask you to answer one of the short reading guidance questions released prior to the class meeting. The goal is to give you an incentive to do the readings on time and come to class. There will be 23 in total, which I’ll grade pass/fail. I will drop your lowest 3, and the remaining 20 will count toward your grade. You will fail the reading response if it is clear that you failed to properly do the reading. You will pass the reading response if it is clear that you properly did the reading.

Make-up Assignment. You can make up for *maximum two* missed reading responses by writing a reflection paper on a film, a novel, or an article. The list will be updated during the semester.

Quiz (10%)

After the first two units, there will be an in-class quiz. The goal is to consolidate your understanding of moral theories before moving forward. This quiz will require you to answer short-answer questions from the readings in Unit 1 and 2. All questions will come from the Quiz Study Guide posted on Sakai.

Paper I (10%)

Before submitting your Paper I, you will submit a 1-page outline for your paper. The outline counts for a tiny portion of your overall grade (1%), so it's a low-stakes opportunity to try out your ideas and make mistakes! The paper itself should be 3-4 pages in length and is worth 9% of your overall grade. I will release a specific guideline for the outline and the paper closer to the due date.

Paper II (20%)

You will also submit an outline for your Paper II. The goal is again to give you a chance to try out your idea for the paper. This outline should be 2 pages in length and is worth 2% of your overall grade. The paper itself should be 4-6 pages in length and is worth 18% of your overall grade. I will release a specific guideline for the outline and the paper closer to the due date.

In addition to submitting an outline, I strongly encourage you to have a meeting with me to discuss your paper idea.

Final Exam (20%)

The exam will require you to answer both short answer questions and essay questions from Unit 2 through 6. All short answer questions will come from the Exam Study Guide posted on Sakai; all essay questions will be released on the Exam Review Session scheduled on the last day of classes. I will post a detailed guideline on how to prepare for and take this exam closer to the exam date.

5. Grading and Other Class Policies

Each assignment will be marked out of the number of percentage points that it contributes to your overall grade. This will give you a total score of 100, which I will convert to your final letter grade:

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	F
94	90	87	84	80	77	74	70	67	60	0-59

For papers, I will also give you a corresponding letter grade. We will look at grading criteria closer to the due dates, but here is a rough description of what these letter grades signify¹:

A: “*Mastery* of course content at the *highest level* of attainment that can reasonably be expected of students at a given stage of development.”

B: “*Strong* performance demonstrating a *high level* of attainment for a student at a given stage of development.”

C: “A *totally acceptable* performance demonstrating an adequate level of attainment for a student at a given stage of development.”

¹ These descriptions are from UNC's official “Explanation of Grading System” (<https://registrar.unc.edu/academic-services/grades/explanation-of-grading-system/>).

D: “A *marginal* performance in the required exercises demonstrating a minimal passing level of attainment [at a given stage of development].”

F: “For whatever reason, an *unacceptable* performance [at a given stage of development].”

Pluses and minuses will be given to papers that fall in between these descriptions.

Anonymous Grading

I will grade the papers, quiz, and the final exam *anonymously*. This means that you should not put any identifying information on them, other than your PID number. Make sure to include your PID number *both* in the body of your paper *and* in the file name.

Page Limit Policy

Paper I and II (but not outlines!) are subject to strict page limits. To standardize length, all submissions should be: 12pt font, Times New Roman, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins. If you have a nonstandard formatting, I will convert it to standard formatting to check for length.

I will dock a third of a letter grade for each half of a page you are over or under the required page range: 3–4 pages for Paper I; 4–6 pages for Paper II (excluding the reference list).

Late Policy and Extension

All paper assignments are due at **11:59pm** sharp on the dates indicated below.

Late Days. You are given “three late days” that you can freely use on any of the paper assignments (not applicable to reading responses, quiz, or the final exam). You can use all three days on a single assignment, or spread them out on several assignments. For instance, you may turn in Paper I three days late, or turn in Paper I an hour late and an outline for Paper II two days late without getting a late penalty. Turning in an assignment an hour late will use up a whole late day. You don’t have to tell me in advance, and I won’t ask any questions! If you submit the paper late, I will simply deduct the day(s) from the remaining late days you have.

Once you have used up the late days, late papers will be docked a full letter grade (10%) for each calendar day (or part of a day) that they are late. For instance, a paper due on a Friday that is turned in on Saturday by 11:59pm will be docked a full letter grade. So, use the late days wisely!

Extension. You may earn an additional extension beyond the three late days given if you make a reasonable request *at least 72 hours in advance* of the paper due date.

Electronics

Electronics—laptops and tablets, but no phones—are allowed in class for accessing the electronic copies of the readings and note-taking. I reserve the right to rescind this permission if they become of a distraction. Whether you bring a laptop to class or not, you should bring paper and something to write with in order to complete in-class exercises and activities.

Plagiarism and the Honor Code

You are expected to abide by UNC's Honor Code, and refrain from any kind of academic dishonesty, including cheating and plagiarism. At UNC, plagiarism is defined as "deliberate or reckless representation of another's words, thoughts, or ideas as one's own without attribution in connection with submission of academic work, whether graded or otherwise." This includes *unintentionally* stealing another person's work or failing to give credit to someone else's idea *by accident*.

Just as you are bound by the Honor Code not to plagiarize, I am bound by it to report suspected cases of academic dishonesty of any kind to the Honor Court. If you are ever in any doubt as to whether something constitutes plagiarism, check with me first!

6. Resources

Accessibility Resources & Service

If you need special accommodations for class participation and assignments, please register with the Accessibility Resources & Service Office (<https://ars.unc.edu/>). Once I receive an official request from the ARS Office, I would be happy to make the arrangements.

Writing Center

To ensure the anonymous grading, I will not read your paper drafts. But you can always set up an appointment with one of the coaches at the UNC Writing Center (<https://writingcenter.unc.edu/>) to improve your paper at any stages of writing—from brainstorming to polishing a draft.

Counseling and Psychological Services

CAPS (<https://caps.unc.edu/>) is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body through timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services, both for short-term and long-term needs.

Title IX Resources

Any students impacted by acts of discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, stalking, and related retaliation are encouraged to report the incident and seek resources on campus or in the community.

Please contact the Director of Title IX Compliance (Rebecca Gibson: rmgibson@unc.edu), Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (reportandresponse@unc.edu), Counseling and Psychological Services (confidential: caps@unc.edu), or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators (confidential: gvsc@unc.edu) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at <https://safe.unc.edu/>.

7. Reading Schedule (Subject to change)

1/10 Tue – Course Overview

- Course Syllabus

Unit 1. Moral Theories

1/12 Thu – *Sentient Beings*

- David DeGrazia, “What Animals are Like” and “The Moral Status of Animals” in *Animal Rights: A Very Short Introduction* (2002)

1/17 Tue – *Utilitarianism*

- John Stuart Mill, excerpts (Introduction to Part 8) from *Utilitarianism* (1861)

1/19 Thu – *Rights Theory*

- Immanuel Kant, excerpts (Introduction to Part 9) from *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785)

1/24 Tue – *Contractualism*

- Thomas Hobbes, excerpts (Introduction to Part 10) from *Leviathan* (1651)
- T.M. Scanlon, “Contractualism and Utilitarianism” (1982)

1/26 Thu – *Virtue Ethics*

- Aristotle, excerpts (Introduction to Part 9) from *Nicomachean Ethics*
- Julia Annas, “Being Virtuous and Doing the Right Thing” (2004)

Unit 2. Animal Rights and Welfare

1/31 Tue – *Utilitarianism (Welfarism)*

- Peter Singer, “All Animals are Equal” in *Animal Liberation* (1990)

2/2 Thu – *Rights Theory (Abolitionism)*

- Tom Regan, “The Case for Animal Rights” (1986)

2/7 Tue – *Contractualism*

- Peter Carruthers, “Contractualism and Animals” (2011)

2/9 Thu – *Virtue Ethics*

- Rosalind Hursthouse, “Applying Virtue Ethics to Our Treatment of the Other Animals” (2006)

2/14 Tue – **Quiz Day**

- No reading!

2/16 Thu – **Paper Writing Workshop I**

- No reading!

2/19 Sun – **Paper I Outline due!**

Unit 3. Eating Animals

2/21 Tue – *Ethics of Eating Animals*

- Lori Gruen, “Eating Animals” in *Ethics and Animals* (2012)

2/23 Thu – *Against Eating Meat (Moral Vegetarianism)*

- Alastair Norcross, “Puppies, Pigs, And People: Eating Meat and Marginal Cases” (2004)

2/28 Tue – *Against Eating Meat, cont’d*

- Cora Diamond, “Eating Meat and Eating People” (1978)

3/2 Thu – *Ethics of Eating Cultured Meat*

- Milburn, “Chewing Over In Vitro Meat: Animal Ethics, Cannibalism and Social Progress” (2016)

Unit 4. Harming Animals

3/7 Tue – *Animals in Research*

- Hugh LaFollette, “Animal Experimentation in Biomedical Research” (2012)

3/9 Thu – *Animals in Research, cont’d*

- Elisa Galgut, “Raising the Bar in the Justification of Animal Research” (2015)

3/9 Thu – *Animals in Entertainment*

- Rebekah Humphreys, “Game Birds: The Ethics of Shooting Birds for Sport” (2010)

3/10 Fri – **Paper I due!**

3/14 Tue – *Spring break* (no class)

3/16 Thu – *Spring break* (no class)

3/21 Tue – *Animals in Entertainment, cont’d*

- Marti Kheel, “The Killing Game: An Ecofeminist Critique of Hunting” (1996)

Unit 5. Animals as Companions

3/23 Thu – *Ethics of Captivity*

- Alexandra Horowitz, “Canis Familiaris” in *The Ethics of Captivity* (2014)

3/28 Tue – *Ethics of Captivity, cont’d*

- Peter Sandøe and Clare Palmer, “For Their Own Good” in *The Ethics of Captivity* (2014)

3/30 Thu – *Partiality toward Companion Animals*

- Cheryl Abbate, “People and Their Animal Companions: Navigating Moral Constraints in a Harmful Yet Meaningful World” (2022)

4/4 Tue – *Euthanizing Animals*

- Eva Meijer, “The Good Life, the Good Death: Companion Animals and Euthanasia” (2018)

Unit 6. Intersectionality

4/6 Thu – **Paper Writing Workshop II**

- No new reading!

4/11 Tue – *Animal and Disability*

- Sunaura Taylor, “All Animals Are Equal (But Some Are More Equal Than Others)” in *Beasts of Burden: Animals and Disability Liberation* (2017)

4/13 Thu – *Animal and Gender*

- Carol Adams, “Masked Violence, Muted Voices” in *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (1990)

4/14 Fri – **Paper II Outline due!**

4/18 Tue – *Animal and Queerness*

- Emelia Quinn, “Vegan Studies and Queer Theory” (2022)

4/20 Thu – *Animal and Race*

- Excerpts from Aph Ko and Syl Ko, *Aphro-ism: Essays on Pop Culture, Feminism, and Black Veganism From Two Sisters* (2017)

4/25 Tue – *Entanglements of Oppression*

- David Nibert, excerpts from *Animal Rights/human Rights: Entanglements of Oppression and Liberation* (2002)

Exam Preparation

4/27 Thu – **Final Exam Review Session**

- No reading

5/1 Mon – **Paper II due!**

5/8 Mon – **Final Exam** (8:00am-11:00am)