

ANIMAL ETHICS 2024

**Professor Laura Ireland
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SYLLABUS AND COURSE INFORMATION

Class Meeting and Learning Management System Information

We meet on Thursdays, at 3:35-6:05 PM, in Oakes 208.

Office hours are by appointment by emailing lireland@vermontlaw.edu. I am generally available to meet the same day as your request, but will be able to make an appointment within 24 hours.

If you are unable to attend a class, please let me know and you can livestream class via Teams. I do not have discretion to count this as class attendance (see Attendance Policy below), but it is nevertheless the next-best option to attending in person if you are unable to be physically present for any reason, as it allows you to earn participation credit and participate in class discussion. Classes will also be recorded and available for you to watch via Teams if you are not able to livestream.

Canvas is the primary learning management system for this course, and you should already be signed up as a student for this course in Canvas. Updates to the syllabus, reading assignments, and more will be provided via Canvas.

Accommodations

Vermont Law and Graduate School is required by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities if such accommodations are necessary to provide equitable access to programs and services. Both the ADA and Section 504 protect students from discrimination and ensure reasonable accommodations. If you need accommodation, please contact VLGS's Section 504 Coordinator, Associate Dean of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Lisa Ryan, lryan@vermontlaw.edu, 802-831-1079. More information about accommodations at VLGS is available at <https://www.vermontlaw.edu/community/students/academic-success/accommodations>. The complete Disability Policy and Procedures is in the Student Handbook.

Attendance Policy

VLGS requires regular and punctual attendance in all classes. VLGS Academic Regulations provide that "[s]tudents who are absent from twenty (20%) percent of the regularly scheduled classes . . . shall be automatically withdrawn from the course with a grade of F/Wd." Because this class has fourteen meetings, this means that if

you miss 3 classes you will be automatically withdrawn from this class with a grade of F-Wd. Students are responsible for monitoring their own compliance with this policy. I do not have discretion to authorize additional absences, or to excuse absences, even if you attend class virtually via Teams (which I nevertheless encourage if it is not possible for you to attend in person, to earn participation credit, see Grading below). Because the attendance policy is part of the Academic Regulations, only the Committee on Standards can grant a waiver. If you have questions about filing a petition with the Committee on Standards, please contact Vice Dean for Students Professor Joe Brennan, jbrennan@vermontlaw.edu, 802-831-1244. In addition, missing classes, or arriving late to class, may impact your participation and professionalism grade in this class (see Grading below).

Grading

Students are expected to prepare for each class, and to participate actively and thoughtfully. I look forward to many interesting discussions of the cutting-edge issues we will address!

- Participation and Professionalism will be 25% of your grade. Regular and punctual attendance, demonstrated engagement with assigned materials, and respectful engagement with your peers. Absences, tardiness, and low class participation will impact your grade. Often, I will ask for individuals to take leadership roles on specific readings. This involves a brief synopsis of the reading and a leading question for the class to initiate discussion. You may earn participation credit by volunteering to participating in class discussions and/or emailing one to two paragraph reading reflections to lireland@vermontlaw.edu no later than 5PM the Wednesday before class. The reflection shouldn't merely the summarize the readings, but should discuss a particular aspect that struck you.
- The Midterm will be 25% of the grade. The paper will be approximately 5 pages (excluding bibliography) on a topic of personal interest assigned September 26 and due October 10.
- The Final Paper will be worth 50% of the final grade. At the end of the term, students will write a paper of approximately 10-15 pages (excluding bibliography) on a topic of personal interest assigned November 14 and due on December 20. Everyone will share a short presentation on their paper topic on the final day of class.

Class Preparation Expectations

Pursuant to VLGS's Credit Hours Policy, in addition to in-class time, for this three-credit class you are expected to spend at least six hours a week preparing for class. That outside work may include, but is not limited to: completing assigned readings and supplemental materials; researching and writing your paper; preparing

presentations; or meeting with the professor, writing specialist, librarians, or ASP mentors about work for this course.

Academic Honesty

The Vermont Law and Graduate School Honor Code and the Code of Ethics apply to all activities, assignment submissions, and conduct in this course. You are required to be familiar with the Honor Code. Student conduct in this course may not violate the Prohibited Conduct classes of violations recognized in the Honor Code (located in the Student Handbook).

Plagiarism is a class one violation of Vermont Law and Graduate School's Honor Code. The school uses various software programs to detect plagiarism in all forms. I will report any suspected cases of plagiarism to the Vice Dean for Students. Read the Vermont Law and Graduate School Student Handbook section on plagiarism and the article, "What You Don't Know Can Hurt You: How to Recognize Plagiarism and Avoid Committing It" prior to submitting your first assignment.

Additional Support

VLGS provides numerous additional resources to support your learning, including: - VLGS's Academic Success Program (ASP) provides various forms of support, including writing mentors, who are available to meet with you in the ASP office. - VLGS's Cornell Library has friendly librarians who are happy to help support your research endeavors. You can contact them at reference@vermontlaw.edu. You have my permission to meet with the Writing Specialist about your writing for this class prior to submitting it to me. To schedule a meeting, email WritingSpecialist@vermontlaw.edu.

Inclusive Classroom

In this class, we will work together to develop a learning community that is inclusive and respectful. We will be discussing sensitive topics and our thoughts and opinions will be influenced by our diverse backgrounds. Our diversity may be reflected by differences in race, ethnicity, culture, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, socioeconomic background, and myriad other social identities and life experiences. We will encourage and appreciate expressions of different ideas, opinions, and beliefs so that conversations and interactions that could potentially be divisive turn, instead, into opportunities for development.

Activation Acknowledgement

This class tackles difficult and sensitive topics, including violence inflicted on nonhuman animals, the relationship between violence targeted at nonhuman animals and violence toward humans, and fraught analogies between the oppression of humans and nonhumans. Course materials and discussions may well

prove challenging, and may activate past traumatic experiences. It is well documented that witnessing trauma endured by other beings—including secondhand witnessing through readings and other observations—can cause real traumatic effects on the observer, sometimes referred to as vicarious trauma. I've done my best to avoid gratuitous exposure to upsetting information and to limit such information to that which is essential to understanding core animal ethics concepts.

Please make sure to take care of yourself and each other, as that is an important component of studying and working with such information—and an important skill to develop. If you need to step out of class because a discussion is activating for you, and/or to skip participating in a particular discussion, that is okay. If, looking ahead on the syllabus, it seems that a particular topic is likely to be challenging for you, you are welcome—but by no means required—to share that with me privately in advance so that I can give you space.

Helpful resources:

- Pattrice Jones, “Aftershock: Confronting Trauma in a Violent World: A Guide for Activists and Their Allies” (2007)
- Taimie L. Bryant, *Trauma, Law, and Advocacy for Animals*, 1 J. ANIMAL L. & ETH. 63 (2006)
- Laura van Dernoot Lipsky, “Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others” (2009)

VLGS also provides a dedicated mental health clinician who is available to meet with you.

Background and Course Overview

Humans and animals have lived in mixed communities for thousands of years. They have shared relationships of affection as well as utility. Yet the dominant human relationship to animals is exploitative and harmful to animals in many contexts, especially farming, entertainment, sporting activities, and research. In about the last thirty or so years many people have come to recognize that human treatment of animals must improve for ethical reasons. This has led to steady law and policy reforms, and this trend continues in exciting, although often frustratingly slow, ways. *You* can help to improve the conditions for animals in so many incremental but significant ways even if your overall goal is to abolish their exploitation on all levels!

American and international animal policy and law is evolving often in response to explicit ethical and scientific arguments reasoning. Thus, it is practically as well as intellectually important to understand the varied ethical frameworks used to advocate for animals. Widespread changes in public attitudes toward animals and scientific studies of animal cognition and affective capacities (ethology) have

provided empirical data relevant to animal understanding and treatment, making it harder to retain the idea that humans are exceptional and should be treated as such. The text I have chosen, *Animals & Ethics*, by Angus Taylor is a very good introduction to basic animal issues that we will cover in the course. The ethics anthology assigned for the course, *The Animal Ethics Reader, Third Edition* (Armstrong & Botzler, Eds.) contains many of these empirical materials on the cognitive and affective characteristics of primates, farmed animals, and the relationships that animals form with each other and humans. I will integrate the anthology readings, and other selected readings and videos and posted on Canvas, with the text.

We will study animals in diverse contexts including companion animals, domesticated animals on farms, animals used for entertainment and in sports, those used in laboratory and field experiments, captive wildlife and animals in the wild.

The course will devote some attention to wildlife law and the protection of species, habitat, and systems. Wildlife law is designed to protect species, populations, and natural systems, and very little of this law considers the interests of individual animals. Students will examine selected environmental laws and their application. We will discuss how this holistically oriented law has diverged from law on individual animals. Animal and environmental law have traditionally developed in different directions, preventing constructive dialogue and integration of the two "fields." We will explore possibilities for cross-collaboration and strategic unity that could make both areas of law more powerful. We will explore ways for the individual animal welfare/rights approaches to join with ecological approaches to enhance both.

Learning Goals and Objectives

The most important aim of the course is to familiarize students with existing animal ethics approaches to domesticated, captive, and wild individual animals. It will also cover some more holistic environmental policy on wildlife and species. Because animal policy faces pressure to reform in response to rapidly developing scientific understanding of animals and evolving ethical norms, an important goal of the course will be to build creative reasoning skills. The course covers recent research on animal capacities and emphasizes incorporating empirical studies into ethical advocacy. The course will address various methods to prompt reform, such as shareholder advocacy, consumer movements, media education, and direct action. A separate course on animal law focuses on legal modes of change, which are, of course also relevant in an ethics course and will sometimes be mentioned as examples. A practical objective of the course is to consider career possibilities related to animal policy. A personal objective is to assist you in refining your own animal ethics.

COURSE TOPICS AND READINGS

Week 1: August 29

Introductions and syllabus review.

- **What is Moral Standing? Do Animals Have It?**
 - Animals & Ethics, pp. 7-31
- **History of Animal Ethics as A Movement**
 - Animals & Ethics, pp. 33-56
 - The Animal Ethics Reader, pp.1-12
 - Abbate, [Animal Ethics](#)
- **Watch “[Animal Ethics: Figuring Out What is Right and Wrong](#)”**
 - *optional* to read the [accompanying paper](#)

Week 2: September 5

- **Rights Discussion**
 - Animals and Ethics, pp. 57-73, 83-85
 - Animal Ethics Reader:
 - pp. 15-21 (Tom Regan)
 - pp. 26-31 (Paola Cavalieri)
 - pp. 665-671 (Steven Wise)
 - pp. 53-64 (Sue Donaldson & Will Kymlicka)

Week 3: September 12

Approaches to Animal Ethics (Theoretical Frameworks)

- **Utilitarianism**
 - Animals & Ethics: pp. 73-83
 - Animal Ethics Reader: pp. 32-41 (Peter Singer)
- **Contractarianism,**
 - Animals & Ethics: pp. 78-79
- **Feminism**
 - Animals & Ethics: pp. 79-83
 - Animal Ethics Reader: pp. 42-49 (Josephine Donovan)
- **Rights of Nature**
 - **Watch:** [Rights of Nature: A moral or a legal-political concept?](#)

Week 4: September 19

Approaches to Animal Ethics Continued (Theoretical Frameworks)

- **Virtue Ethics**
 - Animals & Ethics: p. 83
 - Rosalind Hursthouse, [Applying Virtue Ethics to the Treatment of the Other Animals](#)
- **Capabilities**
 - Animals & Ethics: pp. 85-89

- Martha Nussbaum, "[*Beyond "Compassion and Humanity"*](#)"
- **Watch:** "[Sentience Is More Complicated Than You Think](#)" by Dale Jamieson
- **Create an account** in aedilemma.net. Review the various views of morality, and choose at least one case on the main menu to help identify your views.

Supplemental Readings:

- Julia Driver, *Ethics: The Fundamentals*
- Lori Gruen, *Ethics and Animals: Chapter 1: Why Animals Matter*
- Gary Francione & Robert Garner, *The Animal Rights Debate*

Week 5: September 26

Animal Capacities

- Animal Ethics Reader: pp. 65-66
 - Methodology, pp. 83-86 (Barbara Smuts)
 - Pain, pp. 109-115 (Bernard Rollin)
 - Consciousness, pp. 140-148 (Donald Griffin & Gayle Speck)
- **Watch:** Lori Marino: "[The Synergism of Animal Law and Science](#)"
- **Midterm paper assigned**

Week 6: October 3

Animal Capacities Continued

- Animal Ethics Reader:
 - Self-Awareness, pp. 149-160 (David DeGrazia)
 - Psychology, pp. 185-195 (Kristin Andrews)
 - Marc Bekoff, [Animal Emotions: Exploring Passionate Natures](#)
 - Barbara J. King & Lori Marino, [Octopus Minds Must Lead to Octopus Ethics](#), 26 *Animal Sentience* (2019)
- **Watch:** "[What are Animals Thinking and Feeling?](#)"
- **Optional Watch** [Unlocking the Cage Documentary](#)

Week 7: October 10

Ethical Issues in Context: Raising and Eating Animals for Food

- Animals & Ethics: pp. 91-107
- Animal Ethics Reader:
 - pp. 251-257 (Temple Grandin)
 - pp. 281-286 (Carol Adams)
- Cora Diamond, Eating Meat and Eating People
- What are Farm Animals Thinking?
- **Watch** [The Ethics of Saving Animals: A Conversation between Elan Abrell and Lori Gruen](#)

- **Midterm paper due**

Supplemental Reading: Lori Gruen, *Ethics and Animals*: Chapter 3: Eating Animals

Week 8: October 17

Ethical Issues in Context: Religious Issues/Hunting & Trapping

Religion

- Animal Ethics Reader:
 - pp. 289-293 (David Mevorach Seidenberg)
 - 294- 300 (Andrew Linzey)
 - 295-303 (Martin Forward and Mohamed Alam)

Hunting

- Animals & Ethics: pp. 107-118; 168-169 (top)
- Animal Ethics Reader:
 - pp. 489-493 (Aldo Leopold)
 - 514- 522 (Alastair Gunn)
 - *Two additional readings to come*

Week 9: October 24

Ethical Issues in Context: Experimentation (including genetic)

- Animals & Ethics: pp. 119-145
- Animal Ethics Reader:
 - Basic Legal Framework, pp. 680-685 (Stephen Latham)
 - Common Sense Approach, 309-320 (Mylan Engel)
 - Rodents, pp. 339-346 (Lynda Birke)
 - A Moral Science, pp. 347-351 (Bernard Rollin)
 - Species Boundaries, pp. 405-414 (Jason Scott Robert & Francoise Baylis)
 - Genetic Engineering, pp. 449-455 (Bernard Rollin)
 - Animal Integrity, pp. 456-462 (Bernice Bovenkerk, Frans Brom & Babs van den Bergh)

Supplemental Reading: Lori Gruen, *Ethics and Animals*: Chapter 4: Experimenting with Animals

Week 10: October 31

Ethical Issues in Context: Animals in Captivity

- Animals & Ethics: pp. 169-174
- Animal Ethics Reader:
 - Zoos, pp. 576-582 (Dale Jameison); 582-590 (Michael Hutchins, Brandie Smith & Ruth Allard)
 - Captive Elephants, p. 575 (Kristin Vehrs)

- Captive Chimpanzees, pp. 196-201 (Jane Goodall)
- Cetacean Captivity, pp. 563-572 (Lori Marino)
- Releasing Captive Cetaceans, pp. 573-574 (Marc Scheff)
- **Watch:** "[Tokitae, Reflections on a Life: Evolving Science & the Need for Better Laws](#)"

Supplemental Reading:

- Lori Gruen, *Ethics and Animals*: Chapter 5: Dilemmas of Captivity
- The Politics of Zoos: Exotic Animals and Their Protectors (perspectives from the AZA)
- Zoo Ethics: The Challenges of Compassionate Conservation
- Explore the work of:
 - [The Nonhuman Rights Project](#).
 - [Whale Sanctuary Project](#)
- Cornell Library Resources:
 - Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Environmental Issues
 - Animal Behavior and Conservation
 - Wildlife, Wild Death
 - Animal Extinctions (Hoage)
 - The Palgrave Handbook of Practical Animal Ethics
 - Animals, Ethics and Trade
- [Zoos and Animal Rights: The Ethics of Keeping Animals](#)

Week 11: November 7

Ethical Issues in Context: Companion Animals

- Animal Ethics Reader:
 - pp. 613-615 (Paul Shepard)
 - pp. 619-621 (Freya Mathews)
 - pp. 646-649 (Diane Leigh & Marilee Geyer)
 - pp. 635-638 (Alan Brantley)
- Articles
 - "Pets": The Inherent Problems of Domestication
 - Should we stop keeping pets? Why more and more ethicists say yes
- **Watch:** "Animal Law and Youth Activism: Companion Animals"

Supplemental Materials:

- [Our Hen House Podcast](#): Why Mouse Meat? Because Animals
- "Our moral duties to ill and aging companion animals" in *The Palgrave handbook of practical animal ethics*
- [Companion Animal Ethics](#), Peter Sande
- The Ethics of Animal Shelters, [Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association](#)
- Explore [National Animal Interest Alliance](#)
- [Pet Ownership](#)

Week 12: November 14

Animal Advocacy and the Future: Compatibility of Animal and Environmental Ethics

- Animals & Ethics: pp. 147-174
- Animal Ethics Reader
 - Ecological Ethics, pp 387-394 Ben Minteer & James Collins
- Conservation and Individual Animals, Marc Bekoff & Camilla Fox
- Article to discuss: [US Government Wants Hunters to Shoot 500,000 Owls](#)

- **Final paper assigned**

Supplemental Readings:

- *Wildlife Law and Ethics: A U. S. Perspective* by Yolanda Einsenstein and Bruce Wagman
- *Animal Ethics and Animal Law* by Andrew Linzey and Claire Linzey (history and various theories of advancing legal protections for animals, including international case studies.)

Week 13: November 21

Animal Advocacy and the Future: Activist Strategies

- Non-Violence
 - Animals & Ethics, pp. 175-186
 - Animal Ethics Reader: pp. 696-700 (Tom Regan)
- Effective Altruism
 - Animal Ethics Reader: pp. 705-710 (Peter Singer)
- Animal Ethics Reader: pp711-719 (Matt Ball and Bruce Friedrich)

Supplemental Materials:

Lori Gruen, *Ethics and Animals*: Chapter 7: Action for Animals

Week 14: December 5

- Present final paper topics
- I encourage papers to be turned in by December 6, but they are due no later than December 18.

LEARNING OUTCOMES SUMMARY

At the end of the course, students should be able to:

- explain the main conceptual approaches to contemporary animal ethics
- identify strengths and flaws in the main conceptual approaches to animal ethics

- recognize ethical assumptions and reasoning in policy arguments about animal matters
- apply ethical concepts to factual situations involving animals
- discuss possible policy reforms using ethical reasoning about animals
- discuss possible policy reforms using empirical research about animals
- identify ethically relevant factors in animal case studies
- identify different courses of action for resolving animal case studies
- identify how animal justice affects the human and nonhuman quality of life
- make progress in developing and refining his or her personal animal ethics