

People and Animals

UHON 302-019 | T R | 12:30-1:45 | SHC 8 | 43650

Fulfills A&S Group IV: Social and Behavioral Sciences

Dr. Michael Thomas

Through all of human history, people have connected in the most intimate ways with other animals. The earliest known human remains are associated with the fossilized remains of other animals, animals which had been apparently hunted and eaten by our distant ancestors. The earliest art was devoted to the images of animals, animals humans needed, animals that excited the imagination. Much later, people revolutionized their way of life through domestication of several species. In modern times, human existence is utterly enmeshed with connections to other animals. We eat them (and they us). They compete with us for resources. They provide us with clothing, entertainment, companionship, aesthetic inspiration, selfless labor, and powerful metaphors for our religions and philosophies. We live in the company of animals. In this seminar students will be asked to study the nature of our relationships to other creatures. We will particularly focus on unpopular animals (vermin, outlaw animals, pests), animals that people despise and/or fear. Using approaches drawn from anthropology, economics, psychology, history, and ecology, we will explore these animals and our relation to them. As we do so, perhaps we can come to a deeper understanding of ourselves.

Readings

Temple Grandin: *Animals in Translation : Using the Mysteries of Autism to Decode Animal Behavior*, ISBN: 0743247698, Scribner Books and a series of readings featuring Peter Singer, Charles Darwin, Paul Shepherd, Aldo Leopold, Rachel Carson, Steven Gould, and others.

Requirements

Each student will focus on a particular animal and research both its natural history and its status in relation to humans. Requirements include:

- 1) Two research progress reports (oral) along with written 1-2 page synopses (10pts +10pts).
- 2) A final research paper (40pts)
- 3) A brief, research-based presentation based on the research (15pts).
- 4) Attend all classes, participate in all class activities, and maintain a courteous, professional demeanor. (25pts).

There will be two required Saturday field trips.

About the Instructor

Michael Thomas received his Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of Washington. He writes fiction and in the course of his life has owned and cared for dogs, cats, donkeys mules, horses, cattle, goats, sheep, pigs, chickens, turkeys, guinea fowl, parrots, parakeets, and fish. His novel, *OSTRICH* (U. Nevada Press 2000), which offers a humorous look at the place of animals in American life.

About the Student Teacher

Matthew Otero is a double major, pursuing a B.A. in Biology and a B.S. in Psychology. Upon completion of his undergraduate studies, Matthew is open to the idea of graduate school, but is also heavily interested in participating in the Teach For America or an AmeriCorps Service Volunteer program.