

Sustainability Learning and Teaching at the University of St Andrews

Case Study

Module Title: PY4647(Humans, Animals, and Nature)

School and Discipline: Department of Philosophy (School of Philosophical, Anthropological and Film Studies); counts toward the MA in Philosophy.



Background of Staff: Dr Benjamin Sachs. My Ph.D. is in philosophy. Animal ethics is one of my main research areas and I used to do a bit of research on environmental ethics. I've done lots of teaching in environmental ethics.

Student profile: This module is open only to students enrolled in single- or joint-honours with philosophy as the (a) subject. Typical enrolment is 20 students.

Module Descriptor:

The module aims, as stated in the module handbook, are as follows:

This module provides a basis for analysing various ethical questions concerning humankind's relationship with other animals. The first part of the course is devoted to questions regarding what individuals—you and I—owe to animals. We'll examine what various contemporary ethical theories have to say about these questions, and in addition we'll examine two particular questions—whether we should kill animals and whether we should genetically engineer them. The second part of the course is devoted to questions regarding what the state owes to animals. Each week in this part of the course we'll take up a new concept from political philosophy and ask whether and to what extent that concept can be sensibly applied to animals. The concern about whether the state should police nature will be a recurrent theme in this part of the course.

As mentioned in the module aims, one of the questions with which this module engages is that of policing nature—i.e. intervening so as to mitigate its endemic brutality. This is the aspect of the module that is most targeted at questions of sustainability. However, any module that challenges students to think about whether we should be raising and killing animals for food is, obviously, relevant to sustainability.

Context and Description:

I proposed this module in 2014 because I thought I would enjoy teaching it and because doing so would, I thought, answer to the university's desire for us all to be doing research-led teaching (I was doing research on animal ethics at the time, and still am). The idea and proposal were entirely my own and I have been sole lecturer on this module both times it has run.

How do students develop their capabilities on this module?

This is a module in moral philosophy and as such it is entirely concerned with matters of ethics and justice. It engages with the question of how much well-being the lives of animals have and what trade-offs there are between animal well-being and human well-being. Furthermore, it encourages students to think about their own choices (e.g. whether to eat meat) and the ethical implications of those choices. It also requires students to deliberate about whether and how political systems can and should be changed so as to give a voice to animals.

As with almost any honours-level philosophy module—and certainly all of those that I coordinate—there is a heavy emphasis in this module on critical thinking. Students are expected to critically analyse texts, argue and debate with their fellow students (and me), and through this process begin to develop their own original perspectives on the central questions of the module.

Assessment:

All of the assessment for this module is by way of written material—material in which the students are expected to ask good, critical questions and develop their ideas about the issues being discussed. Specifically, the students are required to write two essays and make a weekly blog post.

Innovative approaches:

For the two essays, the students are forced to come up with their own topic (from within the general domain of the themes of the module). They are supposed to first get approval for that topic from me and then they are required to submit an essay outline, which is returned to them with comments. Only then do they write the essay itself. For the weekly blog, the students are supposed to do the set reading for that week first and then post a question, comment or objection regarding that reading. Each student's blog post is visible to the rest of the students and they're allowed to post in response to each other. I often used blog posts as a way to kick off discussion in seminar.

All philosophy honours modules involve 3 classroom hours per week. Unlike most other philosophy honours modules, however, in PY4647 the 3 weekly hours are divided into a 1-hour lecture and a 2-hour seminar. The benefit of this, and its main motivation, is to give students more space to debate, question, and develop their own thoughts in the somewhat less structured context of a seminar discussion.

Student and staff feedback:

Student MEQ feedback on PY4647 has generally been quite positive. For the 2017 version of the module, the average response to the prompt, “Overall, I rate this module” was 2.21. Some of the most favourable MEQ comments regarding the module have been:

- “This was definitely one of my favourite modules so far, and it was taught very well and clearly.”
- “Dr. Sachs always made himself available and I really appreciated this. He promptly replied to emails and was able to help when I needed it. I also appreciate the diversity in the material, and how it linked up together at times...I felt the readings were also really relevant and interesting, and I appreciated how there was continuity between material in the lecture and then [sic] readings that were assigned (i.e. Dr Sachs would refer to them and explain them in advance to place them in context) Overall I really enjoyed the module and would thoroughly recommend it!”
- “The two-hour tutorials are excellent. Always well organised and interesting. A big step up in from other honours classes I've taken with only one-hour tutorial sessions.”
- “The two hour seminar was helpful to cover both readings.”
- “Two hour tutorials are also brilliant as they allow you to properly discuss topics not brush over them...”
- “The structure of the module was excellent - I thoroughly enjoyed the 1 hour lecture with a 2 hour seminar. I found that the longer seminar made the material more accessible, and definitely prepared me for engaging with the material in the assigned coursework.”
- “I thought the blog was really helpful because it required more than merely reading the weekly papers and hoping for the best. It was helpful to direct more focus on what the inconsistencies or strengths of these papers were in order to speak and write more confidently about the topic.”
- “The blog has been really helpful in encouraging clarity in my writing.”
- “The blog posts helped force me to look back on what I had read and take away the major points.”

Sustainability learning and teaching resource recommendations for other staff:

As mentioned above, each time the students in PY4647 were required to write an essay they were required to submit an outline first, which was returned to them with comments. I developed an essay outline template for the students, so as to make it easy for them to produce a good outline. I'm happy to provide this template upon request.

Handbook & Reading List

Please see Appendix 1 for 2016-17 Module outline and reading list for the most recent version of PY4647: Humans, Animals and Nature.

Appendix 1: Module Outline and Reading List

***Please include an image for your case study.**

Appendix 1: Module outline for PY4647 Humans, Animals and Nature

Humans, Animals, and Nature

PY4647

Semester 2, 2016-17

Module Coordinator

Ben Sachs, Lecturer in Philosophy

Office Hours: By appointment and (beginning in week 2) Wednesdays 11-1

Office: Edgecliffe B09

Office Phone: 01334 464439

Email: bas7@st-andrews.ac.uk

Module Aims: This module provides a basis for analysing various ethical questions concerning humankind's relationship with other animals. The first part of the course is devoted to questions regarding what individuals—you and I—owe to animals. We'll examine what various contemporary ethical theories have to say about these questions, and in addition we'll examine two particular questions—whether we should kill animals and whether we should genetically engineer them. The second part of the course is devoted to questions regarding what the state owes to animals. Each week in this part of the course we'll take up a new concept from political philosophy and ask whether and to what extent that concept can be sensibly applied to animals. The concern about whether the state should police nature will be a recurrent theme in this part of the course.

Learning Outcomes: By the end of this module, students should have gained a good critical understanding of the most influential philosophical perspectives on the relationship between humans, animals, and nature. Students will be able to analyse and evaluate critical discussion of this issue in contemporary literature, formulate and articulate their own views on it, and provide a rational defence of these views in written work and discussion.

To these ends, the requirements of the module are: attending all classes, preparing for seminars by doing the assigned readings and preparing to discuss them, and completing all formal assessment.

Course Materials:

- Required (and available at Blackwell's): Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights* (OUP 2011).
- All other readings will be easily available, some on the library's Online Reading List system (where noted ("LORL")), some on MMS (where noted), some on the web (where noted) and some via the library's electronic resources (check for yourself). Everything I'm assigning is a published piece of work. Although you might be able to find pre-publication versions of some of these items, your instruction in each case is to download and read the *published* version.

Lectures: Monday 10-11 in Arts Seminar Room 5

Seminars: Friday 11-1 in Edgecliffe G01, Friday 3-5 in Edgecliffe G01

Seminar sign-up: A sign-up system has been set up on MMS, and you will be able to sign up for a seminar as soon as the first lecture is over. Log in to MMS and click on 'tutorial sign-up' for this module, view the groups and sign up to one of them.

Assessment:

<u>Item</u>	<u>Portion of Overall Mark</u>
Weekly Blog Entries	10%
Essay/Essay Outline 1—Material from Part 1	45%

Blog Entries: You are required to make a blog posting before each of the weeks 1-11 seminars. That’s 11 postings, each worth one point, for a maximum of 11 points total. The blog can be found on the module’s Moodle page. Further instructions will be provided in a separate handout.

Essay/Essay Outlines

Prompt: Write an essay that makes an original contribution to some debate that came up during the designated Part of the course. For each essay you are required first to submit an essay outline, which I will comment on and give back to you. The topic for each essay will normally be settled through my approval of your essay outline, though in some cases the topic will be settled through a separate discussion between you and me.

- The word limit for each essay is 3000.
- The expectations for each essay/essay outline will be described in a separate handout.
- All outlines and essays are to be submitted on MMS.
- The University’s policy on plagiarism will be enforced, and can be found at www.st-andrews.ac.uk/staff/policy/tlac/academicmisconduct/academicmisconduct/.

Assignment Schedule

	Outline Due	Feedback Provided By	Essay Due
Essay 1	8 Mar	14 Mar	29 Mar
Essay 2	28 Apr	2 May	17 May

Topics and Readings

PART 1: ETHICAL QUESTIONS ABOUT HUMANS AND ANIMALS

Week 1: Moral Individualism

The prevailing view among philosophers is that an individual’s species membership doesn’t make a difference to how we’re permitted to treat that individual. How should our moral reasoning about our treatment of animals proceed in the absence of some consideration of their species status?

Required Readings:

Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation*, chap. 1 (LORL)
 James Rachels, “Drawing Lines”

Further Readings:

Aristotle, *Physics*, Book II, chaps. 3,8; *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I, chaps. 1,2,7
 Philippa Foot, *Natural Goodness*, chap. 2
 Micah Lott, “Have Elephant Seals Refuted Aristotle? Nature, Function and Moral Goodness”
 Ben Dixon, “Darwinism and Human Dignity”
 Mark Greene, “On the Origin of Species Notions and Their Ethical Limitations”
 Shelly Kagan, “What’s Wrong with Speciesism?”
 Jeff McMahan, “Our Fellow Creatures”
 Jason Wyckoff, “Analysing Animality: A Critical Approach”

Week 2: Utilitarianism and Animals

Utilitarianism has generally been seen as very friendly to animals. But things are more complex than they seem.

Required Readings:

Peter Singer, “Killing Humans and Killing Animals” (LORL)
 Gary L. Francione, “Taking Sentience Seriously”

Further Readings:

Mark Budolfson, "You Don't Make a Difference: The Inefficacy Objection and the Problem with the Singer/Norcross/Kagan Response"

Alasdair Cochrane, "From Human Rights to Sentient Rights"

Week 3: Contractarianism and Animals

Contractarianism has generally been understood as being unable to accommodate the direct moral significance of what moral agents do to animals. However, various contemporary contractarians are questioning that understanding.

Required Readings:

Mark Rowlands, *Animal Rights: Moral Theory and Practice*, chap. 6. (LORL)

Robert Garner, "Rawls, Animals, and Justice: New Literature, Same Response"

Further Readings:

Andrew Cohen, "Contractarianism and Interspecies Welfare Conflicts"

Alastair Norcross, "Contractualism and the Ethical Status of Animals" (MMS)

Mark Coeckelbergh, "Distributive Justice and Co-Operation in a World of Humans and Non-Humans: A Contractarian Argument for Drawing Non-Humans into the Sphere of Justice"

Week 4: Neo-Kantianism and Animals

Kant was renowned for saying that humans have no duties to animals. But various neo-Kantians believe that Kant misunderstood the implications of his own theory, and they propose that Kantianism supports the conclusion that harming or killing animals can be wrong in itself.

Required Readings:

Christine Korsgaard, "Fellow Creatures: Kantian Ethics and our Duties to Animals"

Jens Timmermann, "When the Tail Wags the Dog: Animal Welfare and Indirect Duty in Kantian Ethics"

Further Readings:

Lara Denis, "Kant's Conception of Duties Regarding Animals: Reconstruction and Reconsideration"

Allen Wood, "Kant on Duties Regarding Nonrational Nature"

Emer O'Hagan, "Animals, Agency, and Obligation in Kantian Ethics"

Week 5: Challenges to Moral Individualism, Part 1: The Ethics of Killing

If species membership is irrelevant, then how can we accommodate the idea that it's more seriously wrong to kill a human than it is to kill an animal?

Required Reading:

Jeff McMahan, *The Ethics of Killing*, pp. 145-74

Jeff McMahan, "Challenges to Human Equality"

Further Reading:

Eva Feder Kittay, "At the Margins of Moral Personhood"

Rahul Kumar, "Permissible Killing and the Irrelevance of Being Human"

Jeff McMahan, "Eating Animals the Nice Way" (MMS)

Week 6: Challenges to Moral Individualism, Part 2: The Ethics of Genetic Engineering

Can a moral individualist make sense of the apparent goods or bads that genetic engineering might deliver, having discarded the idea that being rendered more or less well-off than other members of one's species is morally relevant?

Required Readings:

Bernard Rollin, "On *Telos* and Genetic Engineering" (LORL)

Jeff McMahan, "Cognitive Disability and Cognitive Enhancement" (LORL)

Further Readings:

John Basl and Ronald Sandler, "The Good of Non-sentient Entities: Organisms, Artifacts, and Synthetic Biology" (LORL)

Jeff McMahan, "Cognitive Disability, Misfortune, and Justice"

Jeff McMahan, "Radical Cognitive Limitation"

PART 2: THE POLITICAL AND LEGAL STATUS OF ANIMALS AND NATURE

Week 7: Liberalism

Required Readings:

Martha Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice*, chap. 6 (LORL)

Kimberly Smith, *Governing Animals*, chap. 5

Further Readings:

Elizabeth Cripps, "Saving the Polar Bear, Saving the World: Can the Capabilities Approach do Justice to Humans, Animals and Ecosystems?"

Simon Hailwood, "Bewildering Nussbaum: Capability Justice and Predation"

Kimberly Smith, "Animals and the Social Contract: A Reply to Nussbaum" (LORL)

Anders Schinkel, "Martha Nussbaum on Animal Rights"

Ramona Ilea, Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach and Nonhuman Animals: Theory and Public Policy"

Martha Nussbaum, "The Capabilities Approach and Animal Entitlements"

Gary Steiner, "Toward a Non-Anthropocentric Cosmopolitanism"

Week 8: Citizenship

Required Reading:

Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, *Zoopolis*, chaps. 1-5

Further Readings:

Emma Planinc, "Democracy, Despots and Wolves: On the Dangers of *Zoopolis*'s Animal Citizen" (LORL)

Eva Meijer, "Interspecies Democracies"

Kimberly Smith, *Governing Animals*, chap. 4

Will Kymlicka and Sue Donaldson, "Animals and the Frontiers of Citizenship"

Week 9: Sovereignty

Required Readings:

Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, *Zoopolis*, chap. 6

Oscar Horta, "Zoopolis, Intervention, and the State of Nature"

Further Readings:

Christine Korsgaard, "Kantian Ethics, Animals, and the Law"

Alasdair Cochrane, "*Cosmozoopolis*: The Case Against Group-Differentiated Animal Rights"

Josh Milburn, “Rabbits, Stoats and the Predator Problem: Why a Strong Animal Rights Position Need not Call for Human Intervention to Protect Prey from Predators”
William Edmundson, “Do Animals Need Citizenship?”

Week 10: Denizenship

Required Readings:

Clare Palmer, “Placing Animals in Urban Environmental Ethics”
Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, *Zoopolis*, chap. 7

Further Readings:

None

Week 11: Legal Personhood

Background Readings:

Ngairé Naffine, “Who are Law’s Persons? From Cheshire Cats to Responsible Subjects”
Transcript of Habeas Corpus hearing in the matter of The Nonhuman Rights Project v. State University of New York at Stony Brook (2015) (start at p. 31 line 6 and read to the end) (MMS)

Required Readings:

Alasdair Cochrane, “Ownership and Justice for Animals”
Andreas Schmidt, “Property or Persons—Freedom and the Legal Status of Animals”

Further Readings:

Robert Garner, “Political Ideology and the Legal Status of Animals”
Cass Sunstein, “Standing for Animals (with Notes on Animal Rights)”
Gary Francione, “Reflections on *Animals, Property, and the Law* and *Rain without Thunder*”
Oregon v. Newcomb (2016) (web)
Steven M. Wise, “Hardly a Revolution—The Eligibility of Nonhuman Animals for Dignity-Rights in a Liberal Democracy”
Emily Fitzgerald, “[Ape]rsonhood”
Ngairé Naffine, *Law’s Meaning of Life*, Ch. 10 (LORL)
Richard Epstein, “Animals as Objects...” in Sunstein & Nussbaum (eds.), *Animals Rights*