



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

SOCI8033

Co-presence: Human-animal Relationships in Modern Cities

2025/26, Semester 2

Table of contents

Table of contents	p.2
Course information	p.3
Instructor contact information	
Course overview/description	
Course learning goals	p.4
Course schedule	p.5
Coursework and grading scheme	pp.6-13
Assessment ratios and submission dates	
Detailed instructions	
Grading rubrics	
Course materials	pp.14-15
Technology	
Readings	
Course policies	pp.16-18
Presence and participation	
Deadlines and late submissions	
Coursework feedback policy	
Academic honesty and plagiarism	
Use of Generative AI	
Course privacy statement	
Research ethics	
Student feedback on learning experience	
Academic success	
Writing/presentation skills	
Student wellbeing	
Special educational needs support	
Detailed course outline	pp.20-29

Course information

Course code:	SOCI8033
Course title:	Co-presence: Human-animal Relationships in Modern Cities
Offer Year / Semester:	2025/26, Semester 2
Lecture times:	Wednesday, 7:00-9:50 pm (CPD-LG.18)
Course Moodle:	https://moodle.hku.hk/course/view.php?id=132201

Instructor contact information

Course instructors

Lecturer: Dr. Carmen TONG (ckmtong@hku.hk)
Rm 911, The Jockey Club Tower, Centennial Campus

Student consultation hours: by appointment

Course overview/description

Animals are everywhere in modern societies - on the Internet, in the media, and as symbols in our languages and cultural practices. Animals are also nowhere in modern cities - factory farms and slaughter houses are obscured, wild animals are segregated, and urban animals are managed. Except for the animals people brought in their homes as pets and those kept in entertainment facilities, we live separate lives.

In a globalised world amidst environmental crisis, consumption ethics and justice, the entanglement and future of human-animal relationships have become an increasingly urgent topic of inquiry. Is vegetarianism simply another dietary trend? Could companion animals fill the lonely hearts of city dwellers? How should we get rid of cruelty and violence against animals? Should animals have a rightful place in our legal system? Is there a species specific boundary of ethics and biotechnology? These are a few among many questions we face with human-animal co-presence in modern cities.

In this course, we will set our scope of inquiry under the discipline of Human Animal Studies and reflect our manifold relationships with animals, especially through the media representations and cultural practices in modern cities, with particular connections to local experiences in Hong Kong.

Course learning goals

Upon completion of the course, you will be able to:

Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)	MCCC Programme Learning Outcome	Criminology Programme Learning Outcome	Sociology Programme Learning Outcome
1. Understand key theoretical concepts and debates in human-animal studies and human-animal relationships.	1, 3, 4, 6	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	1, 3, 4, 5
2. Reflect on their daily interactions with animals and consumption of animal products in relations to global connection and development.	1, 3, 4, 6	3, 4, 6	2, 3, 4, 5
3. Understand the importance of human decision and habits in affecting the lives and welfare of animals in urban cities.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	1, 2, 3, 4, 5
4. Aware of the global development of animal rights movement and the relevance to human/animal liberation and the environment.	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Course schedule

Week	Date	
1	21 Jan	Topic 1. Beyond species - intersectionality and the reflexive human self
2	28 Jan	Topic 2. The culture of meat - domestication and production of animals as food
3	4 Feb	Topic 3. Food autonomy - consumption, choices and identities
4	11 Feb	Topic 4. Made of animals - the goods, the styles, and the ethics
	18 Feb	Public holiday - no class
5	25 Feb	Topic 5. Keeping pets - affection and emotional consumption
6	4 Mar	Topic 6. Animal spectatorship - from captivity to ecotourism
7	11 Mar	Reading week - no class
8	18 Mar	Topic 7. Thinking with animals - representations in media and popular culture
9	25 Mar	Topic 8. Violence against animals
10	1 Apr	Topic 9. Moral and legal status of animals - protection and rights
11	8 Apr	Topic 10. A post-human future? Biotechnology and human/animal liberation
12	15 Apr	no class (<i>unless an extra session for group presentations is needed</i>)
13	22 Apr	Group presentations
14	29 Apr	Group presentations

Coursework and grading scheme

Assessment ratios and submission dates

Assessment item	% of overall grade	CLO addressed	Submission deadline
Participation and class discussion	15%	2, 3, 4	N/A
Reading discussion (group work)	15%	1, 2, 3	TBD - check Moodle in week 3 (slides submission via Moodle on presentation day)
Project presentation (group work)	20%	1, 2, 3, 4	Last 2 lessons (slides submission via Moodle on presentation day)
Reflective essay	20%	1, 2, 3	23:59, 27 Feb 2026 (submission via Moodle)
Final project	30%	1, 2, 3, 4	23:59, 6 May 2026 (submission via Moodle)

Detailed instructions

Participation and class discussion

As this course focuses on active learning, class participation is very important. We will have class discussion weekly in the last hour and/or after student presentation at each lecture. Students are expected to share their experience or observations actively. Let's make our classroom an interactive learning space.

Readings discussion

Students will take turns to share their understanding and comments on a key reading. You will work in a small group (number of students in a group depends on class size) and summarise and highlight the key ideas of a reading in around 5 minutes, and then prepare related questions to discuss with the class in another 15 minutes.

Project presentation

You will participate in a group presentation. Group presentation is to test the collective effort in examining human-animal relationships by engaging with relevant theories and perspectives appropriately and creatively. The class will be divided into small groups depending on the class size. Each group will be responsible for presenting the features/issues/problems of a particular human-animal relationship.

Rather than merely repeating the discussion in lecture or presenting the ideas of the readings, you are expected to add a dimension of daily life by drawing everyday examples or case studies in modern society. You may collect media images, edit clips of TV dramas/movies, and/or make use of studies from literature to help illustrate your understanding of concepts and academic debates.

The group project presentations will be conducted in the last 2 weeks in the semester. Each group presentation should be around 15 minutes, followed by a 5 minutes Q&A session.

Reflective essay

Among our many relationships with non-human animals, to kill and consume them is the most frequent and normalised relationship for most of us. Indeed, our dietary habits in modern days are resulted from complex interplay of historical, cultural, technical, political and legal developments to become our individual dietary choices and preferences. In this assignment, you are to reflect your encounters of (not) eating animals in the culture of meat, then further discuss with the possibilities and constraints of food autonomy. The essay is expected to be in around 1,500 words. and it must also be filled with perspectives learnt from course materials/readings.

**Note: Please attach the [Assignment Cover Sheet](#) when submitting your essay.*

Final project

You are to conduct a project about an animal in modern society. The purpose is to cultivate reflexive and empathetic understandings of non-human animals living among us. Henceforth, alternative practices for a sustainable co-presence of all beings could be promoted.

Part 1: Factsheets

The first part of the project involves secondary research about the empirical facts of a non-human animal in a particular society (e.g. dogs in Yulin China, wild boars in Hong Kong) You are suggested to set a feasible time frame (e.g. the past 2 years/during the COVID pandemic). You may choose to work on this part on your own or with a few of your classmates.

Part 2: Animal voices

The second part of the project is a creative and reflective writing. You are to write, individually, a story/narrative/biography *AS* and *FOR* the animal bases on the empirical facts you have collected in Part 1. The goal is to imagine the lived experience of the animal, to portray related human-animal relationship(s) from

the angle of the animal, and to reveal the social, cultural, moral and/or legal arrangements that affect the animal's life.

The discussion of social, cultural, moral and/or legal arrangements in society needs to be supported by course materials/readings and/or other literature.

Lastly, evaluate the pros and cons of anthropomorphising/speaking for animals.

Part 1 should be at around 500 words (x number of students working together) and the format is flexible. Part 2 should be in around 2,500 words.

**Note:*

1. *If you work on your own, combine your Part 1 and Part 2 in one file and submit at the Part 2 tab on Moodle. Please attach the [Assignment Cover Sheet](#) at the beginning of your file.*
2. *If you work together with other students, only 1 submission of Part 1 as a group is needed. Please attach the [Assignment Cover Sheet](#) at the beginning of your individual Part 2 file.*

Useful references for the project (available on Moodle):

Armbruster, K. 2013. What Do We Want from Talking Animals? Reflections on Literary Representations of Animal Voices and Minds, in Demello, M. ed. *Speaking for Animals: Animal Autobiographical Writing*. New York: Routledge.

Baker, T.C. 2019. Introduction: Literary Animals, in *Writing Animals: Language, Suffering and Animality in Twenty-First-Century Fiction*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Savvides, N. 2013. Speaking for Dogs: The Role of Dog Biographies in Improving Canine Welfare in Bangkok, Thailand, in Demello, M. ed. *Speaking for Animals: Animal Autobiographical Writing*. New York: Routledge.

Grading rubrics

Reflective Essay & Final Project

	Grade A 85-70	Grade B 69-60	Grade C 59-50	Grade D 49-40	Fail 39-0
Addressing the Task	Identifies and addresses clearly the main question(s) and the subsidiary, embedded, or implicit aspects, addressing their relationships to each other.	Identifies and addresses the main question(s) and most of the subsidiary, embedded or implicit aspects.	Identifies and addresses the main question(s) and some of the subsidiary, embedded or implicit aspects.	Identifies part of the main question(s) and a few of the subsidiary, embedded or implicit aspects but only addresses them partially.	Lacks an understanding of what the question requires or responds inappropriately or tangentially to the task or topic.
Understanding, Analysis, Synthesis, and Application of Knowledge	Consistent perceptive and critical engagement with issues and themes based on comprehensive understanding of relevant concepts and theories. The analysis, synthesis and application of knowledge is consistently clear and effective.	Frequent perceptive and critical engagement with issues and themes. The analysis, synthesis and application of knowledge is generally clear and effective but occasional shortcomings in understanding of relevant concepts and theories are evident.	Overall, some perceptive and critical engagement with issues and themes. The analysis, synthesis and application of knowledge is mostly clear and effective but the essay in parts reveals rather superficial understanding of relevant concepts and theories.	Occasional critical engagement with key issues and themes but in general rarely goes beyond reproduction of relevant concepts and theories, impaired in parts by considerable inaccuracies.	An absence of critical engagement with issues and themes. Writing characterized by serious inaccuracies and misunderstandings.
Argumentation	Examines the question/issue/problem from all important perspectives. Overall logic is clear. Premises or evidence strongly support conclusions. Counter-evidence or rival positions addressed. Arguments fit together and build a compelling case.	Examines the question/issue/problem from most of the important perspectives. Expresses own position, and argumentative structure is clear and logical, but some arguments underdeveloped or some considerations overlooked.	Examines the question/issue/problem from some of the important perspectives. Not all relevant arguments and counter arguments are fully examined. Offers own position but reasoning is sometimes impaired by weak or inconsistent argumentation.	Examines the question/issue from a single perspective. Only minimal examination of relevant arguments and counterarguments. Offers own position, but the arguments are not put forward explicitly and not sufficiently supported.	Arguments are confused and illogical. Student fails to present and defend a coherent position. Offers own position, but arguments are flawed, disorganized, or difficult to identify or understand.

Structure / Organization	Introduction clearly states thesis or position, and conclusion clearly summarizes main arguments. Paragraphing is appropriate at all times with each paragraph containing a central idea which is developed throughout the paragraph with supporting details.	Introduction adequately states thesis or position, and conclusion summarizes main arguments. Paragraphing is appropriate, but some paragraphs lack supporting detail or contain unrelated details.	Introduction and conclusion are included and generally capture the essence of the topic and discussion. Evidence of ability to paragraph, but some paragraphs lack a central idea or supporting detail.	Introduction and conclusion do not adequately capture the essence of the topic and discussion in relation to body paragraphs. Ability to construct a paragraph with a central idea and supporting details is evident at times but somewhat limited.	Introduction and conclusion are unclear, lack detail or missing altogether. Very little evidence of an ability to organize the essay into paragraphs with one central idea and supporting details.
Mechanics	The language contains very few, if any, errors in grammar and vocabulary. If slips are present, the meaning is still clear. Conventions of academic writing (e.g. citation, references, footnotes, etc.) are followed meticulously and consistently.	The language is generally accurate but contains some systematic errors in complex grammar and vocabulary. Conventions of academic writing (e.g. citation, references, footnotes, etc.) are followed apart from the occasional oversight.	The language is mostly accurate. Errors, when they occur, are more often in complex grammar and vocabulary. Errors are distracting but the overall meaning is still intelligible. Conventions of academic writing (e.g. citation, references, footnotes, etc.) are followed but at times inconsistencies and/or errors occur.	The language is sufficient for arguments to be understood with effort. However, the language contains frequent errors in simple and complex grammar and vocabulary that are distracting. Conventions of academic writing (e.g. citation, references, footnotes, etc.) are followed but show many inconsistencies and/or errors.	Errors in language and vocabulary are so frequent and distracting that the essay is largely incomprehensible. Does not adhere to the conventions of academic writing (e.g. citation, references, footnotes, etc.).

Readings Discussion & Project Presentation (group work)

	Grade A 85-70	Grade B 69-60	Grade C 59-50	Grade D 49-40	Fail 39-0
Addressing the Task	Identifies and addresses clearly the main question(s) and the subsidiary, embedded, or implicit aspects, addressing their relationships to each other.	Identifies and addresses the main question(s) and some but not all of the subsidiary, embedded or implicit aspects.	Identifies and addresses the main question(s) but does not address the subsidiary, embedded or implicit aspects.	Identifies part of the main question(s) and only addresses the question(s) partially.	Lacks an understanding of what the question requires or responds inappropriately or tangentially to the task or topic.
Understanding, Analysis, Synthesis, and Application of Knowledge	Consistent perceptive and critical engagement with issues and themes based on comprehensive understanding of relevant concepts and theories; the analysis, synthesis and application of knowledge is consistently clear and effective.	Generally perceptive and critical engagement with issues and themes; some shortcomings in understanding of relevant concepts and theories, but the analysis, synthesis and application of knowledge is mostly clear and effective.	Occasional perceptive and critical engagement with issues and themes, but essay tends toward rather superficial understanding of relevant concepts and theories, with some inaccuracies in the analysis, synthesis and application of knowledge.	Very limited critical engagement with key issues and themes; rarely goes beyond reproduction of relevant concepts and theories, impaired in parts by considerable inaccuracies.	No critical engagement with issues, and themes. Essay characterized by serious inaccuracies and misunderstanding s.
Argumentation	Examines the question/ issue/ problem from all important perspectives. Overall logic is clear. Premises or evidence strongly support conclusions. Counter-evidence or rival positions addressed. Arguments fit together and build a compelling case.	Examines the question/ issue/ problem from most of the important perspectives. Expresses own position, and argumentative structure is clear and logical, but some arguments underdeveloped or some considerations overlooked.	Some important perspectives or issues are not recognized. Not all relevant arguments and counter arguments are fully examined. Offers own position but reasoning is sometimes impaired by weak, emotive, or inconsistent argumentation.	Examines things from a single perspective. Only minimal examination of relevant arguments and counterarguments. Offers own position, but the arguments are not put forward explicitly and not well supported.	Arguments are confused and illogical. Student fails to present and defend a coherent position. Offers own position, but arguments are flawed, disorganized, or difficult to identify or understand.

Structure / Organization	The presentation provides an outline which clearly introduces the structure and a conclusion that clearly summarizes the main ideas / arguments. Transitions from one main idea / argument to the next are always clear to the listener through the use of signaling phrases such as “the next point” “the final section” etc.	The presentation provides an outline which introduces the structure and a conclusion that summarizes the main ideas / arguments but one or both could be more comprehensive. Transitions from one main idea / argument to the next are almost always clear to the listener through the use of signaling phrases such as “the next point” “the final section” etc. The listener is always able to follow the development of the main arguments.	The presentation attempts to provide an outline which introduces the structure and / or a conclusion that summarizes the main ideas / arguments. If both are present, one or both may be unclear or lacking in enough detail. Transitions from one main idea / argument are sometimes unclear to the listener through a lack of or unclear use of signaling phrases such as “the next point” “the final section” etc. However, the listener is able to follow the development of most of the main arguments.	The presentation fails to provide an outline which introduces the structure of the presentation or a conclusion that summarizes the main ideas / arguments. If one is present, it is unclear or lacking in enough detail to be useful to the listener. Transitions from one main idea / argument are often unclear to the listener through a lack of or unclear use of signaling phrases such as “the next point..” “the final section..” etc. However, the listener is able to follow the development of some of the main arguments.	There is no outline or conclusion. Transitions from one main idea / argument are unclear because of a lack of signaling. The listener is not able to follow the development of any of the main arguments.
Delivery	Presenter(s) adhere strictly to time limits set. Presenter(s) engage the audience at all times through the skillful use of eye contact, gestures, variation in voice, attractive and professional looking visual aids.	Presenter(s) adhere strictly to time limits set. Presenter(s) engage the audience through the use of eye contact, gestures, variation in voice, attractive and professional looking visual aids although one or two of these could be done better in places.	Presenter(s) may be slightly off the time limits set. Presenter(s) engage the audience most of the time through the use of eye contact, gestures, variation in voice, attractive and professional looking visual aids although one or two are ineffective in parts of the presentation.	Presenter(s) may be significantly off the time limits set. Presenter(s) attempt to engage the audience some of the time through the use of eye contact, gestures, variation in voice, attractive and professional looking visual aids but with limited overall effectiveness.	Presenter(s) do not adhere to the time limits set. Presenter(s) seem to make little attempt to engage the audience eye contact, gestures, variation in voice, attractive and professional looking visual aids. All are ineffective throughout the presentation.
Mechanics	Spoken language is always accurate, comprehensible, fluent, and precise. Pronunciation is clear at all times. Any grammatical errors are infrequent and do not draw the listener’s attention.	Spoken language is mostly accurate, comprehensible, fluent and precise with a few hesitations. Pronunciation is generally clear. Any grammatical errors are infrequent and only rarely draw the listener’s attention.	Spoken language is generally comprehensible and fluent but not always accurate and precise. At times, strain is placed on the listener, especially because of hesitations and/ or pronunciation and grammar.	The language is often inaccurate and imprecise and occasionally incomprehensible but most of the main arguments can be followed with effort. Quite frequent strain is placed on the listener, especially because of hesitations and/ or pronunciation and grammar.	The language is mostly incomprehensible and many of the main arguments are unclear, especially because of frequent hesitations in almost every sentence and/ or pronunciation and grammar.

Marking Scale

Mark	Grade	Standard	Grade Point
80 and above	A+*	Excellent	4.3
75 - 79	A		4.0
70 - 74	A-		3.7
67 - 69	B+	Good	3.3
63 - 66	B		3.0
60 - 62	B-		2.7
57 - 59	C+	Satisfactory	2.3
53 - 56	C		2.0
50 - 52	C-		1.7
46 - 49	D+	Pass	1.3
40 - 45	D		1.0
less than 40	F	Fail	0

* A+ = (80% - 85%)

Course materials

Technology: You will need to have access to a device that connects to the internet so that you can access email and the course Moodle. All course details and materials will be posted on the Moodle course site. Please remember to check the course Moodle page and your HKU email account regularly. For tech support, see [Information Technology Services](#).

Readings:

The followings are key and suggested readings, and recommended journals for the course as a whole. Specific readings for each topic are listed in the section [Detailed course outline](#) (pp.20-29), and they will be available on the course Moodle.

Key readings:

Kalof, L. 2017. *The Oxford Handbook of Animal Studies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Taylor, N. & R. Twine 2014. *The Rise of Critical Animal Studies: From the Margins to the Centre*. Routledge. London, New York: Routledge.

Further readings:

Adams, C.K. 1990. *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-vegetarian Critical Theory*. New York: Continuum.

Ascione, F. 2008. *The International Handbook of Animal Abuse and Cruelty: Theory, Research and Application*. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press.

Beauchap, T.L. & R.G. Frey eds. 2011. *The Oxford Handbook of Animal Ethics*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Bodice, R. ed. 2011. *Anthropocentrism: Humans, Animals, Environments* (Human-Animal Studies Vol.12.) Leiden, Boston: BRILL.

Colombino, A. & H.K. Bruckner eds. 2023. *Methods in Human-Animal Studies: Engaging with Animals through The Social Sciences*. London, New York: Routledge.

Corbey, R. & A. Lanjouw eds. 2013. *The Politics of Species: Reshaping our Relationships with Other Animals*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cudworth, E. et al eds. 2023. *Feminist Animal Studies: Theories, Practices, Politics*. London, New York: Routledge.

Derrida, J. 2008. *The Animals That Therefore I am*. New York: Fordham University Press.

De Waal, F. 2016. *Are We Smart Enough to Know How Smart Animals Are?* New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Fitzgerald, A. 2015. *Animals as Food: (Re)connecting Production, Processing, Consumption, and Impacts*. Michigan: Michigan State University Press.

- Merskin, D.L. 2018. *Seeing Species: Re-presentations of Animals in Media & Popular Culture*. NY: Peter Lang Publishing.
- Molly, C. 2011. *Popular Media and Animals*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nibert, D. 2013. *Animal Oppression and Human Violence: Domeseccration, Capitalism, and Global Conflict*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Nibert, D. ed. 2017. *Animal Oppression and Capitalism*. Santa Barbara: Praeger.
- Overall, C. 2017. *Pets and People: The Ethics of Companion Animals*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Peña-Guzmán, D.M. 2022. *When Animals Dream: The Hidden World of Animal Consciousness*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Regan, T. 2004. *The Case for Animal Rights*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Singer, P. 2009. *Animal Liberation*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Smil, V. 2013. *Should We Eat Meat? Evolution and Consequences of Modern Carnivory*. New York: Wiley.
- Sunstein, C. R. & M. Nussbaum eds. 2004. *Animal Rights: Current Debates and New Directions*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Taylor, N. & H. Fraser 2019. *Companion Animals and Domestic Violence: Rescuing Me, Rescuing You*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Tuan, Y.F. 2003. *Dominance and Affection: The Making of Pets*. New Have: Yale University Press.
- Twine, R. 2010. *Animals as Biotechnology: Ethics, Sustainability and Critical Animal Studies*. New York: Earthscan from Routledge.
- Twine, R. 2024. *The Climate Crisis and Other Animals*. Sydney University Press.
- Waldau, P. 2013. *Animal Studies: An Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Wright, L. ed. 2021. *The Routledge Handbook of Vegan Studies*. Oxon: Routledge.

Recommended Journals

Anthrozoos, Global Journal of Animal Law, Humanimalia, Journal of Animal Ethics, Journal for Human-animal Studies, Society & Animals

Course policies

Presence and participation

Thinking through challenging issues is most productive when done in the company of others! This is why attendance and participation constitute part of your course grade. If for any reason you are unable to attend a lecture/tutorial, then please let your instructor/tutor know by email, preferably in advance of the session.

If a student should miss a class, it is their responsibility to inform the teacher (preferably in advance) along with the reason and the appropriate documentation. **Students who miss more than three classes could be penalized.** Penalties may range from deduction of the overall course grade to, in extreme cases, not being allowed to pass the course. The response will be determined by a panel of teachers in the programme and the student may be called upon to appear before the panel.

Deadlines and late submissions

All course work assignment due dates will not be deferred except in cases of medical emergencies or family bereavement, for which written evidence must be supplied. Applications for extension of submission deadline must be made via email to the course instructor, ideally prior to the original deadline. **Late assignments will be docked 5 marks per day for a maximum of 7 days**, after which the grade will be 0, unless in exceptional circumstances. Technical difficulties are not acceptable reasons for lateness.

Coursework feedback policy

The Department of Sociology's [Policy on timely return of feedback on assessment](#) is to provide feedback (verbal and/or written) on students' assignments within three weeks of submission of coursework/presentation. Please note that if your work is submitted late, then it may take us longer than usual to provide you with feedback.

Academic honesty and plagiarism

The university has high expectations for ethical conduct among students. Students must always pursue academic honesty in their studies, as this is a condition for authentic learning and creative intellectual contributions. Committing the following (including but not limited to) dishonest behaviour is unacceptable in any circumstances:

- Plagiarism (i.e. use of other people's work without proper acknowledgement);
- Submitting an assignment that is not the student's own work, including the use of prior students' work
- Forgery of any document or certificate

Please be reminded that disciplinary actions in connection with the violation of academic honesty may result in serious consequences. Plagiarism may be handled by the individual teacher or reported to the University Disciplinary Committee.

Resources:

- [HKU Teaching & Learning – Plagiarism](#)
- [HKU Online Learning – Information Literacy Training: Academic Honesty](#)

Use of Generative AI

Depending on the context, artificial intelligence (AI) can either enhance and impede learning. There are times when these tools might provide us with new ideas and understandings (e.g., brainstorming or getting feedback). At other points, practicing skills and synthesizing ideas on our own will be crucial for the learning process. Thus, being mindful of when to use these tools will help us navigate the complexity of interacting with AI technologies in the classroom and beyond.

At the beginning of the course, we will co-create a class agreement on the use of AI tools that ensures everyone has equal access to such tools and knowledge of their benefits and limitations; understands the appropriate use of them; and is clear on policies and procedures for their use (including [proper citation](#)), and how they connect to the idea of academic integrity. Our class agreement will be consistent with the University's [Policy on Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence for Teaching and Learning](#), which notes that “students who fail to make a full declaration and proper citation according to the course requirements may face disciplinary action”.

Course privacy statement

As noted in the Department's [Guidelines on the recording of lectures and teaching sessions](#), students may not audio or video record class meetings without permission from the instructor (and guest speakers, when applicable). If the instructor grants permission or if the teaching team posts videos themselves, students may keep recordings only for personal use and may not post recordings on the Internet, or otherwise distribute them. These policies protect the privacy rights of instructors and students, and the intellectual property and other rights of the university. Students who need lectures recorded for the purposes of an academic accommodation should contact [CEDARS Special Educational Needs \(SEN\) Support](#).

Research ethics

This course involves completion of group presentation and project as courseworks. If you involves human participants in your data collection process, it is necessary to obtain ethical approval prior to collecting data. [Application forms](#) should be submitted to your instructor for endorsement and onward [forwarding to the Department](#) for processing.

As sociologists, we are expected to adhere to the highest ethical standards. For example, the American Sociological Association's [Code of Ethics](#) sets forth the principles and ethical standards that underlie sociologists' scientific and professional responsibilities and conduct.

Student feedback on learning experience

We hope that you enjoy the course and find its content stimulating and useful, and that it makes a positive contribution to your learning journey. Several channels exist for sharing feedback on your learning experience:

- The [Student Feedback on Teaching and Learning \(SFTL\)](#) questionnaire is one of the ways in which HKU courses and teaching are evaluated. Students complete this questionnaire at the end of each course. You'll be given time during class to complete the questionnaire, as well as being reminded by e-mail.
- The [Student Learning Experience Questionnaire \(SLEQ\)](#) seeks students' perceptions of the curriculum and the learning outcomes resulting from the degree programme overall. The collected data are used to provide feedback to enhance the programme quality. You will be requested to complete the SLEQ survey on at least one occasion during your degree programme. Please make sure to do so!
- **Staff-Student Consultative Meetings** organised by HKU Sociology. These will be publicised in advance via email to students enrolled on our programmes.

Aside from the official feedback channels detailed above, we always welcome informal feedback on how you are finding the course and how you think it may be improved.

Academic success

Student wellbeing

Life at university can get complicated. If you're feeling stressed, overwhelmed, lost, anxious, depressed or are struggling with personal issues, do not hesitate to contact CEDARS [Counselling and Psychological Services \(CoPE\)](#). These services are free and completely confidential.

- Room 301-323, 3/F, Main Building
- +852 3917 8388
- cedars-cope@hku.hk
- [CoPE appointment booking](#)

Special educational needs support

[Reasonable academic accommodations/adjustments](#) aim to minimise or eliminate the disadvantaging effects of students' conditions on their learning. They are meant to "level the playing field" instead of undermining academic integrity or the core requirements of a course or programme.

Students requiring accommodations/adjustments should contact [CEDARS SEN Support](#) for registration and assessment at the earliest possible opportunity. After reviewing individual cases, CEDARS will issue a letter of recommendations on reasonable accommodations/adjustments (LoRA) to the respective Faculties and the Examinations Office for approval and implementation. Students will also receive a copy of the letter via email for their record.

Detailed course outline

Topic 1. Beyond species - intersectionality and the reflexive human self

In this first lecture, we will learn the background of human-animal studies as an academic discipline - the development of bringing animals 'in' to the social sciences under the discourses of species, intersectionality, modernity and reflexivity. Concepts and debates related to the human-animal divide will also be introduced.

Key readings:

Cudworth, E. 2016. A Sociology for Other Animals: Analysis, Advocacy, Intervention, *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 36(3/4):242-257.

Peggs, K. 2014. From Centre to Margins and Back Again: Critical Animal Studies and The Reflexive Human Self, in Taylor, B. & R. Twine eds. *The Rise of Critical Animal Studies*. London: Routledge.

Further readings:

Bekoff, M. 2013. Who Lives, Who Dies, and Why? How Speciesism Undermines Compassionate Conservation and Social Justice, in Corbey, R. & A. Lanjouw eds. *The Politics of Species: Reshaping our Relationships with Other Animals*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Browne, J. 2025. Dystopian or Utopian Fiction? The Sociological imagination and The Representation of Pandemic Futures in The Animals in That Country, in Brown, J. & Z. Sutton eds, *Human-Animal Relationship in Times of Pandemic and Climate Crisis: Multispecies Sociology for the New Normal*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Cudworth, E. 2015. Killing Animals: Sociology, Species Relations and Institutionalized Violence, *The Sociological Review*. 63 (1): 1-18.

Fitzgerald, A. & N. Taylor 2023. Gender and Nonhuman Animals, in Long, M. et al. eds. *Handbook on Inequality and the Environment*. Northampton: Edward Elgar.

Haraway, D. 2008. *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Chapter 1.

Szydolowski, M. et al. 2022. Domestication and Domination: Human Terminology as A Tool for Controlling Otherthanhuman Animal Bodies, *Journal for Human-Animal Studies*. 8:33-55.

Topic 2. The culture of meat - domestication and the production of animals as food

Killing and consuming animal flesh as food is normalised in most human societies, and believed to be a human nature since the beginning of time. Is it true? In this topic, the historical development of animal domestication and the cultural variation of meat eating will be introduced. We will then focus on the modern factory farm production system and discuss the impacts on animals and the environment.

Key readings:

Fitzgerald, A.J. 2015. *Animals as Food: (Re)connecting Production, Processing, Consumption, and Impacts*. Michigan State University Press. Chapter 4.

Potts, A. 2017. What is Meat Culture? in Potts A. eds. *Meat Culture*. Leiden, Boston: BRILL.

Smil, V. 2013. *Should We Eat Meat? Evolution and Consequences of Modern Carnivory*. New York: Wiley. Chapter 3.

Further readings:

Fitzgerald, A.J. 2010. A Social History of the Slaughterhouse: From Inception to Contemporary Implications, *Human Ecology Review*, 17:1, pp.58-69.

Joy, M. 2010. The Mythology of Meat: Justifying Carnism, in *Why We Love Dogs, Eat Pigs and Wear Cows*. San Francisco: Conari Press.

Morgan, K. & M. Cole 2011. The Discursive Representation of Animals in a Culture of Denial, in Carter, B. & N. Charles eds. *Human and Other Animals: Critical Perspectives*. London, Palgrave Macmillan.

Nibert, D. 2013. Social Construction of the “Hamburger” Culture, in *Animal Oppression and Human Violence*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Twine, R. 2024. *The Climate Crisis and Other Animals*. Sydney University Press. ch.4.

Topic 3. Food autonomy - consumption, choices and identities

Following the previous lecture, we will further discuss if our dietary preferences should simply be regarded as our own freedom of choice, a private matter, and a practice of food autonomy. Alternatively, are they indeed claims that perpetuate speciesist violence, depoliticise food practices, and restrict human agency?

Key readings:

Bjørkdahl, K. & K.V.L. Syse 2024. Welfare Washing: Disseminating Disinformation in Meat Marketing, *Society & Animals*, 32: 37-55.

Fitzgerald, A. & N. Taylor 2014. The Cultural Hegemony of Meat and the Animal Industrial Complex, in Taylor, N. & R. Twine eds. *The Rise of Critical Animal Studies*. London: Routledge.

Jenkins, S. & R. Twine 2014. On the Limits of Food Autonomy, in *The Rise of Critical Animal Studies: From the Margins to the Centre*. Routledge. London, New York: Routledge.

Further readings:

Charles, N. 2023. Loving and Eating Animals: A Feminist Dilemma, in Cudworth, E. et al. eds. *Feminist Animal Studies: Theories, Practices, Politics*. London, New York: Routledge.

Linné, T. & H. Pedersen 2017. With Care for Cows and a Love for Milk: Affect and Performance in Swedish Dairy Industry Marketing Strategies, in Potts A. eds. *Meat Culture*. Leiden, Boston: BRILL.

Nibert, D. 2013. New Welfarism, Veganism, and Capitalism, in *Animal Oppression and Human Violence*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Twine, R. 2018. Materially Constitution a Sustainable Food Transition: The Case of Vegan Eating Practice, *Sociology*, 52(1):166-181.

Twine, R. 2024. *The Climate Crisis and Other Animals*. Sydney University Press. ch.7.

Wicks, D. 2018. Demystifying Dairy, *Animal Studies Journal*, 7(2):45-75.

Whitley, C.T. et al. 2018. Public Receptiveness to Policies Promoting Plant-based Diets: Framing Effects and Social Psychological and Structural Influences, *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning*, 20:1:45-63.

Topic 4. Made of animals - the goods, the styles and the ethics

Besides using animals flesh as food, our everyday lives are indeed full of commodities that are made of animals - clothes, bags, cosmetic products, decorative artefacts, and many more. Besides the normalised everyday usage of animals, we will explore the complexity of wildlife smuggling in the global (illegal) animal trade.

Key readings:

Song, A.Y. & Y. Yao 2021. To Ban or Not to Ban: China's Trade in Endangered Species, *Journal of Contemporary China*.

Van Uhm, D. 2023. The Criminalization of the Trade in Wildlife, in Nelen, H. & D. Siegel eds. *Organized Crime in the 21st Century*. Cham.: Springer. Ch.10

Wyatt, T. et al. 2018. Corruption and Wildlife Trafficking: Three Case Studies Involving Asia, *Asia Criminology*. 13:35-55.

Further readings:

ADMCF 2021. *Still Trading in Extinction: The Dark Side of Hong Kong's Wildlife Trade*. Hong Kong: : ADM Capital Foundation.

Inglis, S. et al. 2022. *Wild, Threatened, Farmed: Hong Kong's Invisible Pets*. Hong Kong: ADM Capital Foundation.

Nijman, V., M.X. Zhang & C.R. Shepherd 2016. Pangolin Trade in the Mongolia Wildlife Market and the Role of Myanmar in the Smuggling of Pangolins into China, *Global Ecology and Conservation* 5: 118-126.

Pickett, H. & S. Harris 2015. *The Case against Fur Factory Farming: A Scientific Review of Animal Welfare Standards and 'WelFur'*. United Kingdom: Respect for Animals Limited.

Wong, R. 2019. *The Illegal Wildlife Trade in China: Understanding the Distribution Networks*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. ch.1-3.

Topic 5. Keeping pets - affection and emotional consumption

Once a privilege and status symbol of the rich, keeping animals as companion for affective purpose is increasingly common of many modern people. While the companionship certainly brings physical and emotional benefits to us, is it somehow positive to the animals too? How do (some) animals become pets? Where do they come from and where do they go when we don't want them? These questions will be discussed with the development of the modern pet industry, as well as animal breeding and abandonment.

Key readings:

Charles, N. & C.A. Davis 2011. My Family and Other Animals: Pets As Kin, in Carter, B. & N. Charles eds. *Human and Other Animals: Critical Perspectives*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Cudworth, E. 2024. Companions, Captives, Kin: Domination and affection in The Conceptualising of 'Pets', *Pets*, 1:182-200.

Fox, R. & Gee, N. R. 2019. Great Expectations: Changing Social, Spatial and Emotional Understandings of the Companion Animal-human Relationship, *Social & Cultural Geography*. 20(1): 43-63.

Further readings:

Bok, H. 2011. Keeping Pets, in Beauchap, T.L. & R.G. Frey ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Animal Ethics*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Cudworth, E. 2024. From Godkin to Oddkin: Love, Friendship and Kin Making Beyond the Human Family, *The Sociology Review*, 1-19.

McKenna, E. 2013. *Pets, People, and Pragmatism*. New York: Fordham University Press. pp.1-42.

Pierce, J. 2016. *Run, Spot, Run: the Ethics of Keeping Pets*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. Selected chapters.

Su, B.T. & P. Martens 2020. Chinese Companion Animal Caretakers' Attachment Influences their Attribution of Emotions to their Animals, *Society & Animals*, 1-20.

Tuan, Y.F. 2007. Animal Pets: Cruelty and Affection, in Kalof, L. & A. Fitzgerald eds. *The Animals Reader: The Essential Classic and Contemporary Writings*. Oxford: Berg. pp.141-153.

Vänskä, A. 2016. 'Cause I Wuv You!' Pet Dog Fashion and Emotional Consumption, *Ephemera: Theory & Poetics in Organization*. 16(4): 75-97.

Topic 6. Animal spectatorship - from captivity to ecotourism

Why do we love watching animals? What does such a practice of looking at the 'others' tell about us? Capturing animals from the wild, especially from afar, and put them into zoos and aquariums has been a demonstration of power for centuries. We also train animals to entertain us in circus, marine parks and race courses. And now the latest trend is to go see them in their natural habitats. In this lecture, we will discuss the nature of animal captivities in the name of conservation, education and other social functions.

Key readings:

Almiron, N. 2017. Slaves to Entertainment: Manufacturing Consent for Orcas in Captivity, in Nibert, D. ed. *Animal Oppression and Capitalism* (Volume Two). Santa Barbara: Praeger.

Carr, N. and P. Tully 2024. Tourism and Its Impacts on Wildlife, in Fine, A.H. et al. eds. *The Routledge International Handbook of Human-animal Interactions and Anthrozoology*. New York: Routledge.

Fennell, D.A. 2022. Animatronic Dolphins as the New Authentic? Posthuman Reflections of 'Light' Tourism on the Move, *Journal of Ecotourism*.

Further readings:

Blair, M. 2022. Animal Rescue Tourism: Digital Technology-enhanced Approaches to Support Voluntourist Engagement, Animal Welfare and Rights, *Tourism Recreation Research*.

Graham, R. & P. McManus 2016. Changing Human-Animal Relationships in Sport: An Analysis of the UK and Australian Horse Racing Whips Debates, *Animals*. 6 (32).

Malamud, R. 2017. The Problem with Zoos, in Kalof, L. ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Animal Studies*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Pierce, J. & M. Bekoff 2018. A Postzoo Future: Why Welfare Fails Animals in Zoos, *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*. 21(S1):43-48.

Wearing, S. & C. Jobberns 2015. From Free Willy to Sea World: Has Ecotourism Improved the Rights of Whales? in Markwell, K. ed. *Animals and Tourism: Understanding Diverse Relationships*. Bristol: Channel View Publication.

Topic 7. Thinking with animals - representations in media and popular culture

For centuries, we have been using animals as symbols to tell moral stories and to make sense of ourselves. Some animals are deified, some are demonised, but the stories told remain about us. How are animals re-presented in the media? Does documentaries provide a more accurate depiction of animals than fictional stories in drama and movie? How about the endless online attractions of posts and videos about animals?

Key readings:

Jarzebowska, G. 2023. "Four-Legged Terror" or "Ultimate New Yorker"? Urban Rat Videos and Their Media Reception, *Society & Animals*. 31:342-361.

Morrison, S. 2024. Playful Rehearsals of Animal Subjugation, *Media International Australia*, 0(0): 1-16.

Policarpo, V. 2020. Daphne the Cat: Reimagining Human-animal Boundaries on Facebook, *The Sociological Review*. 68(6):1290-1306.

Further readings:

Carvalho, A.F. et al. 2023. Profiting from Cruelty: Digital Content Creators Abuse Animals Worldwide to Incur Profit, *Biological Conservation*, 287:110321.

Coghlan, S. & L. Sparrow. 2021. The "Digital Animal Intuition:" The Ethics of Violence against Animals in Video Games, *Ethics and Information Technology*, 23:215-224.

Lenzi, C. et al. 2023. "Let Me Take a Selfie": Implications of Social Media for Public Perceptions of Wild Animals, *Society & Animals*. 31:64-83.

Merskin, D.L. 2018. Nevermore: Ravens in Game of Thrones, in *Seeing Species: Re-presentations of Animals in Media & Popular Culture*. NY: Peter Lang Publishing.

Molly, C. 2011. *Popular Media and Animals*. Palgrave Macmillian. Chapters 1, 3 & 8.

Price, C. 2021. The Online Genetically Modified Food Debate: Sociotechnical Imaginaries and Genetically Modified Animals, *Networking Knowledge*, 14(2), pp.24-40.

Vezovnik, A. 2024. Humans and Farm Animals in Documentary Film Narratives: A Romantic Perspective on the Problem of Capitalist Meat Production, *Anthrozoös*, 37(3): 417-435.

Zavitz, T. & C. Kielbiski 2021. Animal Oppression and Solidarity: Examining Representations of Animals and Their Allies in Twenty-First Century Media, *Networking Knowledge*, 14(2), pp.95-109.

Topic 8. Violence against animals

Violence towards animals is universal - exists in every society and in every period of time. We don't normally see animal suffering and death as violence (e.g. in food and pet industries) as they are socially acceptable. In this topic, we will explore institutional violence with the case of laboratory animals. Then we will move on to cases of deviant violence that are unacceptable in modern societies and criminalised. Finally, the link between violence to animals and violence to humans will be discussed.

Key readings:

Blattner, C. 2019. Rethinking the 3Rs: from Whitewashing to Rights, in Herrmann, K, & K. Jayne eds. *Animal Experimentation: Working Towards a Paradigm Change* (Human-Animal Studies Volume 22). Ch.6

Fitzgerald, A. et al. 2022. The Connection between Animal Abuse, Emotional Abuse, and Financial Abuse in Intimate Relationships: Evidence from a Nationally Representative Sample of the General Public, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. 37(5-6): 2331-2353.

Peggs, K. 2015. An Insufferable Business: Ethics, Nonhuman Animals and Biomedical Experiments, *Animals*, 5:624-642.

Further readings:

Campbell, A.M. et al. 2021. Intimate Partner Violence and Pet Abuse: Responding Law Enforcement Officers' Observation and Victim Reports from the Scene, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 36(5-6)2353:2372.

Peggs, K. 2011. Human Primacy Identity Politics, Nonhuman Animal Experiments and the Oppression of Nonhuman Animals, in Carter, B. & N. Charles eds. *Human and Other Animals: Critical Perspectives*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Swemmer, S. 2021. International Law, Domestic Violence, and the Intersection with Nonhuman Animal Abuse, *Society & Animals*. 29, 203-222.

Unti, B. 2010. Cruelty Indivisible: Historical Perspectives on the Link Between Cruelty to Animals and Interpersonal Violence in Ascione, F. ed. *The International Handbook of Animal Abuse and Cruelty: Theory, Research and Application*. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press.

Whitfort, A. et al. 2021. A Retrospective Analysis of Typologies of Animal Abuse Recorded by the SPCA, Hong Kong. *Animals*. 11, 1830.

Topic 9. Moral and legal status of animals - protection and rights

Most people probably support the protection of (some) animals from extinction, from torture, and from maltreatment. One step further is to enhance animals' well-being through the promotion of animal welfare and animal rights. However, what are we really protecting and enhancing? To understand the debate succinctly, we have to ask - Do animals have moral worth? Should animals be counted as morally considerable lives? Should animals be regarded as legal persons instead of humans' property or resources?

Key readings:

Cao, D. 2022. Is the Concept of Animal Welfare Incompatible with Chinese Culture? *Society & Animals*, 30:284-296.

Waldau, P. 2017. Animals as Legal Subjects, in Kalof, L. ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Animal Studies*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Wu, S.Y. et al. 2024. Influence of Legislation on Public Attitude towards Animal Welfare in Taiwan, *Society & Animals*, 32:406-427.

Further readings:

Francione, G.L. & A.E. Charlton 2017. Animal Rights, in Kalof, L. ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Animal Studies*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Frey, R.G. 2011. Utilitarianism and Animals, in Beauchap, T.L. & R.G. Frey eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Animal Ethics*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Kret, M.E., J.J.M. Massen & F.B.M. De Waal, 2022. My Fear Is Not, and Never Will Be, Your Fear: On Emotions and Feelings in Animals, *Affective Science*, 3:182-189.

Tooley, M. 2011. Are Nonhuman Animals Persons? in Beauchap, T.L. & R.G. Frey eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Animal Ethics*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Whyke, T.W. & J. López-Múgica 2023. Content and Discourse Analysis of Cruelty towards Stray Dogs as Presented in Chinese Social Media, *Society & Animals*, 139-159.

Topic 10. A post-human future? Biotechnology and human/animal liberation

The distinction between humans and animals (and technology) is increasingly vague with the advancement of biotechnology. In this last topic, we will explore the possibilities and challenges of human-animal co-presence. Is post-humanism and multi-species co-presence as the answer to human/animal liberation?

Key readings:

Cole, T. 2025. Can Mosquitoes be Kin? Conservation, Conviviality, and Enmity among “Pests” from Myanmar to Singapore, *Society & Animals*. 33:212-232.

Hill, K. 2024. Cat-Human Intersubjectivity and Joint Meaning-Making within Multispecies Families and Communities, *Humanimalia*, 15(1): 45-74.

Owens, M. & J. Wolch 2017. Lively Cities: People, Animals, and Urban Ecosystems, in Kalof, L. ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Animal Studies*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Further readings:

Bisenieks, D. 2023. Grounding Intimacies: Human-Bovine Coexistence and Community Development in Hong Kong, in Dugnoille, J. & E. Vander Meer eds. *Animal Matter: Resistance and Transformation in Animal Commodification (Human-Animal Studies Volume.26)*. Leiden, Boston: BRILL.

Charles, N. et al. 2024. De-centring the Human: Multi-species Research as Embodied Practice, *The Sociological Review*, 72(6):1335-1354.

Cudworth, E. & S. Hobden 2014. Civilisation and the Domination of the Animal, *Millennium*, 42(3):746-766.

De Waal, F. 2016. *Are We Smart Enough to Know How Smart Animals Are?* New York: W.W. Norton & Company. Chapter 1.

Linares-Roake, J. et al. 2025. Looking Back with Logos the Cat: Unsettling the Gaze in Multispecies Research, *Qualitative Inquiry*, 1-12.

Savulescu, J. 2011. Genetically Modified Animals: Should There Be Limits to Engineering the Animal Kingdom? in Beauchap, T.L. & R.G. Frey eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Animal Ethics*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Shilling, C. 2022. Body Pedagogics, Transactional Identities and Human-Animal Relations, *Sociology*. 56(4):766-782.

Taylor, N. & Z. Sutton 2018. For an Emancipatory Animal Sociology, *Journal of Sociology*, Vol.54(4): 467-487.