**Special Topics: Animal Minds**

**PHIL 4883, Section 001**

**TR 2-3:15, HSS 2063**

**CRN: 13343**

Instructor: Michele Merritt, Ph.D.

Office: HSS 4172

Office Hours: TR 12:45-1:45, or by appointment

Email: [mmerritt@astate.edu](mailto:mmerritt@astate.edu)

**Course Description:**

This course examines the extent to which non-human animals have minds – if they think, in what ways are those thought processes similar to or different than our own? Do they possess concepts? Are they capable of inference and logical reasoning? Do their perceptual capacities afford them specific cognitive abilities? To answer these questions, we must first determine what it means to have a mind in the first place. Thus, a great deal of this course will be devoted to answering some classical questions in the Philosophy of Mind. But we will also draw on the empirical sciences, ethology, psychology, and linguistics to examine the ways non-human animals have been shown to possess minds that are like or completely dissimilar to human minds. We will also examine the scientific practices and methodology surrounding the study of animal cognition to determine the extent to which questions posed might themselves have hidden assumptions packed into them, or perhaps the way the studies are conducted might overlook alternative explanations. The payoff to answering all these questions is that we are laying the foundation for approaching even more philosophical issues surrounding animals – do they have culture? Can they be ethical? What are our moral obligations to them? Pre-requisites: Introduction to Philosophy (PHIL 1103) or Permission by Instructor.

**Program Outcomes:**This course contributes to the following program-level outcomes:  
  
1) Students will understand central issues and theories in philosophy (from among the major areas of metaphysics, epistemology, and value theory).  
2) Students will be able to analyze and explain complicated ideas.  
3) Students will be able to analyze arguments.  
4) Students will be able to evaluate arguments.

**Course-Specific Learning Outcomes:**

1) Students will understand and appreciate issues central to the study of non-human animal cognition, in philosophy, as well as in related disciplines, such as behavioral science, ethology, and psychology

2) Students will be able analyze, explain, and evaluate arguments pertaining to non-human animal cognition, in writing and in class discussion

3) Students will be better prepared for graduate coursework in areas related non-human animal cognition

**Required Reading**

Andrews, K., The Animal Mind: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Animal Cognition, 2014

\*\*And other readings online

**Grading Scale**

90-100 = A

80-89 = B

70-79 = C

60-69 = D

Below 60 = F

**Assignments**

*Longer Papers x2 @ 20% each, 40% of total grade*

Two substantial papers (6-8 pages) that involve developing and sustaining an argument based on readings and discussions will be due, once about halfway through the semester and once at the end. More information will be available as the due date(s) near.

*Reading Response Papers x3 @ 10% each, 30% of total grade*

Throughout the semester, students will write a short (2 pages or so) response to one of the readings assigned (please see schedule of potential readings to utilize for these response papers). The response papers will be due ***before the reading is to be discussed in class***. There will be a separate assignment sheet outlining the guidelines for these response papers.

*Research Project/Presentation 15% of total grade*

Students will develop a research project that is intended to probe more deeply into a particular topic from the course readings and discussion. The idea of this project is not to conduct an experiment per se, but rather, to design a study that the student thinks ought to be undertaken in order to answer a question or settle a dispute surrounding some aspect of animal cognition. To this end, students will need to first ask a *research question*, and then devise a way they think this particular question or issue might be resolved. This assignment will involve writing the proposal (4-5 pages or so) and providing a brief presentation of the project to the class.

*Attendance/Participation 15% of total grade*

It is imperative that students attend and participate in class discussions. This course is not intended to be a professor-dominated lecture, but rather, a discussion-based, interactive learning environment. To this end, failing to attend class will severely diminish the educational process for everyone involved. Three absences will be overlooked and excused, but after that, students will notice a sharp decrease in their overall grade in this category.

**The “Fine Print”**

Students are expected to adhere to all guidelines in the Student Bulletin and Student Handbook (found online at astate.edu). In addition to all the guidelines therein, students in this class are expected to comply with the following:

* + Arrive to class on time and stay for the entirety of the class. If not, I reserve the right to mark you as absent for the day
  + Attendance Policy: The only excused absences will be documented and will pertain to university-sanctioned events, illness, family emergency, or inclement weather. (Attending a routine dental appointment during my class is NOT an excused absence, e.g.).
  + Inclement Weather Policy: Information on campus closure can be found on the ASU web page, KASU, and local radio and television stations. If inclement weather prevents you from being able to come to class and campus is not closed, please call the main office of the philosophy department.
  + Cell phones, laptops, iPads, etc: are to be used *strictly* for academic purposes. Texting, facebooking, running out of the room to take a call, or any other distractions will not be tolerated. You will be asked to leave class or will be given a zero for participation for the day if I deem your electronic/technology use to be inappropriate or disruptive.
  + Cheating: Just Don't Do It! If you are unsure about what constitutes plagiarism, just ask. Better to be safe than sorry. Here is the official statement from the Handbook:
  + *Arkansas State University enthusiastically promotes academic integrity and professional ethics among all members of the ASU academic community. Violations of this policy are considered as* *serious academic misconduct and may result in severe penalties. Sanctions for Academic* *Misconduct may be imposed by the faculty member or instructor discovering the Academic* *Misconduct except in the case of dismissal from a particular program which shall be made by the* *department chair or program director, or suspension or expulsion from the university, which shall* *be made by the dean. A Student may not avoid academic sanctions by withdrawing from a class, a* *program, or the university. A student disagreeing with the sanction issued based on Academic* *Misconduct should follow the Academic Grievance Procedure. It is the student’s responsibility to have read and understood the topics under Academic Misconduct section of the Student Handbook*
  + Policy on Missed Assignments/Make up work: The only reasons I will accept late or missed assignments are documented emergencies, illnesses, deaths in the family, or weather related issues.
  + If you have a disability that might make it difficult for you to succeed in this course, please contact me as soon as possible. Your privacy will be respected and every effort will be made to meet your needs. All students requesting accommodations for disabilities should be registered through ASU’s Disability Services (870 972 3964). If Disabilities Services determines you should be able to take tests in their office, it is your responsibility to schedule the test for the same time and date as the exam is administered to other students.
  + Extra Credit: As a rule, I do not offer extra credit on assignments. If an opportunity, such as a lecture or a philosophy club event arises, and I deem it suitable for students to attend and write a short paper pertaining to it, then I might consider offering extra credit in this case. Please be advised that this is entirely up to me as the instructor. Do not ask for extra credit. Do not ask, at the end of the semester, if there is anything you can do to raise your grade. The answer will always be ‘no.’
  + Email Policy: I will do my best to respond to emails in a timely manner. In order to get a quick response from me, it is imperative that you 1. List the course in which you are enrolled, 2. State your name somewhere in the body of the email, and 3. Be specific about what it is you are asking. I simply will not answer emails that read like text messages to your friends.
  + And finally: While I am all for learning from my students just as much as they learn from me and being a team-player, at the end of the day, I am the instructor. As such, I make the final call on assignments, the way the class is run, etc. Thus, any behavior during class that I deem disrespectful can result in you being asked to leave. Likewise, comments left on assignments, such as you don’t think the questions are fair or you don’t like the class, are unacceptable. I reserve the right to give you negative points on assignments if you choose to show disrespect in this or any other way.

**Tentative Weekly Schedule**

**(Note: In most cases, the first reading listed is for Tuesday and second is for Thursday. In cases where there are more than 2 readings, we will discuss the prior week when each reading will likely be discussed)**

January 14 and 16 – *The problem of ‘other’ minds*

The Economist, “The Hard Problem”

Andrews, Intro and Ch. 1

January 21 and 23 – *Ethology and Methodology*

Allen & Bekoff, from *Species of Mind*, chapter 2

Andrews, chapter 2

January 28 and 30 – *Anthropomorphism and other Problems*

Bekoff & Horowitz, *Naturalizing anthropomorphism*

Burghardt, *Critical Anthropomorphism, Uncritical Anthropocentrism, and Naïve Nominalism*

February 4 and 6 – *Consciousness*

Andrews, Ch. 3

Dennett, *Animal consciousness: What matters and why*

February 11 and 13 – *Rationality and Reasoning*

Andrews, Ch. 4

Wystrach, et al. *Running Paths to Nowhere: repetition of routes shows how navigating ants modulate online the weights accorded to cues*

February 18 and 20 – *Communication and Language*

Andrews, Ch. 5

Reid and Pilley, *Border collie comprehends object names as verbal referents*

February 25 and 27 (no class 27th – use time for finishing papers) – *Communication and Language, cont’d*

Marzluff, from *Gifts of the Crow*

***First Long Paper Due, February 27th, by 11:59pm***

March 3 and 5 – *Emotions and Affect*

Panksepp, *Do animals have affective lives?*

LeDoux, *Feelings: What Are They & How Does the Brain Make Them?*

March 10 and 12 – *Understanding other Minds*

Andrews, chapter 6

Cheney & Seyfarth, *Baboon Metaphysics, chapter 8*

Horowitz, *Theory of mind in dogs? Examining method and concept*

March 17 and 19 – *Cats and Dogs*

Lea and Osthaus, *In What Sense are Dogs Special?*

Kristyn, et al. *What’s inside your cat’s head?*

March 24 and 26- Spring Break

March 31 and April 2 – *Cats and Dogs, cont’d*

Mitchell, et al. *Functions of Pointing by Humans, and Dogs’ Responses, During Dog-Human Play Between Familiar and Unfamiliar Players*

Merola, et al. *Social referencing and cat–human communication*

April 7 and 9 – *Aquatic Minds*

Balcombe, from *“What a Fish Knows”*

Culum, *Fish Intelligence, Sentience, and Ethics*

April 14 and 16 – *Convergent evolution*

Godfrey-Smith, *Cephalopods and the evolution of the mind*

Marino, Convergence of complex cognitive abilities in cetaceans and great apes

April 21 and 23 – *Sociality, culture, morality*

Whiten et al., *Cultures in chimpanzees*

Pierce & Bekoff, *Wild Justice Redux*

April 28 and 30 – *Animal minds and ethics*

Nawroth, et al. *Farm Animal Cognition—Linking Behavior, Welfare and Ethics*

Bekoff, *Representing and misrepresenting animals*

***Second Long Paper Due, April 30th***

**Reading Response Paper Schedule**

Group 1 (choose 1):

Burghardt, *Critical Anthropomorphism, Uncritical Anthropocentrism, and Naïve Nominalism*

Dennett, *Animal consciousness: What matters and why*

Wystrach, et al. *Running Paths to Nowhere: repetition of routes shows how navigating ants modulate online the weights accorded to cues*

Group 2 (choose 1):

Panksepp, *Do animals have affective lives?*

Cheney & Seyfarth, *Baboon Metaphysics, chapter 8*

Lea and Osthaus, *In What Sense are Dogs Special?*

Group 3 (choose 1)

Culum, *Fish Intelligence, Sentience, and Ethics*

Godfrey-Smith, *Cephalopods and the evolution of the mind*

Whiten et al., *Cultures in chimpanzees*