



HIST*6290: North American History F26 theme: Racialization and Animalization

Fall 2026

Department of History
Credit Weight: 0.50

Course Details

Calendar Description

Depending on the expertise of the instructor, this course may concentrate on either the United States or Canada, or it may concentrate on a historical theme or themes common to the larger continent.

F26 Semester Theme:

Racialization and Animalization

In the first half of the course, we will examine how racial ideologies and practices in the United States since the eighteenth century have been constructed and justified through ideas about animality. Students will consider how the classification of certain human groups as “animal-like” shaped legal systems, colonial governance, labour regimes, scientific knowledge, and cultural expression. We will also explore how nonhuman animals were materially impacted by and symbolically implicated in racial projects.

In the second half of the semester, using the tools and insights developed earlier in the course, you will research and write about a topic related to the history of racialization and/or animalization in a context crucial to your own thesis or Major Research Paper (MRP) research.

Method of Delivery: Online synchronous (AD-S) via Microsoft Teams

Meeting time: Tuesdays, 2:30-5:20




Assessments and Due Dates

Class Participation: 15%

Class Presentations (10%, 5%, 10%): 25%

Short Essay (due Mon., Nov. 9): 20%

Final Paper (due Fri., Dec. 18): 40%

See pages 8-10 of this syllabus for detailed instructions on course assignments.

Required Books

Note: You may access books assigned for the course in various ways, including the Internet Archive (archive.org), interlibrary loan, as inexpensive Kindle books to read on a laptop, through new and used booksellers, or (for some titles) online at UofG Library. You are not required to purchase any of them, although you *are required to read them*.

All remaining course readings will be available through the HIST*6290 CourseLink site.

Schedule

Week 1 (Sept. 15)

Introductions, Assumptions, and Ground Rules

Questions:

What are the key terms, questions, controversies, or context of the course? What is at stake in the topics of this course?

Assignment:

Please come to class prepared to discuss a book, poem, song, movie clip, video, photograph, or other ***non-academic thing*** that conveys information, ideas, or even just inspiration for thinking about the topic of this course. The goal is to activate the creative part of your brain and think broadly about the tools historians use.

Week 2 (Sept. 22)

Racialization and Animalization

 **will lead the discussion this week**

Questions:

What is intersectionality? What are Boisseron's arguments about the 'animalization' of blacks and the 'blackification' of animals? What histories are at stake in that analysis?

Read:

Bénédicte Boisseron, *Afro-Dog: Blackness and the Animal Question* (Columbia University Press, 2018).

Colin Salter, "The Animal Question and Condition: Intersectionality and Critical Animal Studies in the Asia-Pacific," *Animal Studies Journal* 4, no. 1 (2015): 1–11.

Assignment:

Presenter – lead the class in a discussion of the readings and film for the week and present an inspirational primary source relevant to the week.

Class – come prepared to discuss the reading, film, and questions of the week.

Week 3 (Sept. 29)

People Shows and the Origins of the Zoo

Questions:

How did the wild animal trade intersect with racial politics and colonization in the 19th and early 20th century?

Read:

James W. Cook, "Describing the Nondescript," in *The Arts of Deception: Playing with Fraud in the Age of Barnum* (Harvard University Press, 2001), 119-62.

Susan Nance, *Entertaining Elephants: Animal Agency and the Business of the American Circus* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2025), ch. 4 "Punishing Bull Elephants," p. 104-37.

Nigel Rothfels, *Savages and Beasts: The Birth of the Modern Zoo*, revised edition (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2025).

Assignment:

Presenter – lead the class in a discussion of the readings and film for the week and present an inspirational primary source relevant to the week.

Class – come prepared to discuss the reading, film, and questions of the week.

Week 4 (Oct. 6)

Case Study: Ota Benga

Questions:

What does the life of Ota Benga tell us about the power of institutions to shape public ideas about "race," animality, and science in US history?

Read:

Neil Pemberton, Julie-Marie Strange, and Michael Worboys, "Breeding and Breed," in *The Routledge Companion to Animal-Human History*, ed. Hilda Kean and Philip Howell (Routledge, 2018), 393-421.

Brian Tyrrell, "Bred for the Race: Thoroughbred Breeding and Racial Science in the United States, 1900-1940," *Historical Studies in the Natural Sciences* 45, no. 4 (September 2015): 549-76.

Pamela Newkirk, *Spectacle: The Astonishing Life of Ota Benga* (Amistad, 2016).

Assignment:

Presenter – lead the class in a discussion of the readings and film for the week and present an inspirational primary source relevant to the week.

Class – come prepared to discuss the reading, film, and questions of the week.

Fall Break (Week 5, Oct. 13), no class meeting

Week 6 (Oct. 20)

Cinema, Racialization, and Animalization

Questions:

What was the special role of the moving image in linking racialization, animalization, and gender politics for American audiences?

Read:

James Snead, *White Screens/Black Images: Hollywood From the Dark Side* (1994), Ch. 1-3, p. 1-46.

Wil Haygood, *Colorization: One Hundred Years of Black Films in a White World* (Knopf, 2021), Ch. 1-6, p. 1-102.

Watch:

The Birth of a Nation, dir. W. D. Griffiths, 1915. [watch first 45 mins. of part 2]

King Kong, dir. Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack, 1933.

Assignment:

Presenter – lead the class in a discussion of the readings and film for the week and present an inspirational primary source relevant to the week.

Class – come prepared to discuss the reading, film, and questions of the week.

Week 7 (Oct. 27)

Indigeneity and Relationality

Questions:

How have scholars drawn on the Indigenous past to challenge animalization as a feature of colonization?

Read:

Kim TallBear, "Why Interspecies Thinking Needs Indigenous Standpoints," *Cultural Anthropology* 24, no. 1 (2011): 1-8.

Margaret Robinson, "Is the Moose Still My Brother if We Don't Eat Him?" in *Critical Perspectives on Veganism*, edited by Jodey Castricano and Rasmus R. Simonsen (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 261–84.

Fiona Probyn-Rapsey and Lynette Russel, "Indigenous, Settler, Animal: a Triadic Approach," *Animal Studies Journal* 11, no. 2 (2022), 38-68.

Jon Coleman, *Vicious: Wolves and Men in America* (Yale University Press, 2006).

Assignment:

Presenter – lead the class in a discussion of the readings and film for the week and present an inspirational primary source relevant to the week.

Class – come prepared to discuss the reading, film, and questions of the week.

Week 8 (Nov. 3)

Intersectional Advocacy in the 21st Century

Questions:

According to Kim, how can concern for animal welfare become racialized? Why have some animal-protection campaigns portrayed people of color as especially cruel to animals, and what is problematic about this framing?

Read:

Claire Jean Kim, *Dangerous Crossings: Race, Species, and Nature in a Multicultural Age* (Cambridge University Press, 2015).

Visit:

APEX Advocacy, <https://www.apexadvocacy.org/>

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), "PETA Celebrates National Hispanic Heritage Month With 35 Latino and Latina Celebrities,"

<https://www.peta.org/features/hispanic-heritage-month-latin-celebs-support-animal-rights/>

Assignment:

Presenter – lead the class in a discussion of the readings and film for the week and present an inspirational primary source relevant to the week.

Class – come prepared to discuss the reading, film, and questions of the week.

SHORT THEMATIC ESSAY

Due Monday, Week 9 (Nov. 9) in our CourseLink Dropbox

Week 9 (Nov. 10)

Final Paper Preview Roundtable

Assignment:

Give a brief (7 minutes max!) preview of your semester historical research and writing project.

Week 10 (Nov. 17)

Independent Research & Writing Week

Assignment:

Get to work!

Week 11 (Nov. 24)

Final Essay Presentations

Assignment:

Presenter(s) – full presentation (20 minutes each max!) of your semester historical research and writing project.

Class – come prepared to ask intelligent questions.

Week 12 (Dec. 1)

Final Essay Presentations

Assignment:

Presenter(s) – full presentation (20 minutes each max!) of your semester historical research and writing project.

Class – come prepared to ask intelligent questions.

Week 13 (Dec. 3) – [class rescheduled](#) from Fall break Oct. 13

Final Essay Presentations

Assignment:

Presenter(s) – full presentation (20 minutes each max!) of your semester historical research and writing project.

Class – come prepared to ask intelligent questions.

FINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Due: Friday, December 18 in our CourseLink Dropbox

COURSE REQUIREMENTS / ASSESSMENTS IN DETAIL

Class Participation – 15% of course grade:

Please come to class having completed assigned reading and ready to discuss it in an informed way with respect to the weekly questions posed in the course schedule, those posed by the seminar leaders for the week, and/or your own questions. An early discussion section participation grade will be provided for students in week 8.

Reading Guide/Notes & Seminar Leader Assignment – 10% of course grade: This assignment has two parts:

1. 5% of course grade: In your assigned week for this task, please **produce a reading guide** for the readings, videos, and/or websites of the week, making sure to have a draft ready before the relevant class meeting. You may use that draft of the notes to aid your work as presenter in class. Then, **no later than midnight that day**, deposit your revised (in reference to any new, good ideas that emerged during the class discussion) notes in our CourseLink Dropbox. Thereafter, Dr. [REDACTED] will post the guide on CourseLink for fellow students.

Reading guide length: ca. **1500 words**. You **do not** need to provide “works cited” list at the end of the reading guide, but do include foot/endnote citations. Please use bullet points, headings, and other formatting that makes your guide more user friendly. Remember, it is not an essay; it is a set of notes.

Please do see Dr. [REDACTED] for one-on-one help with any aspect of your writing or making sense of the week’s readings.

2. 5% of course grade: In your assigned week for this task, using an uncirculated draft of your reading guide as a starting point, you will lead the class in a discussion of the week’s readings. Use assigned questions only as a starting point, identifying in the readings key passages, arguments, sources. Please also present a historical primary source that illustrates and/or problematizes some aspect of what we are examining for the week. Your presentation should (briefly) summarize the readings and discuss them substantively, while the primary source you present needs to be analyzed and connected to the readings; don’t just use it as decoration, but as an analytical source.

Students sharing the same presentation week should consult with one another and divide the readings among themselves in order to avoid overlapping presentations of sources or readings. Please present readings in historically chronological order or some other logical order by publication date, etc. The presentation schedule will be organized on our CourseLink “Groups” widget following the first class meeting. The eventual presentation schedule will thereafter appear on CourseLink in the announcements feed. Please make use of office hours for help in structuring this presentation or the reading guide mentioned above.

Short Thematic Essay – 20% of course grade:

Due Monday, Week 9 (November 9) in our CourseLink Dropbox

In order to demonstrate all your hard work in completing the assigned course readings in the first half of the semester **and** to try out research and writing techniques

you will eventually employ in your own research project, please write a short paper drawn from the assigned course readings up to and including Week 8.

Your goal: Explain how course themes have played out in the history of trafficked animals and people's ideas about them, humanity, and the environment. Please choose several specific case studies to discuss to demonstrate your analysis.

Paper length: **2000 words** (*about* 8 pages, double-spaced). Please provide footnotes or endnotes according to the Chicago Manual of Style. You **do not** need to provide a "works cited" bibliography at the end of this paper. Please do see Dr. [REDACTED] for one-on-one help with any aspect of your writing.

Final Paper Preview Roundtable (Oral Report) – 5% of course grade:

During the class meeting in Week 9 (November 10), you will give a brief (7 minutes max!) report on your proposed semester research project exploring a historical topic drawn from or closely related to the course, and some possible primary and secondary sources you will use.

Final Paper Presentation – 10% of course grade:

During week 11, 12, or 13 (the day held over from the Tuesday of Fall Break), you will give a formal presentation detailing your final paper research project—20 minutes in length (max!). Please explain the case study you will research and write about in the second half of the course to explore the. You may also provide an explanation of your research and writing process, plus a reflection on what is working, or not, what has been easy, what key points you want readers to understand, how this exercise will support your later (proposed / probable) MRP or thesis research. Feel free to discuss both primary sources and secondary sources relevant to your project. Imagine this as a friendly work-shopping opportunity in which students will help one another to produce the best possible final work.

The presentation schedule will be organized on our CourseLink "Groups" widget following the first class meeting. The eventual presentation schedule will thereafter appear on CourseLink in the announcements feed. Please contact Dr. [REDACTED] for any necessary help in structuring this presentation.

Final Research Paper – 40% of course grade:

Due: Friday, December 18 in our CourseLink Dropbox

In the second half of the semester, using the tools and insights developed earlier in the course, you will research and write about a case study that is crucial to your own historical thesis or MRP research. Please employ both secondary and primary sources in your writing.

Paper length: 4000 words including citations (ca. 15 pages, double-spaced). Please provide footnotes or endnotes according to the Chicago Manual of Style; no MLA or parenthetical citations please. Yes, you **do** need to provide a "works cited" page at the end of this paper. Please visit office hours for help in structuring this presentation.

Use of AI (eg. ChatGPT) and other writing tools in this course

Students in this course may use writing aids like Grammarly or the spelling and grammar features in Word to revise their writing. They may also use AI services like ChatGPT to correct spelling and grammar, or to ask factual or research questions. You must cite information you copy and paste from ChatGPT into your own work as originating in an AI application, using quotation marks to indicate the relevant text (citation info in footnote #1 below).¹

Beyond that, please see the [University of Guelph Guidance on the use of Generative AI for Graduate Students](#), as well as the statement on Academic Misconduct below.

University of Guelph Policies

Academic Integrity

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and it is the responsibility of all members of the University community – faculty, staff, and students – to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that discourages misconduct. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection.

Please note: Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor.

The [Academic Misconduct Policy](#) is outlined in the Undergraduate Calendar.

Accessibility

The University promotes the full participation of students who experience disabilities in their academic programs. To that end, the provision of academic accommodation is a shared responsibility between the University and the student.

¹ "You **do need** to credit ChatGPT,"
<https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/qanda/data/faq/topics/Documentation/faq0422.html>.

When accommodations are needed, the student is required to first register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS). Documentation to substantiate the existence of a disability is required; however, interim accommodations may be possible while that process is underway.

Accommodations are available for both permanent and temporary disabilities. It should be noted that common illnesses such as a cold or the flu do not constitute a disability. Use of the SAS Exam Centre requires students to make a booking at least 10 days in advance, and no later than the first business day in November, March or July as appropriate for the semester. Similarly, new or changed accommodations for online quizzes, tests and exams must be approved at least a week ahead of time. For students at the Guelph campus, information can be found on the [SAS website](#).

Accommodation of Religious Obligations

If you are unable to meet an in-course requirement due to religious obligations, please email the course instructor within two weeks of the start of the semester to make alternate arrangements.

See the Academic calendar for information on regulations and procedures for [Academic Accommodations of Religious Obligations](#).

Copies of Out-of-class Assignments

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

Drop Date

Students will have until the last day of classes to drop courses without academic penalty. The deadline to drop two-semester courses will be the last day of classes in the second semester. This applies to all undergraduate students except for Doctor of Veterinary Medicine and Associate Diploma in Veterinary Technology (conventional and alternative delivery) students. The regulations and procedures for course registration are available in the [Undergraduate Calendar - Dropping Courses](#).

Email Communication

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their <uoguelph.ca> e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the University and its students.

Health and Wellbeing

The University of Guelph provides a wide range of health and wellbeing services at the [Vaccarino Centre for Student Wellness](#). If you are concerned about your mental

health and not sure where to start, connect with a [Student Wellness Navigator](#) who can help develop a plan to manage and support your mental health or check out our [mental wellbeing resources](#). The Student Wellness team are here to help and welcome the opportunity to connect with you.

Illness

Medical notes will not normally be required for singular instances of academic consideration, although students may be required to provide supporting documentation for multiple missed assessments or when involving a large part of a course (e.g., final exam or major assignment).

Recording of Materials

Presentations that are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded or copied without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a student, or guest lecturer. Material recorded with permission is restricted to use for that course unless further permission is granted.

Resources

The [Academic Calendars](#) are the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies and regulations which apply to undergraduate, graduate and diploma programs.

When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. See the Undergraduate Calendar for information on regulations and procedures for [Academic Consideration](#).