



UNIVERSITY OF  
**GUELPH**

**HIST\*6290: North American History**  
**W26 theme: The Zoopolitics of Consumer Capitalism**

**Winter 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.

**W26 Semester Theme**

This semester, in the first half of the course, we will examine the global trade in biologically wild animals (whether born in captivity or taken from their natural habitat) since the 18th century. Students will consider how the development of consumer economies shaped that traffic, the human sciences, politics, and leisure subsisting on the trade, as well as the lives of individual nonhumans caught up in the trade. Historical reading topics include animal dealers, zoos, circuses, national parks, pet keeping, taxidermy, the politics of extinction, and the role of animals in wildlife TV and tourism. 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 animals, globalization and commodification of the environment, or popular science 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:** [REDACTED]

Instructor – [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**Office Hours** via Microsoft Teams: Students may opt to visit virtual office hours on Tuesdays from 12:00 to 2:00pm beginning on January 13—please email [REDACTED] in advance for best results.

## Assessments and Due Dates

Class Participation: 15%

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

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

Final Paper (due Fri., April 17): 40%

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

## Required Books

**Note:** Students 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.

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

## Schedule

### Week 1 (Jan. 8)

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 (Jan. 15)

Centering Animals

\* [REDACTED] will lead the discussion this week

**Questions:**

What is “lively capital”? What is “animal welfare science”? What are “biopolitics”?

**Read:**

John Berger, “Why Look at Animals?” in *About Looking* (Pantheon, 1980), 1-26.  
[.pdf posted on CourseLink]

Sue Savage-Rumbaugh, Kanzi Wamba, Panbanisha Wamba, and Nyota Wamba, “Welfare of Apes in Captive Environments: Comments on, and by, a Specific Group of Apes,” *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science* 10, no. 1 (2007): 7-19. [.pdf posted on CourseLink]

Rosemary-Claire Collard, *Animal Traffic: Lively Capital in the Global Exotic Pet Trade* (Duke University Press, 2020). [online at UofG Library]

**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 (Jan. 22)**

Globalized Pets and Spectacle

**Questions:**

How old is the wild animal trade? When, where, why, and how did it develop? Whom did it serve?

**Read:**

(browse) Louise E. Robbins, *Elephant Slaves and Pampered Parrots: Exotic Animals in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).  
[online at UofG Library]

Lawrence Perry, “The Wild Beast Traffic,” *Frank Leslie’s Popular Monthly* 41, no. 3 (July 1903): 229-38. [.pdf posted on CourseLink]

Susan Nance, *Animal Modernity: Jumbo the Elephant and the Human Dilemma* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2015). [.pdf posted on CourseLink]

**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 (Jan. 29)**

Colonization and Extinction

**Questions:**

What did people think passenger pigeons *were for*? How did settler-colonial ideas of abundance and providence influence people's behavior? How did Indigenous observers perceive the pigeons and one's responsibility to them?

**Read:**

- Chief Pokagon, "The Wild Pigeon of North America," *The Chautauquan* 22, no. 2 (Nov. 1895): 202-06. [online at Internet Archive, link in CourseLink]
- Andrea L. Smalley, *The Market in Birds: Commercial Hunting, Conservation, and the Origins of Wildlife Consumerism, 1850-1920* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2022). [online at UofG Library]

**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 5 (Feb. 5)**

Taxidermy and Conservation

**Questions:**

In what ways was conservationism part of a larger elite, settler cultural and political project? What contradictions did it raise? In what ways did taxidermy monetize animal bodies, and how did that commercial logic shape conservation rhetoric?

**Read:**

- Gregory J. Dehler, *The Most Defiant Devil: William Temple Hornaday and His Controversial Crusade to Save American Wildlife* (University of Virginia Press, 2013). [online at UofG Library]
- Rachel Poliquin, *The Breathless Zoo: Taxidermy and the Cultures of Longing* (Penn State University Press, 2012), ch. 3 "Spectacle," ch. 5 "Narrative." [online at UofG Library]

**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 6 (Feb. 12)**

Primates and "Science"

**Questions:**

What were the colonial conditions that enabled R. L. Garner's work? How "scientific" was the research activity described in the reading and film of the week? How do you see primates acting as historical actors in these accounts?

**Read:**

Jeremy Rich, *Missing Links: The African and American Worlds of R. L. Garner, Primate Collector* (University of Georgia Press, 2012). [.pdf posted on CourseLink]

Tara Suri, "Between Simians and Cell Lines: Rhesus Monkeys, Polio Research, and the Geopolitics of Tissue Culture (1934–1954)," *Journal of the History of Biology* 55, no. 1 (2022): 115-46. [.pdf posted on CourseLink]

**Watch:**

James Marsh, dir. *Project Nim*, 2011. [online at UofG Library]

**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.

**Winter Break (Feb. 16 – Feb. 22), no class meeting**

**Week 7 (Feb. 26)**

Mediated Animals

**Questions:**

How did mid-20th century zoos and wildlife film construct or produce the idea of "wildness"? How did they display a tension between care and control of biologically wild animals? What kinds of labor—human and nonhuman—made these industries possible? According to audiences, especially kids, what was the place of wild animals in the modern world?

**Read:**

Paul E. Rose, et al, "To pace or not to pace? A review of what abnormal repetitive behavior tells us about zoo animal management," *Journal of Veterinary Behavior: Clinical Applications and Research* 20 (July 1, 2017): 11-21. [.pdf posted on CourseLink]

Andrea Ringer, "Captive Breeding and the Commodification of 'Surplus' Animals at the Central Park Zoo, 1886-1974," in Susan Nance and Jennifer Marks, ed., *Bellwether Histories: Animals, Humans, and US Environments in Crisis* (University of Washington Press, 2023), 157-80. [online at UofG Library]

Daniel E. Bender, *The Animal Game: Searching for Wildness at the American Zoo* (Harvard UP, 2016). [online at UofG Library]

**Watch:**

The Fifth Estate, *Cruel Camera* (2008) – an update to the original 1982 documentary. [online at CBC, link in CourseLink]

**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 (March 5)**

The Aquarium Industrial Complex

#### **Questions:**

What was it like to be a trafficked animal in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century? How did states, corporations, scientific institutions, and animal advocates compete to regulate the life, death, and reproduction of aquatic and reptilian animals? How did scientific and commercial institutions, legal and illegal, construct knowledge about orcas or reptiles, and how did this knowledge serve consumer and institutional markets?

#### **Read:**

Jason Colby, *Orca: How We Came to Know and Love the Ocean's Greatest Predator* (Oxford University Press, 2018). [online at UofG Library]

Jennie Erin Smith, *Stolen World: A Tale of Reptiles, Smugglers, and Skulduggery* (Crown Publishers, 2011), Part II, p. 83-203. [.pdf posted on CourseLink]

Clifford Warwick, et al, "Reptile Expos: An Analysis and Recommendations for Control," *Frontiers in Animal Science* 5 (April 29, 2024): 1-19. [.pdf posted on CourseLink]

Alexandre Azevedo et al, "Understanding the Human-Reptile Bond: An Exploratory, Mixed-Methods Study," *Anthrozoös* 35, no. 6 (2022): 755-72. [.pdf posted on CourseLink]

#### **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 (March 9) in our CourseLink Dropbox**

### **Week 9 (March 12)**

Final Paper Preview Roundtable

#### **Assignment:**

Give a brief (10 minutes max!) preview of your semester historical research and writing project.

### **Week 10 (March 19)**

Independent Research & Writing Week

#### **Assignment:**

Get to work!

**Week 11 (March 26)**  
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 (April 2)**  
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, April 17 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, [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 [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 (March 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 [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 (March 12),** you will give a brief (10 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 or 12,** 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 [REDACTED] for any necessary help in structuring this presentation.

### **Final Research Paper – 40% of course grade:**

**Due: Friday, April 17** 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).<sup>1</sup>

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,

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

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.

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](#).