

**Animals and Society**  
**SOCI 330**  
**Spring 2024 Syllabus**

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Virtual Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 1-2 PM and by appointment

*This syllabus is a contract.* You are responsible for abiding by all policies contained within.

**COURSE OVERVIEW:**

Why do we swoon over cuddly puppies at the pet store but salivate over hot dogs at a baseball game? Why are cows worshipped in India and yet raised in often horrific conditions for their meat, milk and skin in the United States? Should animals have legal rights or do they exist purely to serve us? These are some of the questions we will grapple with in this class.

Non-human animals figure prominently in our daily lives – in our families, our jobs, our food, our entertainment. Yet we human animals rarely consider the role animals play in society or our attitudes toward them. The study of human-animal interaction has been a relatively recent development in the field of sociology, but the study of animals in society offers valuable sociological insight into who we are as human beings. In this course, we will apply sociological theories and concepts to the various roles that animals play in society, as well as examine the nature of the human-animal bond, with a particular focus on the connection between animal abuse and human violence.

**COURSE PRIORITIES:**

These are trying times to say the least. Pandemic reverberations, social injustice, climate change, mass violence...the list goes on. How is this sociohistorical context unique? Or is it? This is one of the questions we will tackle in this class. In addition, it will impact our ability to teach and learn. Remember that my priority (and what I am trained to do) is to teach you. But, with all that is going on, I am also committed to fostering a climate of patience, compassion, and inclusivity as we work together to create a caring and safe place to learn.

**HOW ARE WE WORKING TO PROMOTE DIVERSITY?**

It is my intention to create a learning environment for my students that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives and experiences, and honors your identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, etc.).

To help accomplish this:

- If you have a name and/or set of pronouns that differ from those that appear in your official NIU records, please let me know.
- If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class, don't hesitate to talk with me. I want to be a resource for you.
- I (like many people) am still in the process of learning about diverse perspectives and identities. If something was said in class that made you feel uncomfortable, please talk to me about it.
- Undocumented students are welcome in this class. If you are undocumented and need assistance with successfully completing courses or a degree at NIU, the coordinator for Undocumented Student Support, Sandy López, can help you with advising, campus services designed for undocumented students, and other university resources. Visit Sandy in the Campus Life Building, room 236 or contact her at [slopez1@niu.edu](mailto:slopez1@niu.edu) or 815-753-2391.

**A NOTE ABOUT CONTENT:**

This class covers topics students may find upsetting or disturbing. I recommend not taking the class if you feel you cannot handle the material. Also, the issues examined in this course may trigger strong emotions and experiences. If for any reason you feel that you would like to talk to someone about any emotions that arise while participating in the class please contact NIU's Counseling and Consultation services any time at [815-753-1206](tel:815-753-1206).

Call 911 if you're experiencing a mental health emergency or are concerned about your or another person's immediate safety.

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

*Upon completion of this course you will be able to:*

1. Apply your sociological imagination to the role of animals in our society.
2. Understand the social construction of animals.
3. Evaluate the distinctions between companion animals and animals as commodities.
4. Recognize the link between animal oppression and the oppression of other human beings.
5. Critically examine your own attitudes about animals.

## COURSE MATERIALS:

1. *Animals and Society: An Introduction to Human-Animal Studies*, by Margo DeMello, 2012.
1. *Regarding Animals*, by Arnold Arluke and Clinton Sanders, 1996.
2. *Understanding Animal Abuse: A Sociological Analysis*, by Clifton Flynn, 2012.
3. Additional reading materials will be available through the BLACKBOARD web site.

## OTHER RESOURCES:

A helpful resource for this class is the journal *Society & Animals*. Full-text articles from all issues of the journal since its inception in 1993 through 2005 can be found online at the *Animals & Society Institute's* website. The link to the journal is:

<http://www.animalsandsociety.org/resources/index.php?pid=87&tpid=22>.

## COURSE BLACKBOARD SITE:

The course Blackboard site will contain everything you need to succeed in this class, including this syllabus, important announcements, a course schedule, and calendar with due dates. These items will be modified as needed - depending on the pace of the class - so I recommend that you check it daily to make sure you stay current with the course topics, readings, and assignment due dates. If you have a question, it is probably answered here or somewhere on Blackboard. Please check before emailing me.

## OFFICE HOURS:

I encourage office visits to discuss course material, assignments, or anything else you would like to talk about. Please stop by during regular office hours or contact me by email to set up an appointment; I can usually be available within one day of you contacting me. Please be advised, I will not discuss assignment material via email. Such matters must be discussed in person. For clarity, you should include the course and section number (SOC 330) in the subject line of any email you send me.

## COURSE EXPECTATIONS:

This class *requires* preparation, attention and participation. **Preparation** means critically reading all assigned readings before class, checking Blackboard for any important announcements, and looking over the course schedule to know what we will be doing in class that day. **Attention** means engaging with the material, with me, and with your fellow students. **Participation** means answering questions when asked of you, raising critical comments of the material, and asking your own questions when you do not understand something.

Participation is 10% of your grade. Take it seriously!

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- **EXAMS:**  
There will be two in-class essay exams. Exams will cover material from class readings **AND** lectures and will be open-note.
- **FIELD ASSIGNMENT**  
Students will be required to visit an animal shelter or farm sanctuary: TAILS Humane Society in DeKalb or Freedom Run Farm Sanctuary in Franklin Grove. Students will work in teams of three or four when feasible and pick a pre-determined time to visit either. More information will be available on Blackboard.
- **BLACKBOARD JOURNAL POSTS**  
Every week throughout the semester, students will use Blackboard Journal to reflect on the course material. For more information, see details on Blackboard.
- **ANALYTIC REFLECTIVE PAPER**  
You will use your journal posts, and other relevant course material, to write a Final Analytic Reflective Paper due during finals week. For more information, see details on Blackboard.
- **ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION**  
Attendance will be checked randomly throughout the semester to ensure that everyone is coming to class. In-class participation is strongly encouraged.

Final grades will be determined as follows:

Exams	200 points
Journal Posts	100 points
Field Assignment	50 points
Analytic Reflective Paper	100 points
Attendance and Participation	50 points
<b>Total Points</b>	<b>500 points</b>

## GRADING:

Calculating your grades simply involves adding up your total points and dividing that number by the total number of points available in the class to date. Grades are yours to **earn**, not mine to **give**.

The grade scale is:

A = 93 – 100%	B+ = 87 – 89%	C+ = 77 – 79%	D = 60 – 69%	F = below 60%
A- = 90 – 92%	B = 83 – 86%	C = 70 – 76%		
	B- = 80 – 82%			

You should evaluate your assignments and exams carefully **before** turning them in to be graded. A thorough reading of the descriptions of the assignments, available rubrics and/or exam questions will help you evaluate your work. If, after an assignment has been graded, you find there is a discrepancy in the assessment of your assignment, you are encouraged to schedule a meeting with me to discuss your grade. Students should also regularly check Blackboard to monitor their grades.

Grading issues should be discussed immediately after an assignment or exam has been returned (or the grade posted), **not** at the end of the semester. **Do not wait until the end of the semester to discuss a specific grade or your course grade.**

## ATTENDANCE POLICY:

Why is Class Attendance Important? (From *NIU's Attendance Matters*)

1. You retain more when you listen to your instructor; missing just one day could put you behind.
2. Your teacher explains material better than you can learn it yourself.
3. There's a direct correlation between going to class and doing well in it.
4. Your attendance shows your professor the class is important to you.
5. You are paying to be in class.
6. If your grade is borderline, your teacher may give you extra points for good attendance.

Some professors do not care if you attend class. I do! I will record attendance randomly throughout the semester. Anyone who arrives 15 or more minutes late will be recorded as absent. If you know ahead of time that you have to be late or leave early, notify me the class period before. There are no excused absences. If you are not in class, and I take attendance, you will be marked as absent.

If a student will be absent from classes for a week or more because of an accident, illness, or other emergency, instructors will be notified of the absence only if students or their parents request it through the Division of Student Affairs. [Health Services](#) will not release information about students unless they provide a written request.

Leaves of absence will be granted for volunteer services related to disaster relief in accordance with applicable Illinois statutes or executive orders issued by the State of Illinois in response to emergency situations. To initiate a leave of absence, students should contact their College Dean's office, or the vice provost (or the vice provost's delegate) for any student who has no college affiliation. Following the period of volunteer service, Registration and Records will facilitate reenrollment of the student.

In the case of an absence due to required attendance at a university-sponsored event such as a department trip, performing arts activity, ROTC function, or athletic competition, reasonable attempts shall be made by faculty members to allow the student to make up missed work. Both the sponsoring unit and the student should inform the faculty member as soon as possible in the semester in order for arrangements to be made for completing missed assignments, examinations or other required course work. The student is required to provide each instructor with an official notification in advance of the absence (e.g., a letter from the chair of the sponsoring department, the head of the sponsoring unit, or the coach).

If you do miss class, it is **YOUR** responsibility to keep up with happenings in the course. Specifically, you are responsible for all materials covered in class while you were gone as well as any in-class exercises, videos, schedule changes, and / or deadlines announced or given during the class you missed.

## MAKE-UP AND LATE ASSIGNMENT POLICY:

You must let me know **BEFORE** you miss anything! Exams, papers and other assignments are due on the due date. I do **not** accept any assignments late or via email.

If you encounter an emergency, you must provide **official written documentation** to be eligible to make-up any missed assignments.

If a student will be absent from classes for a week or more because of an accident, illness, or other emergency, instructors will be notified of the absence only if students or their parents **request it** through the Division of Student Affairs. [Health Services](#) will not release information about students unless they provide a written request.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:**

Good academic work must be based on honesty. The attempt of any student to present as his or her own work that which he or she has not produced is regarded by the faculty and administration as a serious offense. Students are considered to have cheated if they copy the work of another during an examination or turn in a paper or an assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else. Students are responsible for plagiarism, intentional or not, if they copy material from books, magazines, or other sources without identifying and acknowledging those sources or if they paraphrase ideas from such sources without acknowledging them. Students responsible for, or assisting others in, either cheating or plagiarism on an assignment, quiz, or examination may receive a grade of F for the course involved and may be suspended or dismissed from the university. In short, any form of cheating or plagiarism will not be tolerated.

If you have questions about academic integrity, the University has provided some tutorials here:

<https://www.niu.edu/academic-integrity/index.shtml>

*If you attempt to take credit for someone else's work, without giving that person due credit, you are guilty of plagiarism and will face the consequences described above. If you have questions about how to properly cite someone else's work, simply ask!*

Also, students are not allowed to use advanced automated tools (artificial intelligence or machine learning tools such as ChatGPT or Dall-E 2) on assignments in this course. Each student is expected to complete each assignment without substantive assistance from others, including automated tools.

A faculty member has original jurisdiction over any instances of academic misconduct that occur in a course which the faculty member is teaching. The student shall be given the opportunity to resolve the matter in meetings with the faculty member and the department chair. If the facts of the incident are not disputed by the student, the faculty member may elect to resolve the matter at that level by levying a sanction no greater than an F for that course. The faculty member shall notify the student in writing whenever such action is taken, and the [Office of Community Standards and Student Conduct](#) shall receive a copy of the Academic Misconduct Incident Report indicating final disposition of the case, which will be placed in the student's judicial file. In all matters where the charge of academic misconduct is disputed by the student or if the faculty member feels a sanction greater than an F in the course is appropriate (such as repeated offenses or flagrant violations), the faculty member shall refer the matter to the Office of Community Standards and Student Conduct making use of the Academic Misconduct Incident Report.

**ELECTRONIC DEVICES POLICY:**

You are welcome to use a laptop or tablet in this class as long as it contributes to your learning. Students are expected to actively listen and participate in classroom activities. If you are unable to contribute to the discussion or are otherwise distracted by your computer, tablet, or cell phone, I will ask you to refrain from using it in class. If you have any questions, please contact me.

**COURSE ACCOMODATIONS:**

If you need an accommodation for this class, please contact the Disability Resource Center as soon as possible. The DRC coordinates accommodations for students with disabilities. It is located in the Campus Life Building, Suite 180, and can be reached at 815-753-1303 or [drc@niu.edu](mailto:drc@niu.edu). Also, please contact me privately as soon as possible so we can discuss your accommodations. Please note that you will not be required to disclose your disability, only your accommodations. The sooner you let me know your needs, the sooner I can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

**COURSE SCHEDULE: Lecture Plan and Assigned Readings** (subject to change)

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Reading Assignment</b>
<b>COURSE INTRODUCTION</b>	January 16	
<b>The Social Construction of the Animal</b>		
<b>WHY ANIMALS?</b>	January 18	DeMello, Chapter 1 Arluke and Sanders, Introduction
<b>HISTORICAL AND COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES</b>	January 23	DeMello, Chapter 5; Hodges, 1999
<b>STUDYING ANIMALS SOCIOLOGICALLY</b>	January 25	Arluke and Sanders, Chapter 1; Arluke 2002
<b>SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTING ANIMALS</b>	January 30	DeMello, Chapter 3; Arluke and Sanders, Chapter 7
<b>HUMAN-ANIMAL INTERACTION</b>	February 1	Arluke and Sanders, Chapter 3; Alger and Alger, 1997
<b>The Role of Animals in Our Lives</b>		
<b>LIVING WITH ANIMALS</b>	February 6	DeMello, Chapter 8
<b>FILM</b>	February 8	“Dogs Decoded”
<b>WORKING WITH ANIMALS</b>	February 13	DeMello, Chapter 11; Arluke and Sanders, Chapter 4 and Chapter 5
<b>FIELD TRIP</b>	February 15	Tails Humane Society
<b>SERVICE AND THERAPY ANIMALS</b>	February 20	DeMello, Chapter 10; Sanders, Chapter 5
<b>CONSUMING ANIMALS</b>	February 22	DeMello, Chapter 7; Herzog, Chapter 7
<b>ANIMALS AND ENTERTAINMENT/SPORT</b>	February 27	Forsyth and Evans, 1998; DeMello, Chapter 9
<b>CLASS CANCELLED</b>	February 29	
<b>EXAM 1</b>	March 5	
<b>FIELD TRIP</b>	March 7	Freedom Run Farm Sanctuary
<b>SPRING BREAK</b>	March 12-14	
<b>Animal Abuse and Human Violence</b>		
<b>FILM</b>	March 19	“The Elephant in the Living Room”
<b>WHY STUDY ANIMAL ABUSE?</b>	March 21	Flynn, Chapter 1
<b>A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF ANIMAL ABUSE</b>	March 28	Flynn, Chapter 2
<b>THE LINK BETWEEN ANIMAL ABUSE AND HUMAN VIOLENCE</b>	April 2	Flynn, Chapters 3-4
<b>THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES</b>	April 4	Flynn, Chapters 5 and 7
<b>RECENT STUDIES</b>	April 9	Burchfield, 2016; Burchfield, Markowitz and Koskela, 2022
<b>EXAM 2</b>	April 11	
<b>Broader Themes and The Future of Animal-Human Relationships</b>		
<b>NON-HUMAN AND HUMAN OPPRESSION</b>	April 16	DeMello, Chapter 13; Arluke and Sanders, Chapter 6
<b>ANIMAL WELFARE AND ANIMAL RIGHTS</b>	April 18	DeMello, Chapter 18 and 19; Regan, 1989
<b>POLICY AND PRACTICE</b>	April 23	Flynn, Chapter 6; Herzog, Chapter 10

<b>CLASS CANCELLED</b>	April 25	
<b>PULLING THINGS TOGETHER</b>	April 30	Arluke and Sanders, Conclusion; DeMello, Chapter 20; Herzog, Chapter 10
<b>LOOKING AHEAD</b>	May 2	