ENTS 395: Environmental Studies Comps Seminar

“Considering Animals”

Course Outline

Week 1: Introduction: The Animal Issue Area

Reading: Punch, Developing Effective Research Proposals, 2nd Ed., Ch. 2

Smith, Governing Animals, Ch. 1

[The Smith reading covers the history of animal policy in the US, giving a good overview of historical context and map of the contemporary issue area. Class discussion will focus also on how to formulate a good research question and conceptions of interdisciplinarity.]

Week 2: Developing an Interdisciplinary Project

Reading: Tom Regan, The Case for Animals Rights (selection from The Animal Ethics Reader);

Jamieson, Science, Knowledge and Animals Minds;

Jamieson and Bekoff, On Aims and Methods of Cognitive Ethology (in Morality’s Progress)

Cora Diamond, Eating Meat and Eating People

[These readings explicitly address how and why one needs to draw on natural science and the humanities and social sciences to answer the basic philosophical question raised by Regan.]

Week 3: Literature Review, Research Questions, Research Process

Reading: Punch, Ch. 3, 4;

Smith, Governing Animals, Ch. 2, 3

[These two chapters from Smith include extensive lit reviews and a specific research question. We’ll examine them critically to figure out what makes for a good lit review and research question. This would also be a good class in which to have students read research proposals from past versions of the course and use the rubrics to evaluate them.]

Week 4: Designing a Research Method

Reading: Punch, Ch. 5;

Jamieson, Against Zoos;

Richard Reading and Brian Miller, “Attitudes and attitude change among zoo visitors”

Markus Gussett and Gerald Dick, “Building a Future for Wildlife? Evaluating the contribution

of the world zoo and aquarium community to in situ conservation.”

[We will critique the empirical readings to determine whether they provide reason to reject the arguments in Jamieson’s piece. We’ll springboard from there into a more general discussion about how to design empirical studies]

Week 5: Finding and Analyzing Data

Reading: Endangered Species Act at Thirty, Ch. 2, 5, 6, 12

Other resources:

<http://www.gapminder.org>  
<http://www.worldmapper.org>

[These data-rich chapters give us the opportunity to focus on the challenges of finding good quantitative data in this field, where to find quantitative data, what kinds of data might be useful, ways to analyze the data, and issues of data visualization.]

Week 6: Writing the Proposal

Reading: Punch Ch. 6, 8.3;

Carleton IACUC webpage on animal care and use in psychology;

Research proposal from Carleton’s IACUC

[This class will focus on the regulatory system for protecting lab animals. We’ll use an actual research proposal and IACUC application, using what we’ve learned about the research process to critique the proposal by both ethical and methodological criteria.]

\*Lit Review and Statement of Research Question due

\*Data Report due

Week 7: Refining the Methodology

Reading: Bartlett, P., A. Bartlett, S. Walshaw, S. Halstead, et al. “Rates of Euthanasia and Adoption for Dogs

and Cats in Michigan Animal Shelters.” Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science 8, no. 2 (2005):

97-104;

Guttilla, D. & P. Stapp, “Effects of Sterilization on Movements of Feral Cats at a Wildland-Urban

Interface.” Journal of Mammalogy 91(2): 482-489 (2010).

[These studies will be used to discuss a variety of methodological issues, with attention to the special difficulties of doing quantitative research in animal studies.]

Week 8: Methodology Continued

Reading: [Candea, Mattai, "I fell in love with Carlos the meerkat," American Ethnologist 37:2, 241-58.](http://serc.carleton.edu/admin/private_download.php?file_id=35663)

[This reading explores issues of ethics and the researcher/animal relationship, and other issues in ethnographic research as they relate to the study of animals]

\*Draft Proposals due

Week 9: Workshop draft proposals

Reading: Draft research proposals

[Each group will read the proposals of two other groups and evaluate them using our rubrics. The groups will provide detailed feedback to one another in class.]

Week 10: The Road Ahead

Reading: Comps guidelines and rubric

[This class session will be used mainly for getting feedback about the course.]

\*Final Research Proposal due in class

Assignments

1. Statement of Research Question and Literature Review

A good research question grows out of the scholarship on your topic. The purpose of the literature review is to explain the scholarly conversation so and demonstrate how this question has arisen. The lit review makes it clear why this question is important and interesting. It also explains how others have tried to answer it, and how and why they have failed. It should be clear by the end of the lit review how your project will contribute to the scholarship on your topic.

The statement of research question should be a couple of paragraphs at most. The lit review might be 5-7 pages. It’s better to make the lit review too long and cut it down later. The deeper and broader your research in the area, the better your comps will be. Your lit review should be properly documented and include a bibliography.

2. Data Report

The data report should describe the universe of available data (available to you) on your topic. This includes quantitative data that others have collected (like census data); qualitative data that others have collected (interviews, etc); documents and other artifacts; and quantitative and qualitative data that you can collect (through surveys, interviews, gathering information from documents, etc). You can organize this report in whatever way makes sense to you. Your search for data should be informed by the literature review—the data you identify will have to be relevant to questions being raised in the scholarly literature on the topic. ***Keep in mind that your research question may change***. It’s important to identify data that might be useful if your research goes off in a different direction.

The data report will probably be 4-6 pages. Length is less important than finding a variety of data that’s relevant to your research question.

3. Research Proposal

Good research projects grow out of real-world problems or issues.  We will look to see that your group is aware of and consciously tries to integrate different disciplinary approaches and/or knowledges that are relevant to the problem you are investigating.  We are particularly concerned that our majors demonstrate confidence in making arguments using both quantitative and non-quantitative reasoning.

We expect the research proposal to be 12-15 pages (not including the timeline and work plan), and to include the following:

1)  A title.  Choose a working title that is concise and allows others to clearly infer the topic and focus of your research project.

2)  A well-formulated and clearly-stated research question that can be answered within the time frame given.

3)  A literature review.  Explain how your research will relate to, build on, and depart from the work of others who have addressed the problem you are investigating.  What contributions do you expect your research to make to a specific scholarly or policy debate?

4)  An explanation of the methodologies the project will employ, including identification of the relevant sources of empirical data.  We expect all comps project to make use of empirical data (either primary data gathered by the group or secondary data sets).

5)  If the project includes philosophical, artistic or literary analysis, the proposal should identify the scholarly literature that will inform such analysis.

6)  A specific timeline and work plan that lays out, in detail, when each task will be completed and which group member is responsible for which tasks.