

ENL 4273: Interspecies Modernity: Animals in the Twentieth Century British Literature Spring 2025

Class: 25101, **Section:** 1GS4, **Instructor Name:** Suvendu Ghatak

Course meeting times: Monday, Wednesday, Friday | Period 4 (10:40 AM - 11:30 AM)

Class Location: MAT 0113

Office Hours: Thursday Period 7-8 (1:55pm- 3:50pm) and by appointment via Zoom.

Office Location: TUR 4325

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Animals are a ubiquitous presence in British literature of the twentieth century. They scutter across cities as companions or stray into the wilderness. They lurk in the twilight of a waning empire, creep in the grief of postwar devastation, often take apart the barriers of gender, class, and race, and always ask what it means to be human. While animals have always held an important place in the literary imagination, this course treads across the canonical and the popular, writings meant for the children and for the grownups, poetry, and prose, to explore how encounter with animals play a key role in the shaping of late modernity. The course has five clusters. In the first cluster on “Insects” we read Katherine Mansfield’s postwar short story “The Fly” alongside A.S. Byatt’s historical novella *Morpho Eugenia*. In the cluster “Mammals”, we pair Virginia Woolf’s imaginative biography of a cocker spaniel *Flush*, alongside George Orwell’s essay “Shooting an Elephant”. In the cluster “Reptiles”, we read D. H. Lawrence’s poems “Snake”, alongside Roald Dahl’s novel on a pet tortoise *Esio Trot*. In the cluster on “Birds”, we read Ted Hughes’s poems “Hawk in the Rain” and “Hawk Roosting”, alongside short sections from Derek Walcott’s poem collection *White Egrets* and Benjamin Zephaniah’s “Talking Turkeys”. We sign off with “Marine Animals”, reading Samuel Beckett’s short story “Dante and the Lobster”.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

This course fulfils the Humanities (H) subject area objectives of the General Education curricula, designated by the University of Florida

Humanities courses must afford students the ability to think critically through the mastering of subjects concerned with human culture, especially literature, history, art, music, and philosophy, and must include selections from the Western canon.

Humanities courses provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and theory or methodologies used within a humanities discipline or the humanities in general. Students will learn to identify and to analyze the relevant factors that shape thought. These courses emphasize clear and effective analysis and approach issues and problems from multiple perspectives.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

1. Beckett, Samuel. “Dante and the Lobster” <https://evergreenreview.com/read/dante-and-the-lobster/>
2. Byatt, A.S. *Morpho Eugenia in Angels and Insects: Two Novels* (Vintage International, 1994)

3. Dahl, Roald. *Esio Trot* (Viking Books, 1990)
4. Hughes, Ted. "Hawk in the Rain" in *Hawk in the Rain* (Faber & Faber, 2019)
<https://genius.com/Ted-hughes-the-hawk-in-the-rain-annotated>
5. Hughes, Ted. "Hawk in the Rain" in *Lupercal* (Faber & Faber, 2023)
<https://allpoetry.com/hawk-roosting>
6. Lawrence, D.H. "Snake." <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/148471/snake-5bec57d7bfa17>
7. Mansfield, Katherine. "The Fly." <https://americanliterature.com/author/katherine-mansfield/short-story/the-fly/>
8. Orwell, George. "Shooting an Elephant." <https://www.orwellfoundation.com/the-orwell-foundation/orwell/essays-and-other-works/shooting-an-elephant/>
9. Walcott, Derek. *White Egrets* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011)
10. Woolf, Virginia. *Flush* (Mariner Book Classics, 1976)
11. Zephaniah, Benjamin. "Talking Turkeys." https://benjaminzephaniah.com/books/talking-turkeys/?doing_wp_cron=1734126971.9512479305267333984375

All secondary critical materials will either be uploaded under "Files" in Canvas or embedded in the syllabus as links.

COURSE POLICIES:

1. You must complete all assignments to receive credit for this course.

2. **Attendance Policy:** Attendance is fundamental for the success of this course. Like all lecture-discussion courses, this one needs you! Use your allotted absences wisely (for emergencies, major illness) as you would for any job. Find a list of UF approved excuses, and certified illnesses here for which alone a make-up option will be applicable (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>) **You will fail the course if you accrue six 50-minute absences.** You will earn a lowered course grade if you accrue four absences.

3. **Late Policy:** Please be punctual. Arriving late at 3 sessions equal 1 absence. Make sure, however, to contact me through email or Canvas as soon as possible when something prevents you from arriving (on time) to class. Please communicate with me openly and honestly.

5. **Late Papers/Assignments:** No late submissions will be accepted unless an extension has been previously agreed upon with the instructor. I am flexible and empathetic, but, again, clear and prompt communication is essential for this course and elsewhere.

6. **Paper Format & Submission:** All papers will be submitted electronically, via Canvas unless otherwise stated. Each submitted paper must be in .doc or .docx format.

7. **Paper Maintenance Responsibilities:** Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.

8. Students should be respectful of their peers and different viewpoints on subjects discussed. Disrespectful behavior is unprofessional and will result in lower participation grades or a meeting with the instructor to address the behavior. Additionally, emails to the instructor must follow professional protocols of subject, grammar, and tone— including proper salutations and signature. Remember that all emails sent through our UFL accounts are Public Records (Florida Statutes, Chapter 119).

9. The University of Florida is committed to providing a safe educational, working, and residential environment that is free from sexual harassment or misconduct directed towards any and all members of the community: [Statements » UF Office for Accessibility and Gender Equity \(ufl.edu\)](#)

10. **Academic Honesty:** Students are required to be honest in their coursework, may not use notes during quizzes or exams, and must properly cite all sources that they have consulted for their projects. Any act of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of Students and may result in failure of the assignment in question and/or the course. Also, turn-it-in will be used as a plagiarism checker. For University of Florida’s honor code, see <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

11. Students with disabilities who are requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, <https://disability.ufl.edu/>), which will provide appropriate documentation to give your instructor early in the semester.

12. **Counseling and Mental Health Resources:** Students facing difficulties completing the course or who are in need of counseling or urgent help should call the on-campus Counseling and Wellness Center (352 392-1575; <https://counseling.ufl.edu/>).

13. **Online Course Evaluation:** Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at [Evaluations](#). Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/>

15. **Policy on environmental sustainability:** Whenever possible, I will use paper-sparing electronic media to distribute our course materials. Consider purchasing electronic editions of assigned texts when they are available or used copies of print texts. If you do not elect to keep your print books, consider sharing them with others after the semester ends. (For example, you could donate them to the Alachua County Friends of the Library annual book sale <http://folacld.org/>)

See the grade distribution and assignment explanation below.

GRADE DISTRIBUTION:

Assignments	Percentage
Self-Evaluation Letters	20%
Response Papers with Discussion Question	30%

Mini Lecture/Podcast	30%
Final Project	20%
Total	100%

ASSIGNMENTS:

1. **Self-Evaluation Letters (20%):**

In this course, you are required to write **two** letters of self-evaluation and goal setting. Each of these letters should be submitted as word documents through email. The submission of letter 1 should be followed by an appointment for consultation during office hours.

- Letter 1 should indicate the writing and research goals you have for this class and create a rubric for evaluation for all the other assignments of this course.
- Letter 2 should address whether you met the goals set in the beginning of the semester and assign a letter grade to your final paper in accordance with your rubric. *This letter should be accompanied with the submission of your final paper.*

The self-evaluation letters are designed to minimize the authority of the instructor in the course and enable the learners to have agency over their learning outcomes.

2. **Response Papers with One Discussion Question, 4 times in the semester, 600 words each (30%):**

You are required to submit **4** response papers in the course. The response paper could take the form of close readings from the texts, a reflection on the theme of the week's readings, or historical contextualization. The response papers should help you workshop ideas for your final paper.

The response paper should be accompanied by one discussion question related to your response, and be aimed at opening up the class discussion.

3. **Recorded 10-minute-Long Mini Lecture/Mini Podcast (30%):**

This is a group project. Students in **groups of three** are required to create one **10-minute-long** mini lecture to be posted on YouTube or a mini podcast for uploading into podcasting platforms, related to either a primary text, a theoretical concept, or a historical theme discussed in the course. It should have persuasive visual/aural rhetoric and meet accessibility needs.

4. **Final Paper (20%):**

The final paper (**2000 words** in length) should be written in consultation with the instructor, developing ideas you workshopped in your response papers. The papers must engage with at least **two** secondary sources, which the instructor will help identify.

Tentative Schedule

Week One:

Monday: 01/13: Introductions, and discussion on the syllabus and the assignments.

Wednesday: 01/13: Berger, John. "Why Look at Animals?", in *About Looking*.

https://www.sas.upenn.edu/~cavitch/pdf-library/Berger_LookAnimals.pdf . Read before class. Class discussion

Friday: 01/15: Class discussion.

Email submitting the Self-evaluation Letter 1, and book an appointment.

Cluster I: Insects

Week Two:

Monday: 01/20: Holiday

Wednesday: 01/22: Read “The Fly” before class. Class discussion.

Friday: 01/24: Class discussion. **Students are assigned groups for mini podcast/video.**

Week Three:

Monday: 01/27: Read *Morpho Eugenia* up to page 100 before class. Discussion

Wednesday: 01/29: Read *Morpho Eugenia* up to page 145 before class. Discussion

Friday: 01/31: Read *Morpho Eugenia* to end. Class discussion.

Cluster II: Mammals

Week Four:

Monday: 02/03: Read *Flush* first 3 chapters before class.

Wednesday: 02/05: Read *Flush* Ch. 4 before class. Class discussion.

Friday: 02/07: Read *Flush* Ch. 5 before class. Discussion.

Week Five:

Monday: 02/10: Read *Flush* to the end. Class discussion

Wednesday: 02/12: Read Craig Smith, “Across the Widest Gulf: Nonhuman Subjectivity in Virginia Woolf’s *Flush*,” *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (Autumn, 2002), pp. 348-361 before class. Discussion.

Friday: 02/14: Class discussion.

Week Six

Monday: 02/17: Read “Shooting an Elephant” before class. Discussion.

Wednesday: 02/19: Read Saha, Jonathan. “Colonizing elephants: animal agency, undead capital and imperial science in British Burma,” *BJHS: Themes* 2 (2017), pp. 169–189 before class. Discussion.

Friday: 02/21: Class discussion.

Cluster III: Reptiles

Week Seven:

Monday: 02/24: Read Lawrence’s “Snake” before class. Discussion.

Wednesday: 02/26: Read Carrie Rohman, “The Animal among Others,” in *Stalking the Subject: Modernism and the Animal* (Columbia University Press, 2009), pp. 1-28 before the class. Discussion.

Friday: 02/28: Class discussion.

Week Eight:

Monday: 03/03: Read *Esio Trot* before class. Discussion.

Wednesday: 03/05: Carolyn L. Burke and Joby G. Copenhaver, “Animals as People in Children’s Literature.” Read before class. Discussion.

Friday: 03/07: Class discussion.

Cluster IV: Birds

Week Nine:

Monday: 03/10: Read “Hawk in the Rain” and “Hawk Roosting” before class. Discussion.

Wednesday: 03/12: Class discussion.

Friday: 03/14: Class discussion on podcast/video ideas.

Week Ten:

Spring Break

Week Eleven:

Monday: 03/24: Read “White Egrets” and “The Lost Empire” before class. Discussion.

The podcast/video assignment due by midnight of 3/24.

Wednesday: 03/26: Read “White Egrets VI” and “A London Afternoon” before class. Discussion.

Friday: 03/28: Read Martiny, Erik. “All that Romantic Taxidermy”: Derek Walcott’s Caribbean Bestiary,” *Commonwealth Essays and Studies*, 34.2 (2012), pp. 91-103.

<https://doi.org/10.4000/ces.5508> before class. Discussion.

Week Twelve:

Monday: 03/31: Read “Talking Turkeys” before class. Discussion.

Wednesday: 04/02: Read “Zephaniah Speaks: Poetic Thoughts” before class for discussion. https://benjaminzephaniah.com/poetic-thoughts/?doing_wp_cron=1734244741.5066769123077392578125

Friday: 04/04: Workday

Cluster V: Marine Animals

Week Thirteen:

Monday: 04/07: Read “Dante and the Lobster” before class. Discussion.

Wednesday: 04/09: Class Discussion.

Friday: 04/11: Class discussion.

Email for consultation about final papers.

Week Fourteen:

Monday: 04/14: Read Wynter, Sylvia, and Katherine McKittrick. “Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species? Or, to Give Humanness a Different Future: Conversations.” *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, ed. Katherine McKittrick (Duke University Press, 2015), pp. 9–89 before class. Discussion.

Wednesday: 04/16: Discussion on Wynter.

Friday: 04/18: Final discussion.

Final paper due midnight of 04/25.