Department of Animal Biosciences

ANSC*6700 – ANIMALS IN SOCIETY:

Historical and Global Perspectives on Animal Welfare

Course Overview

This graduate level course will review and discuss society's relationship with animals. It will explore how animals are affected by the ways in which human beings keep them, use them, and conflict with them. The main ethical theories that deal with humanity's duties to animals will be introduced, traced through history, and their strengths and weaknesses discussed. The relationship of science to ethics will be considered and the importance of being able to justify a moral point of view will be emphasized. Various scientific approaches to animal welfare will be described and the crucial importance of animal sentience in these approaches will be discussed. The acceptance of sentience in animals through history will be considered and the problems associated with assessing subjective feelings will be discussed. Society's attitudes to animals in Canada will be compared to elsewhere, and cultural differences will be considered. Society's willingness to pay for improved welfare will be discussed. The inadequacies of Canadian laws to protect animal welfare will be discussed. Finally, a variety of contemporary welfare problems will be described arising from the use of animals in agriculture, biomedical science, product testing, as service and working animals, and as animals in entertainment and sport. Possible solutions will be explored.

Course Objectives

The general aims of the course are to:

- Introduce the main ethical theories that deal with animals
- Describe the various scientific approaches to animal welfare
- Consider the relationship of science to ethics
- Interpret and critically evaluate the literature on animal welfare
- Make objective and evidence-based judgments on animal welfare
- Be creative in solving welfare problems

The specific learning outcomes of the course are to:

1. Sensitize students to other people's values and views
2. Emphasize the importance of being able to justify a moral point of view
3. Encourage exploring different forms of inquiry
4. Enhance literacy and independence of thought
5. Stimulate logical thinking and sharpen thinking skills
6. Enable students to marshal evidence in a logical way
7. Present cogent arguments in a well-structured and convincingly-stated way
8. Instil a sense of historical development and cultural diversity

Method of Course Presentation

This course will be offered face-to-face. Topics will be presented using traditional seminar format. There will be a few formal presentations by the instructor, but the major part of the seminars will be spent in discussion, debate and role-playing exercises.

Instructor

Dr. Ian Duncan, iduncan@uoguelph.ca

Instructional Support

For any questions about the course or its contents, students are welcome to e-mail Dr. Duncan at any time (iduncan@uoguelph.ca). Dr. Duncan will be checking his e-mail account many times a day and promises a speedy reply (within 4 hours).

Seminar Schedule

Tuesdays 11.30 am – 2.20 pm   Room 101, ANNU

Method of Evaluation

Seminar	Activity	Mark
6	Choose a welfare topic and discuss how various cultures deal with it. Comment on the strengths and weaknesses of each view and which view you personally favour and why. (Oral assignment)	10
7	Choose a piece of animal welfare legislation from any country and discuss its inadequacy and/or ability to protect animal welfare. (Written assignment, 3 pages text, double spaced, + page(s) of references)	15
8	Debate an animal welfare topic formally. Topics and debate teams will be assigned ahead of time. (Oral assignment; team mark)	25
10/11/12	Choose a particular welfare problem and make a formal presentation, analyzing its causes and suggesting solutions. Answer questions from classmates and instructor (Powerpoint and oral presentation).	25
	Each student should also write a paper on the same topic as the presentation. (Written assignment of no more than 6 pages, double spaced. References on additional pages. Due 1 week after presentation).	25
	Total	**100**

Assessment Details:

Animal Welfare and Cultural Views   **10%**
Oral Presentation
Choose a welfare topic and discuss how various cultures deal with it. Comment on the strengths and weaknesses of each view and which view you personally favour and why. (Week 6 seminar)

Course Learning Outcomes Assessed: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

Animal Welfare Legislation   **15%**
Written Assignment
Choose a piece of animal welfare legislation from any country and discuss its inadequacy and/or ability to protect animal welfare. Submissions must be no more than 3 pages of text (12 pt. font, double-spaced) excluding references (Week 7 seminar)

Course Learning Outcomes Assessed: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7

Animal Welfare Debates   **25%**
Group Oral Presentation
Debate an animal welfare topic formally. Topics and debate teams will be assigned ahead of time. (Week 8 Seminar)

Course Learning Outcomes Assessed: 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7

Animal Welfare Problems and Solutions   **25%**
Oral Presentation
Choose a particular welfare problem and make a formal presentation, analyzing its causes and suggesting solutions. Answer questions from classmates and instructor. (Week 10, 11, & 12 seminars)

Course Learning Outcomes Assessed: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

Written Assignment   **25%**
Each student will also write a paper on the same topic of their spoken presentation. Submissions must be no more than 5 pages of text (12 pt. font, double spaced) excluding references. These will be due 1 week after the date of their oral presentation.

Course Learning Outcomes Assessed: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8

Last Day to Drop Course

The final day to drop Fall 2025 courses without academic penalty is the last day of classes: November 28, 2025.
After this date, a mark will be recorded, whether course work is completed or not (A zero is assigned for missed tests/assignments). This mark will show on the students transcript and will be calculated into their average.