MHB 559/PHIL 543: Animal Bioethics
Syllabus, Fall 2010 (Final)
© 2010 Robert Streiffer

A. Administrative Information
Instructor: Professor Robert Streiffer
Lectures: Eng Hall 3355, Monday, 2:25-4:55 (15 minute break at 3:30)
Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:00-3:00 in my philosophy office and by appointment
Bioethics Office: 1411 Medical Sciences Center; 262-7490
Philosophy Office: 5101 Helen C. White Hall; 263-9479
E-mail: rstreiffer@wisc.edu. Please begin the subject of all e-mails with “[Animal Bioethics F10]”.
Course Home Page: https://mywebspace.wisc.edu/rstreiffer/web/

B. Course Description
This course is for graduate students and upper-level undergraduates. It is an in-depth study of the main philosophical theories in animal ethics and a survey of the ways that empirical research is important for evaluating the truth of those theories as well as for understanding their practical implications. Although the exact content will vary from year to year, topics covered will include the moral status of animals, different conceptions of animal welfare, animals’ mental lives, the use of animals in research, and the use of animals in agriculture. Additional topics could include disobedience on behalf of animals and the legal and regulatory aspects of animal use oversight.

The topics are intended to hang together in the following way. An understanding of the moral status of animals provides an account of how morally important they and their interests are, in their own right and independently of their utility to others. Are their lives and interests morally irrelevant, do they matter but in a way that can be justifiably sacrificed for the greater good, or are they protected by individual rights that stand as a bar (even if the bar can be overridden) to being sacrificed for the greater good? For animals that do have independent moral importance, the fact that an action would contribute to or detract from their well-being matters morally, and so it is important to understand how to properly define animal well-being. Is animal well-being defined purely in terms of the quality of their subjective experiences, in terms of the satisfaction of their desires, or in terms of objective factors such as physiological health or species-typical functioning? However animal well-being is to be understood, animals with different cognitive and emotive capacities will have different levels of well-being accessible to them. Thus, information about animals’ mental lives is also relevant to understanding how we can affect their well-being. For example, if an animal is not capable of feeling pain, then nothing we can do can hurt it and so we need not have moral concern over that possibility. But if, for example, an animal is capable of feeling love or friendship, then separating it from its parent, child, mate, or friend will be wrong unless adequate moral justification can be found. Moreover, many of the claims about the moral status of different animals depend upon empirical claims about their mental lives, not all of which are equally well-supported by the empirical literature. With some understanding, then, of the moral status of animals, their well-being, and their mental lives, we are then in a position to begin morally evaluating the human use of animals in agriculture and research.
C. **Materials:**
   - Reading packet which will be available for purchase at Bob’s Copy Shop on University between Randall Ave. and Lorch St. (1401 University Ave., 251-2936). I will send out an e-mail to the class when it is ready.
   - Handouts and news articles distributed in class
   - Because the debate is very polarized, you should be careful about relying on the web for information about animal use.

D. **Objectives**

There are three overall goals of the course:

1. To improve your familiarity with the facts, concepts, theories, and arguments from the relevant scientific, legal, and ethical literature, esp. with regard to theories of the moral status of nonhuman animals, conceptions of animal welfare, and the mental lives of animals.
2. To improve your ability to think through for yourself the ethical issues raised by our use of animals in agriculture and research.
3. To improve your ability to discuss with others the ethical issues raised by our use of animals in agriculture and research.

E. **Grading Plan:**

I use the following numerical equivalents when calculating your final grades: A=4, AB=3.5, B=3, BC=2.5, C=2, D=1, F=0.

F. **Requirements:**

(1) Before the class for which they are assigned, read all of the assignments, read them carefully, and read them critically. Come to class ready to discuss the material. The contribution that each person makes to the discussion is important and participation is 10% of your grade.

(2) Attend all the classes. I will be taking attendance, both to grade attendance and to help me learn your names. Attendance will count as 5% of your final grade. You are entitled to one free unexcused absence. Any excused absences for reasons other than an emergency must be cleared in advance of the class missed. For all excused absences, you must send me an e-mail stating the date and the reason so that I will have a record of it when it comes time to calculate your final grade. Any unexcused absence above your free one will affect your attendance grade as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Absences</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Fail the class</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(3) Participate in class discussions. Class participation will count for 10% of your grade.

(4) Several short, in-class, unannounced quizzes, cumulatively worth 20% of your grade. These will be on the readings assigned for that day, and possibly include short-answer,
multiple choice, and true/false questions. The grade for the quizzes will be determined by
the following formula: (total # of questions answered correctly/total # of questions)*4.
(5) Undergraduate papers: two 6-8 page papers, per the schedule below. The first is worth
30% of your grade, the second is worth 35%.
(6) Graduate student papers: a choice between two 8-10 page papers or one 16 page paper in
two drafts. By “draft” I mean a draft of a complete paper, not a partial paper. For the two
papers or the term paper, you may choose your own topic so long as you discuss it with
me beforehand.

Attendance (5%)+ Participation (10%) + Paper 1 (30%) + Paper 2 (35%) + Quizzes (20%)

G. Undergraduate Paper Dates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assigned</th>
<th>Due</th>
<th>Paper Length</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Oct. 4</td>
<td>Oct. 18</td>
<td>1800-2400 words (6-8 pages)</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Nov. 15</td>
<td>Dec. 6</td>
<td>1800-2400 words (6-8 pages)</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

H. Graduate Student Paper Dates:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assigned</th>
<th>Due</th>
<th>Paper Length</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Oct. 4</td>
<td>Oct. 18</td>
<td>First draft 2,400-3,000 words (8-10 pages); or 2,400-3,000 words (8-10 pages)</td>
<td>NA/30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Nov. 15</td>
<td>Dec. 6</td>
<td>Final draft 4,675-4,925 words (16 pages); or 2,400-3,000 words (8-10 pages)</td>
<td>65%/35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Late Paper Policy: You must hand in all the papers in order to pass this course. You may
  not elect to opt out of a paper and receive an F on it. Papers are due at the beginning of
  class on the due date. Papers handed in during class but after the beginning of class will
  be bumped to the next letter grade or half-letter grade down (e.g., from an A to an AB,
  from a C to a D.) After that, the penalty is one full letter grade per 24 hours. Any non-
  emergency extensions must be requested prior to the due date, and will be granted only in
  rare circumstances. Although you are encouraged to discuss your papers with friends and
  classmates, no group work is allowed.
- Incompletes: I think incompletes are almost invariably a bad idea both for the student and
  the professor, and they will only be granted in rare cases of truly extenuating
  circumstances.

I. Additional Class Policies

Plagiarism and other kinds of academic misconduct: You must cite all of the sources you use for
your papers, except that you need not cite my lectures or my handouts. Instead, cite to the
original source, if there is one. The UW Writing Center also has helpful guidelines for
appropriate quotation and citation at http://students.wisc.edu/saja/pdf/Plagiarism.pdf. Ignorance
of what counts as plagiarism is not an acceptable defense. Please note that the imposition of any
penalty for any kind of academic misconduct (e.g., plagiarism, trying to get credit for a class you
didn’t attend, etc.) can result in a permanent note that goes into your academic file, and that UW
can disclose the fact that you were penalized for academic misconduct to interested parties who
request that information. I will fail any papers not in compliance with the UW rules governing
academic misconduct, which you can find at
http://students.wisc.edu/saja/misconduct/UWS14.html. Other penalties may also be used, if appropriate.

Feedback on final papers: Because many students do not bother to pick up their final papers after the class is over, I do not automatically provide comments on them except for papers by graduate students. If you are an undergraduate and are interested in comments, I am more than happy to meet with you to discuss your paper.

Exceptions to the rules: I will not grant anyone an exception to the rules outlined in this syllabus unless that exception is granted to everyone. This means, for example, that since I can’t commit to allowing everyone the option of rewriting their paper, I can’t allow anyone the option of rewriting their paper.

Classroom Etiquette: You are expected to behave in ways that are appropriate and respectful to the professor and the other students. This includes, but is not limited to

1. The topics in this class are some of the most controversial that are dealt with in any class on campus. While we want to strive for a critical approach to our own views and the views of others, we want to make sure that we are polite and respectful at all times.
2. Any particular views or stories that are discussed in class need to stay in class, as people in class may work within the animal use community and want to either express their view or try on a view for size without getting hassled by their peers. However, please keep in mind that I am not in a position to guarantee that this rule will be followed.
3. Arriving on time. Students who walk into the classroom late create a distraction.
4. Refraining from private conservations with classmates during lecture or discussion.
5. Being patient and courteous to other students when they ask a question or make a comment.
6. Expressing disagreement with the comments of others in a respectful manner.
7. Removing sunglasses and hats.
8. Staying awake.
9. Refraining from reading any non-course-related material.
10. Refraining from packing up until class is completely over.
11. Turn any cell phones off when entering class.

J. Outside Resources for Help

The Writing Center has several classes and numerous handouts on academic writing. They will also do provide individual writing instruction. Appointments can be made by stopping in at 6171 Helen C. White or calling 263-1992. Their web site is http://www.wisc.edu/writing. They can be much more effective if you approach them early in the writing process. Strunk and White’s classic *Elements of Style* is a good general guide to writing, and Anthony Weston’s *Rulebook for Arguments* is a good guide to philosophical writing.

Study Skills: UW, as well as many other universities, have on-line materials available on how to improve your study skills as an undergraduate, and I encourage you to take a look at the URLs below and try to benefit from them.
Students with disabilities should notify me by the end of the second week of the semester so that appropriate accommodations can be made. Please bring your documentation from the McBurney Center (http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/).

Jim Pryor has a very helpful page on how to read philosophy papers at

http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html

K.  A Note about the state of the literature

The literature on animal ethics amply represents the views of those who are critical of the ways in which animals are typically used, but it is much more limited with regard to the representation of views that are supportive of the ways in which animals are typically used. In a review article, David DeGrazia makes the following observation:

“Also striking is the fact that there is no well-developed theory explicitly addressing the moral status of animals that supports such current practices as factory farming, animal research, and hunting. No philosopher who has developed his or her views to the point of publishing a book on the subject has vindicated the status quo. Michael A. Fox did write a book calling for only modest reforms in current animal research practices (Fox 1986), but his argumentation was severely criticized. Within a year, he recanted his views and joined those opposing the status quo (Fox 1987). Widely perceived to be a staunch opponent of the animal welfare movement, R. G. Frey is often invited to conferences as the sole opponent of Singer, Regan, and others considered radically proanimal. Yet while Frey vigorously opposes Regan’s argumentation for animal rights, his own argumentation suggests he is almost an antivivisectionist (see, e.g., Frey (1987a)). This surprising clustering of the leading theorists on the side of animal welfare changes the meaning of “radical,” “moderate,” and “conservative” as one moves from society at large—which generally accepts meat eating, for example—to the academic arena of animal ethics.”


There are several possible explanations, not mutually exclusive:

1. The fact of clustering lends epistemic support to the idea that the status quo really is indefensible.
2. The fact of clustering shows a systematic bias in the antecedent beliefs of people who tend to work on the philosophy of animal ethics.
3. The fact of clustering reflects the fact that, to those who typically publish on animal ethics, the moral costs of animal use are more easily observed and documented than the moral benefits of animal use.

This asymmetry in the literature makes it challenging to construct an appropriate syllabus.
I. Course Schedule

1. Monday, September 13
   Course Introduction, Moral Argumentation, Logic Terminology; Kant on Animals

2. Monday, September 20
   Theories of Moral Status (I): Utilitarian Views (Animal Welfare Views)

3. Monday, September 27
   Theories of Moral Status (II): Animal Rights Views

4. Monday, October 4:
   Theories of Moral Status (III): Indirect Duty Views and Speciesist Views

5. Monday, October 11
   Conceptions of Animal Welfare
Monday, October 18 (Out of town; Tour will be scheduled for another date as a substitute)

6. **Monday, October 25**
   **Animals’ Mental Lives (I): Feelings, Pain, and Desires**

7. **Monday, November 1**
   **Animals’ Mental Lives (II): Altruism, Empathy, Theory of Mind, Memory and Planning**

8. **Monday, November 8**
   **Agricultural Uses of Animals (I): Animal Welfare Issues in Agriculture**

9. **Monday, November 15**  
   **Agricultural Uses of Animals (II): Vegetarianism and Veganism**  

10. **Monday, November 22**  
   **Overflow**

11. **Monday, November 29**  
   **Overflow**

12. **Monday, December 6**  
   **Research Uses of Animals (I)**  

13. **Monday, December 13**  
   **Research uses of Animals (II)**  

© 2010 Streiffer