COURSE  
LAW 381 Animals, Culture and the Law

UNIT VALUE  
1.5 Units (3 hours of instruction per week)

INSTRUCTOR  
Maneesha Deckha

TERM OFFERED  
Fall 2019

CLASS TIMES  
See Schedule

PREREQUISITES/COREQUISITES  
None

BRIEF COURSE DESCRIPTION

This seminar will explore the relationships between nonhuman and human animals, focusing on the legal and ethical issues raised by the legal status of animals as property. In particular, we will look at how recent cultural developments have redrawn the human/nonhuman boundary, implicating what it means to be “human” and “animal”, and resulting in a renewed questioning of the current scope of legal personhood. Specific themes and topics that will be explored include: 1) current Canadian jurisprudence characterizing animals as property and the specific legal regulation of animals as food, research tools, entertainers, companions and carriers/symbols of human cultural and religious traditions; 2) various western philosophical positions on animals that animate Canadian law and alternative legal conceptualizations in Indigenous legal orders; 3) theoretical challenges to animal exploitation, subordination, and commodification from deontological, utilitarian, feminist, postcolonial, Indigenous, queer, and poststructuralist traditions; 4) the types of legal and ethical alternatives proposed to supplant animals’ current status as property; and 5) the imbrication of cultural and legal ideas about animals, animality, and species with the social constructs of gender, culture, race, class, sexuality, and ability and the connections between speciesism, sexism, racism, capitalism, imperialism and ableism. Adopting animal-centered perspectives (as much as humans can) in relation to the law and contesting anthropocentrism, human exceptionalism, and species as a category is integral to this course. We will also discuss power and hierarchies organized along gender, race, class, culture, and ability to understand the role these social forces play in shaping the legal and cultural treatment of animals.

TEACHING METHODOLOGY

An active learning model of pedagogy will be the norm in the seminar. Class time will consist of discussion, small group work and other interactive and reflective exercises, with limited lectures. Students are expected to complete readings and any other preparatory assignments before the start of class and to actively participate in class, including being open to interactive learning.

EVALUATION METHODOLOGY (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)

Student learning will be assessed by a combination of:

a) critical reflection worth 5%;
b) class participation worth 5%; and
c) research paper worth 90%; students have the option of writing two shorter research papers instead of a longer research paper to comprise the 90%.

Students may opt to write their Major Research Paper in the course.

Please note this assessment is currently tentative and subject to change.

June 2019

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1 The information in this document is provided for course registration purposes only and is subject to change. More detailed course information about course content and evaluation will be provided upon the commencement of the course. Students seeking additional information about the course prior to its commencement may contact the instructor or, if no instructor is listed, the Manager of Academic Administration and Student Services (lawmaass@uvic.ca)