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English 6377: Posthumanism: Human/Animal/Environment

Jane Alexander, The Butcher Boys

Spring 2010  
Tuesday 6-8:50, Carlisle 201.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
There is now a rich tradition of posthumanist thought centering on the cyborg and other technological transformations of the human. This course traces a different posthumanist trajectory beginning with Darwin’s Descent of Man, but flourishing more recently, in cultural studies, animal studies, environmental studies, science studies, science fiction, trans-species art, and various subcultures. These posthumanisms unravel the boundaries of the human as such by emphasizing continuities between humans and other animals as well as interchanges between humans and the environment. These posthumanisms emphasize material agency, evolutionary forces, trans-corporeality, human-animal kinship, and other connections across species. The course will feature the work of Donna Haraway and Cary Wolfe, but also include readings by Deleuze and Guattari, Bruno Latour, Hiroki Azuma and others. Along with the theoretical essays we will read an autobiography, a novel, and science fiction. We will also discuss visual art, film, videos, and web sites as we
analyze what “becoming animal” means to theorists, scientists, artists, and various subcultures. The course will take a cultural studies approach to the topic of posthumanism, considering the philosophical, ethical, and political ramifications of different manifestations of the posthuman---whether they exist in theory, literary texts, visual art, film, video, popular culture, or subcultures. The course will begin with a brief introduction to cultural studies as an academic movement and methodology.


**Course Objectives & Learning Outcomes**
1. Students should develop a solid understanding of a range of theories, concepts, and debates in posthumanism, environmental humanities, cultural studies, and animal studies.
2. Students should write and speak, in an informed manner, about the readings for each week, demonstrating their ability to compare and contrast, evaluate, extend, and apply the theories, arguments, concepts, and frameworks. Students should be able to analyze and interpret the texts in a way that is illuminating for the central questions of the class.
3. Students should write an original seminar paper, modeled after a scholarly article, which puts forth an original thesis about a topic or question pertaining to posthumanism. This paper will be based on independent research even though it will be pertinent to the class. They should present a short version of this paper at the final class.

**Course Requirements**
Participation, two presentations: 15%
Weekly papers: 25%
Semitar paper (including presentation of seminar paper): 60%
You must complete all the required work in order to obtain credit for the course.

Eight short response papers (3 double-spaced typed pages) will be required. These will be due at the beginning of class each week (starting with week two) and will be handed in again, gathered together in a folder, at the final class period. These papers are not meant to be fully fleshed out arguments or analyses. Instead, these papers should compare and contrast the readings for the week, remark upon the most significant ideas, evaluate the merits and limitations of particular arguments and theoretical frameworks, and raise significant and provocative questions. The response papers will receive immediate comments but not grades; these papers will be graded in a portfolio manner, along with your presentation and participation, at the end of the course. (If the papers are C, D, or F papers, they will receive those grades, however.)

Two 15‐minute presentations, which you will sign up for, will also be required. (A written version of your presentation can be handed in as that week’s required paper.) One of these presentations will be an Analysis/Interpretation of the assigned reading and one will be a
Summary/Analysis of either one of the “see also” texts, “additional readings,” or another text relevant to that week’s discussion.

One 25-page seminar paper and an oral presentation of an abstract of that paper will be due the final class period. These papers should demonstrate an understanding and engagement with theoretical issues we have discussed in the course. The paper must include a one-page abstract. Ph.D. students will also be required to attach a final page explaining how they would revise the paper for publication and listing five journals to which they would submit the paper. They should also list conferences and panel topics that would be a good fit for this paper. (Ideally, the paper will be presented at a conference and then be revised for publication.)

Mechanics: All papers must be “typed,” stapled, and have a significant title. Please do NOT use plastic folders or paperclips for your paper—a staple is sufficient. All papers are due at the very beginning of the class. I never accept faxed papers or emailed papers. Be sure to keep an extra copy of your paper. Please Note: plagiarism is a serious offense and will be punished to the full extent.

Participation/Attendance
Your active, informed participation is crucial to the success of the course. Carefully prepare for each class period by doing the reading in a rigorous and inquisitive manner. Every day that you come to class you should have something valuable to say. I will grade on actual participation, rather than on mere attendance. However, if you miss class two or more times, I will lower your course grade and if you miss more than that you will fail the course.

Recommended: Spend some time browsing through some of the journals and websites listed below. Find scholars, essays, texts, and topics that will be particularly pertinent for your interests and projects.

JOURNALS, PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS
---ASLE (Association for the Study of Literature and Environment), http://www.asle.org/
---ISLE: Interdisciplinary Study of Literature and Environment.
---ASLE Discussion lists: http://www.asle.org/site/resources/discussion-lists/;
---Environmental Ethics
---Ethics and Environment
---Association for Environmental Studies and Sciences: http://aess.info/;
---Ethics and Environment: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-environmental/
--SLSA: Society for Literature, Science, and the Arts; journal; journal Configurations

WEB SITES:
The Transspecies Institute: http://www.trans-species.org/index.html
The Kerulos Center: http://www.kerulos.org/
Great Ape Project: http://www.greatapeproject.org/
Bill Moyers: Trade Secrets: http://www.pbs.org/tradesecrets/
Washington State University: Environmental Justice Cultural Studies: http://www.wsu.edu/~amerstu/ce/ce.html
Association for the Study of Literature and Environment, ecocritical library:  
http://www.asle.org/site/resources/ecocritical-library/
Pollution Scorecard: http://www.scorecard.org/  
Environmental Research Foundation: http://www.rachel.org/  
Environmental Justice: Environmental Justice Resource Center: http://www.ejrc.cau.edu/;  
http://www.1000voicesarchive.org/series/147/New-Voices-of-Environmental-Justice  
Union of Concerned Scientists: http://ucsusa.org/  
Green Museum: http://www.greenmuseum.org/  
Blue Earth Alliance: http://www.blueearth.org/  
Environmental Working Group: http://www.ewg.org/  
Environmental Ethics: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-environmental/,  
http://online.sfsu.edu/~rone/Environ/Enviroethics.htm  
Environmental Activism: http://www.greenpeace.org/usa/; http://www.sierraclub.org/;  
Breast Cancer Action: http://www.bcaction.org/  
Lynne Hull: Transpecies Art: http://www.eco-art.org/  

SUGGESTED ADDITIONAL READING/TOPICS FOR SEMINAR PAPERS or PRESENTATIONS:  
Anything written by Donna Haraway.  
Susan Squier, Liminal Lives: Imagining the Human at the Frontiers of Biomedicine.  
Neil Badmington, Alien Chic: Posthumanism and the Other Within Anne Marie Mol, The Body Multiple: Ontology in Medical Practice.  
Joseph Dumit, Picturing Personhood: Brain Scans and Biomedical Identity.  
Adriana Petryna, Life Exposed: Biological Citizens after Chernobyl.  
Catherine Waldby, The Visible Human Project: Informatic Bodies and Posthuman Medicine.  
Vanessa Lem, Nietzsche’s Animal Philosophy: Culture, Politics, and the Animality of the Human Being  
Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman, ed. Material Feminisms.  
Francis Fukuyama, Our Posthuman Future: Cosequences of the Biotechnology Revoloution  
Sherryl Vint, Bodies of Tomorrow: Technology, Subjectivity, Science Fiction  
Patricia Melzer, Alien Constructions: Science Fiction and Feminist Thought  
Robert M. Sapolsky, A Primate’s Memoir: A Neuroscientist’s Unconventional Life Among the Baboons.  
Franz de Waal, Our Inner Ape: A Leading Primatologist Explains Why We Are Who We Are.  
Joan Roughgarden, Evolution’s Rainbow: Diversity, Gender, and Sexuality in Nature and People  
Alan Wiesman, The World Without Us.  
“Furry” Novels, graphic novels, web sites, etc. such as Kyell Gold, Pendant of Fortune.  
Barbara Gowdy. The White Bone.  
Philip K. Dick, Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?  
Margaret Atwood, Oryx and Crake.
Memoirs written by animal scientists, animal trainers, etc. There are a great many works on animal studies at this point. See Donna Haraway, Agamben, Cary Wolfe, Mathew Calarco, Kelly Oliver, Linda Kalof, Nicole Shukin, Dominick La Capra, Jodey Castricano, Jonathan Safran Foe, Harriet Ritvo, Temple Grandin, and others. There are several good books about animals in film, specifically (ask me and I’ll bring some in.)

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Official UTA Policies:

Americans With Disabilities Act: The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 92-112 - The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. With the passage of federal legislation entitled Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), pursuant to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens. As a faculty member, I am required by law to provide “reasonable accommodations” to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Student responsibility primarily rests with informing faculty of their need for accommodation and in providing authorized documentation through designated administrative channels. Information regarding specific diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining academic accommodations can be found at www.uta.edu/disability. Also, you may visit the Office for Students with Disabilities in room 102 of University Hall or call them at (817) 272-3364.

Academic Integrity: It is the philosophy of The University of Texas at Arlington that academic dishonesty is a completely unacceptable mode of conduct and will not be tolerated in any form. All persons involved in academic dishonesty will be disciplined in accordance with University regulations and procedures. Discipline may include suspension or expulsion from the University.

“Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts.” (Regents’ Rules and Regulations, Series 50101, Section 2.2)

Support Services Available: The University of Texas at Arlington supports a variety of student success programs to help you connect with the University and achieve academic success. These programs include learning assistance, developmental education, advising and mentoring, admission and transition, and federally funded programs. Students requiring assistance academically, personally, or socially should contact the Office of Student Success Programs at 817-272-6107 for more information and appropriate referrals.

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Minimal standards for classroom etiquette:

1. TURN OFF all pagers, beepers, cell phones and other electronic devices! You may not have these devices turned on while in class. You may not text message or read email or engage in any other electronic activities during class. NO LAPTOPS IN CLASS.
2. Arrive to class ON TIME. It is distracting to both the professor and the students to have someone come in late. If you come in late, you will be marked absent.
3. Arrive to class PREPARED to discuss the texts and materials in an informed manner. You are expected to make a substantial contribution to every class.
4. Treat your classmates with RESPECT. Learn to disagree without being disagreeable. We will often discuss controversial, volatile topics, so everyone needs to learn how to disagree with someone’s views, beliefs, or perspectives while maintaining a sense of civility.
SYLLABUS

Packet = course packet, available from the UTA bookstore
PDF= PDF or word doc. emailed to the class.

Introductions:
Posthumanism, Cultural Studies, Science Studies

Week One. January 19.
Introductory Lecture.
Read these brief pieces before class:
Berube, “What’s the Matter with Cultural Studies”[email]
Read: “Rene Descartes,” “Cultural Studies,” and “Science Studies” in Wikipedia.

“Me” and “Mutant” from Bennett and Royle, Literature, Criticism and Theory [packet]
Bruno Latour, “Crisis” and “Redistribution” from We Have Never Been Modern [packet]
Hiroki Azuma, Otaku: Japanese Database Animals

We Have Never Been Human

Week Three. February 2.
Charles Darwin, The Descent of Man. Read Darwin’s introduction and conclusion to Origin of Species, all of The Descent of Man, and the conclusion to Selection in Relation to Sex [any edition].
Harriet Ritvo, “Our Animal Cousins” [PDF]

Week Four. February 9.
The Great Ape Project: Equality Beyond Humanity, ed. Paolo Cavalieri and Peter Singer
Barbara Herndon Smith, “Animal Relatives, Difficult Relations” [PDF]
Ronnie Zoe Hawkins, “Seeing Ourselves as Primates” [PDF]
See web sites: Great Ape Project, Transspecies Institute, Kerulos Institute

Week Five. February 16.
Donna Haraway, The Haraway Reader
[See also, the rest of Haraway’s work, especially Primate Visions, When Species Meet, and the Companion Species Manifesto.]
Becoming Animal

Week Six. February 23.
Deleuze and Guattari, “Introduction” and “Becoming Animal,” excerpt from A Thousand Plateaus [packet]
Leanne Allison and Diana Wilson, Being Caribou (watch online at: http://beingcaribou.com/necessaryjourneys/film.html#BC

Week Seven. March 2.
Nato Thompson, Becoming Animal: Contemporary Art in the Animal Kingdom
Lynne Hull: Transpecies Art: http://www.eco-art.org/
Una Chaudhui and Shonni Enelow, “Animalizing Performance, Becoming-Theatre: Zooesis with the Animal Project at NYU” [PDF]
Judith L. Goldstein, “The Origin of The Specious” [PDF]
http://www.ebaumsworld.com/video/watch/555833/

Toxic Bodies, Toxic Places

Week Eight. March 9.
Suzanne Antonetta, Body Toxic
Nancy Tuana, “Viscous Porosities” [packet]

Week Nine. March 16: Spring Break.

Week Ten. March 23.
Indra Sinha, Animal’s People
Rob Nixon, “Neoliberalism, Slow Violence, and the Environmental Picaresque” [PDF]
Web exploration: “Bhopal Disaster;” photoessay at Greenpeace:
http://www.greenpeace.org/international/photosvideos/slideshows/bhopal-the-world-s-worst-ind
Video of Diane Wilson, “Texas Gold” (in class).
Becoming Posthuman

Week Eleven. March 30.
Cary Wolfe, What is Posthumanism?

Week Twelve. April 6.
Margaret Atwood, The Year of the Flood
[Companion books: Atwood, Oryx and Crake; Ozeki, All Over Creation; Killing Animals, by The Animal Studies Group]

Week Thirteen. April 13.
Octavia Butler, Lilith's Brood
Bruce Clark, “Posthuman Viability” and conclusion from Posthuman Metamorphosis: Narrative and Systems.

Week Fourteen. April 20.
Greg Bear, Darwin's Radio
Michael De Landa, “Species and Ecosystems,” and “Biological History 17000-2000 AD,” from A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History

Week Fifteen. April 27. Week off to write seminar papers.