

*Animals in Society*

**Animal Sciences 240**

**GEC Category 4. Social Science**

**Section A. Individuals and Groups**

**I. Goals and Objectives:**

A. The proposed *Animals in Society* course meets the **Goals** of the Social Science (Individuals and Groups) GEC category as follows:

Courses in social science help understand human behavior and cognition, and the structures of human societies, cultures and institutions:

- *Animals in Society* is designed to equip a broad range of students with the knowledge and critical thinking skills required to address questions, concerning how animals can best co-exist with modern human societies, in an informed and objective manner.
- Students will be introduced to the historical, social, cultural, economic, and legal frameworks within which current human-animal relationships have evolved.
- Students will consider the social importance of animals kept as companions and the benefits to both humans and animals of developing close and reciprocal inter-species relationships.

B. The proposed *Animals in Society* course fulfills the **Learning Objectives** of the Social Science GEC category as follows:

1. Students understand the theories and methods of scientific inquiry as they are applied to the studies of individuals, groups, organizations, and societies.

- The principles of animal learning will be reviewed and strategies for enhancing the welfare and well-being of animals required to interact closely with humans will be presented and analyzed.
- The many roles of animals in science will be discussed and the concepts of reduction, refinement and replacement elucidated.
- Throughout the course, students will be provided with a broad and critical overview of theories and methods of social scientific inquiry as these apply to human-animal relationships, with an emphasis on developing practical solutions to challenging social issues.

2. Students comprehend human differences and similarities in various psychological, social, cultural, economic, geographic, and political contexts.

- With the knowledge base acquired in this course, students will explore a variety of contemporary issues concerning human obligations towards wild animals.
- They will then consider the differences between wild and domesticated animals and will review various ways in which domesticated animals are currently used by humans.

3. Students develop abilities to comprehend and assess individual and social values, and recognize their importance in problem solving and policy making.

- Students will consider whether the leading frameworks used to address human moral issues can be effectively applied to animal issues and will review the scientific knowledge required to objectively form the attitudes and beliefs that shape social decision making processes.
- They will also consider current limitations in our knowledge about animals, and the challenges that these limitations impose upon the decision making process.
- The course will include a discussion of strategies that could be used globally to promote attitude change concerning animals in society issues, ranging from humane education to improved labeling of animal products to direct social persuasion.

C. Overview: An evaluation of the various roles for animals within our global society, which is informed and objective, requires that our community learn to integrate moral views with biological, social and cultural facts. This requires an understanding of theories and methods of social science, and familiarity with factors underlying those human actions that affect other animals. In recent years, the welfare implications of most animal practices and the response of animals to these practices have been identified. Considerable information about the physical, psychological and social benefits of human engagement with animals has also accumulated, whether this occurs as companions, food sources, recreational participants or medical models. Unfortunately, there is limited transfer of this knowledge to people employed to work with animals and, more generally, to those with an interest in human-animal relationships. *Animals in Society* is an ideal mode by which to facilitate the general transfer of knowledge about the diverse roles and obvious impact that animals have within human communities.

In this course, students will learn to assess and address these issues as individuals, but will, through discussion groups and group activities, learn to also consider these issues in the context of community.

## **II. Assessment Plan**

Our goal is that students who satisfactorily complete this course will be knowledgeable, skilled, reflective and compassionate. Students will appreciate the physical, social and psychological interdependence that exists between humans and nonhuman animals, and will be familiar with the historical, social, economic, cultural, legal, biological and moral contexts within which our current relationships with non-human animals have developed and are maintained. They will have the opportunity, through this course, to develop innovative approaches to, and solutions of, problems in the area of animals in society.

Assessment will include students' knowledge and ability to integrate that knowledge in problem solving. Through the use of examination, essay and monitored discussion (see below), instructors will be able to evaluate students' progress toward the goals outlined above and will adjust teaching tools and methods as needed during the course. In addition, the effectiveness of the instructors will be evaluated by peers experienced in educational pedagogy as well as by the students themselves (see below). Adjustments

will be made as indicated by these sources of assessment to improve comprehension and achievement of learning objectives. Finally, the course content will be assessed before each offering to validate that it is current and applicable to the goals outlined above (see below).

### **1. Student Assessment:**

- Students will be assessed for comprehension and application of the information base of the material through three examinations. Multiple choice and short answer questions will be used to evaluate students' understanding of the theoretical material and their ability to apply it to practical issues. In addition, the final examination will include essay-type questions that will assess the students' ability to integrate the knowledge acquired throughout the course and apply it to appropriate issues, chosen from a selection of topics provided by the course instructor.
- Students will be assessed for their ability to evaluate a contemporary issue relating to the course content through a theoretical essay. Students are required to select a contemporary 'animals in society' issue, research this issue, referring to scientific and contemporary issues literature, and write a 1000 word paper describing and evaluating the issue in a well-balanced, objective manner. The discussion should include consideration of historic, economic, social, cultural, moral and legal factors influencing the current debate, and suggestions for its resolution using knowledge acquired during the course. Evaluation by the instructor of a first draft of the essay will provide constructive assessment and suggestions for improvement prior to the final submission.
- Students will be assessed for their ability to comprehend their importance in social discussion through participation in a monitored electronic discussion. Students will contribute electronically to a discussion about issues raised during the lectures and workshops. At the completion of each week of study, each student will be required to submit a brief paragraph or response describing their thoughts, feelings, interpretations or questions in response to a topic provided by teaching staff. These discussion entries will be monitored by a teaching assistant and each student will be awarded a pass/fail grade for their participation each week (each discussion will be closed at 5:00 PM on the following Monday). Students will receive one percentage point for each pass grade awarded.

### **2. Course Instructor Assessment:**

Through Peer Evaluation of Instruction by faculty members in the Department of Animal Sciences and utilization of the University Student Evaluation of Instruction (SEI) instrument, the instructors will be evaluated on an ongoing basis to assure that goals of the course are met and that educational pedagogy is implemented.

### **3. Course Assessment:**

By its nature, the content of this course will require ongoing evaluation and updates to keep current with the issues and social context of animals in society. The reading list will be evaluated and new articles of interest will be added. The writing assignment will involve contemporary issues. In addition, the group exercises will be assessed for effectiveness in enhancing the students' integration of the course materials, and will be adjusted as needed.